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Safety & Consent In Kinbaku

(Handout for students of TheSpace2.)

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Kinbaku or rope bondage is not without certain risks. This little map shall give a brief overview of some important factors. It is not complete. Its content is a summary of experiences of almost 20 years of combined practice as well as recommendations by experts in the field. Of course, new learning and new experiences will add to this.

- Risk consists of 2 numbers:
 - Probability of an event to happen
 - “cost” of consequences if that event happens.

Always a personal assessment of BOTH participants of a Kinbaku scene! Note, that the consequences are mostly carried by the one in ropes, whereas the actions leading to an event are generally performed by the one tying.

PHYSICAL SAFETY

Body and gear

- Nerves

2 different consequences:

- Nerves to control sensation (“numb patches”)
- Nerves to control motor functions (“wrist drop” etc.)

2 ways of harm nerves:

- Impinging the nerve directly. Full loss of movement, occurs immediately, like a light switch, and without warning.
Nerve needs time to regenerate (approx. 1mm/day). No ice. Physiotherapy recommended.

Two possible causes:

- Pressure of the rope
- Position of the body

- Pressure on the nerve by a bruise. Slow build up (~ minutes-hours). Weakness lasts as long as bruise. Ibuprophen (anti-inflammatory), rest, range of motion exercises, do not further aggravate it.

Two possible causes:

- Pressure of the rope
- Pressure of body parts on each other (e.g. wrists in handcuff)

In most rope play, you have access to nerves either in the arms or in the legs. The position of the nerves varies from one person to another. Test with fingers where soft spots on your partner are. Varies from position to position!

- Circulation

In most cases no problem! BUT circulation can mask underlying problems with nerves. Distinction between nerve problem and circulation in e.g. hands:

- Pins and needles in the whole hand: most likely circulation -> untie if in doubt!
- Pins and needles in only a distinct part of the hand: most likely nerves -> untie!

In some cases, e.g. likelihood of blood clots, circulation can become a problem!

Neck rope: Choke responsibly! Don't tie off a neck rope in a complicated way. Stay low on the neck (better protection by muscles). No transitions with an applied neck rope! Learn ropes before attempting neck rope and take classes.

- Skin

Three issues possible:

- Rope burn. When rope is pulled too fast or with pressure over skin. Possibility of scars. Avoiding through learning proper rope handling.
- Rash of the skin. Some people react sensitive to natural fibres.
- Rope marks. The visible imprint of the rope after a scene. Usually gone within a couple hours. Excuse for work/family: nickel allergy ;-)

- Joints and body mechanics

Usually not a huge problem for floor work, but a bigger deal in suspension. Be careful and reasonable with joints, fingers, toes! Avoid tying directly in joints. Nerves, etc. are often exposed in the area of joints.

- Gear

Suspension: The weakest non-human element is the rope (natural fibre.) Everything one buys from climbing/outdoor store is rated much higher than ever needed in rope bondage.

Don't trust non-fully-visible suspension points in someone's ceiling!

When tying on the floor, no extra gear necessary. Access to rated safety scissors recommended.

Care for your ropes in terms of dirt and body liquids! Some STI's can be transferred by using e.g. the same crotch rope on various partners.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The practice of rope bondage often includes (consciously or not) playing with power dynamics, restriction, exposure, sensory deprivation, and much more. Playing with these and other feelings and situations can lead the players into deep emotional states and therefore rope bondage can be extremely interesting and at the same time also psychologically impactful, for better or for worse.

In the following, we want to list some recommendations that turned out to be useful. Please take these points and reflect upon them well.

- **Respect.** All players involved should ask themselves if they are able to fully respect their partner. To respect someone and oneself also includes the possibility to say no and to graciously hear a no.
- **Focus.** During a scene, all partners should focus on each other. It can be distressing to be involved in this activity while your partner is checking their phone or chatting with others.
- **Accountability.** If something happens, it is only fair to be there for each other! Tying is a fellowship. Nobody wants to hurt someone. Most incidents that cause trauma are those where the one responsible for an incident didn't show a minimum measure of accountability. Ask: "What do you need?" instead of "What can I do?". The first is about the person harmed, the latter is about oneself. It makes a huge difference in a difficult situation.
- **Consent.** It is advised, that all players seek each other's consent for the activity they have planned BEFORE they start playing. There are plenty of ways to discuss consent and to deal with it.
 - Inclusive lists -> possibility of scripted scene
 - Exclusive lists -> never complete!

Other useful phrases:

- "how do you want to feel?"
- "What do you need afterwards?"

Ways of reaching consent also differs between one time play or long-term partners. We at TheSpace2 recommend not to use "mid-scene-negotiation" unless it is to downgrade previously discussed activities.

Useful practice: "5min scene". No neck or crotch rope, no suspension. To see if you "click".

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please be aware, that if you practice ropes and believe that you will never run into a problem, you will be very surprised and unprepared WHEN it happens!
This does not mean that problems are to be taken lightly!

USEFUL LINKS

- In case of injury.
The following health professionals are rope-aware
 - Chiropractor and bodywork
Dr. Marina Liarsky. www.eastpointnaturalhealth.com
 - Registered massage therapist.
Lyrica Lawrence. www.lyricalwellness.com

We would be happy to connect people with these professionals. Usually, injuries recover better when they are treated early.

- In case of psychological issues.
For issues appearing at TheSpace2 directly, we have people with mental health first aid training. Please don't hesitate to ask for help. We can guide you to professional help.