



UNDRESSING DISABILITY

enhance the uk

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Disability, Bondage and Sexual Pleasure

****PLEASE NOTE BEFORE USING THIS GUIDE****

Capacity to consent: *Not everyone has the mental capacity to consent. The law defines the age at which consent can be given for certain relationships and activities. It also requires that for consent to be valid it must be freely given and the individual concerned must be able to demonstrate a broad understanding of what is involved with a basic understanding of the likely consequences of their actions and of the decisions they make. If a person does not have this level of understanding then in the eyes of the law, they may be unable to give consent. This guide has been written for those individuals who have full mental capacity to consent without any doubts.*

This resource outlines how common bondage practices can assist some disabled people to have more fulfilling sexual activity. It has been researched and created by occupational therapist Katherine Sellors on behalf of Enhance The UK.

What is bondage?

The practices of bondage fall under the category BDSM (Bondage Discipline Sadism and Masochism) and relate to a person being restrained in some form for sexual gratification. This can be both a physical restraint or as part of a power dynamic, within this resource the term 'restrained' refers to being physically bound in some way. When I told a friend, who happens to use crutches, about bondage their response was "I don't need tying up, just take the sticks away and I'm going nowhere." Actually being "tied up" can help people with restricted movements have more fulfilling sexual expression.

Is bondage for me?

Some people enjoy bondage as a natural part of their sex lives. This is perfectly reasonable however its association with the kink community can be off putting for some people. For those with a disability, or those whose partners have a disability, the use of bondage and BDSM implements can enable their sexual expression in a way that may not feel overtly kinky. So, whilst typically bondage involves the sexual gratification from being restrained it can be used to help people get sexual gratification in another way.

Positioning and equipment

If you or your partner have restricted movement in one or more limbs, it can be very difficult to find and change positions. The same applies if you have a limb which needs supporting throughout sexual activities. Doing this with your hand may work however it can be tiring, clumsy and occupies a hand which could be used for other, more pleasurable, things!

The force placed through a hand gripping a limb is also applied through each finger. This narrow distribution of pressure creates a higher likelihood of bruising, pain, or injury. Using a harness or cuffs specifically designed for restraining and supporting the human body means this pressure will be more evenly distributed making it more comfortable, safer, and easier to manage.

An easily applied example of this is using a spreader bar which is an adjustable metal bar with a padded cuff at either end. These can be attached to ankles or wrists, or a combination of the two, and adjusted to spread the two limbs to the desired distance. The presence of the bar also means you can move by simply gripping the bar instead of two independent limbs. Similar to this

is a restraint device that unfortunately does not have an official name. It is a band of fabric with two or four cuffs, and typically listed on websites with handcuffs. It can also be bought as separate components. The benefit of the fabric strap is it can be comfortably rest on shoulders or under waists to hold the cuffs where you want them to be, whether it is attached to ankles or wrists.



Alternatively if you have the money to spend and the space to do it a more pricey approach is using pullies and straps which, once attached to a harness, could enable your partner to reposition you with just a few pulls on a rope. If you want to do something this elaborate for solo sex then that works too, just make sure you don't let go of the rope!

Even something as simple as the right type of sheet for your bed can help with positioning. A satin or silk fabric will create less friction and make it easier to move although this can compromise stability. Cotton, rubber, or leather will typically provide more friction in comparison which may make repositioning harder but will reduce slipping or sliding.

Quick tip: the wider and more padded the banding on the cuff the more evenly pressure is applied and the less chance of bruising.

Sensory pleasure

If you have reduced sensation you may find things designed to cause "pain" can actually register as a pleasant experience. The use of something such as a pinwheel or Wartenberg wheel (a small device with prongs which can be rolled across skin) could provide a pleasurable level of sensory input.

Spanking or paddling can increase the sensitivity of an area as it encourages blood flow to the surface



layer of skin. When selecting the ideal device, the rule of thumb is the thinner and longer the implement the sharper the sting and the higher chance of breaking the skin. There is an added risk for those with reduced sensation when using these devices in that it may be harder to detect an injury and this is why it is important to be aware of yourself and your partner.

Alternatively, the presence of heightened sensitivity can be just as much of a barrier to sexual expression. Equipment such as blindfolds, noise cancelling headphones and sensory deprivation suits can help control this. Buying 'a tickler' - which looks closer to a cat toy than a sex toy - can give a softer sensory input.

Quick tip: a long thin cane will create a sharper sting than a short flat paddle, the same can be applied to the thickness of a whip or crop.

Grip issues

If grip is an issue, strap your favourite toy on with some bondage tape and the fun is back in your hands. This self-adhesive tape is strong but doesn't rip your skin off when the fun is over. At Enhance The UK, we believe that sexual expression isn't just about sex and masturbation but how you express yourself as a sexual being. So if you want to do your hair or makeup in a particular way bondage tape can be used to position brushes in your hands, or attach them to your limb, and you don't have to be worried it will stick to any stray strands of hair in the process. Bondage tape is purchased on a large roll similar to Sellotape, which may make it easier to apply and support than items using straps or fastens.



Sexy clothing and underwear

For some individuals buying lingerie is difficult because of clasps, underwires or their hygiene needs making readily available lingerie completely impractical. Historically the underwear sold within sex toy shops was cheap and pretty uncomfortable. Now most stores stock tasteful lingerie, much of which is made from stretchy fabrics. Being able to stretch clothing on and off, instead of fiddle with clasps and buttons, means:

- you don't need a lot of dexterity or movement to wear them
- they can be pulled on over most limbs
- partners or carers can take them off without needing a degree in engineering and an instructional video to undo them!

Crotch-less underwear has the potential to provide easier access to complete personal care tasks without having to remove your underwear, and still have that sexy feel. Finally if continence can be an issue the BDSM corner of your local sex toy store (or website) often stocks outfits made of fabrics which can be wiped clean although these can be slightly squeaky if you are planning to wear them in public.

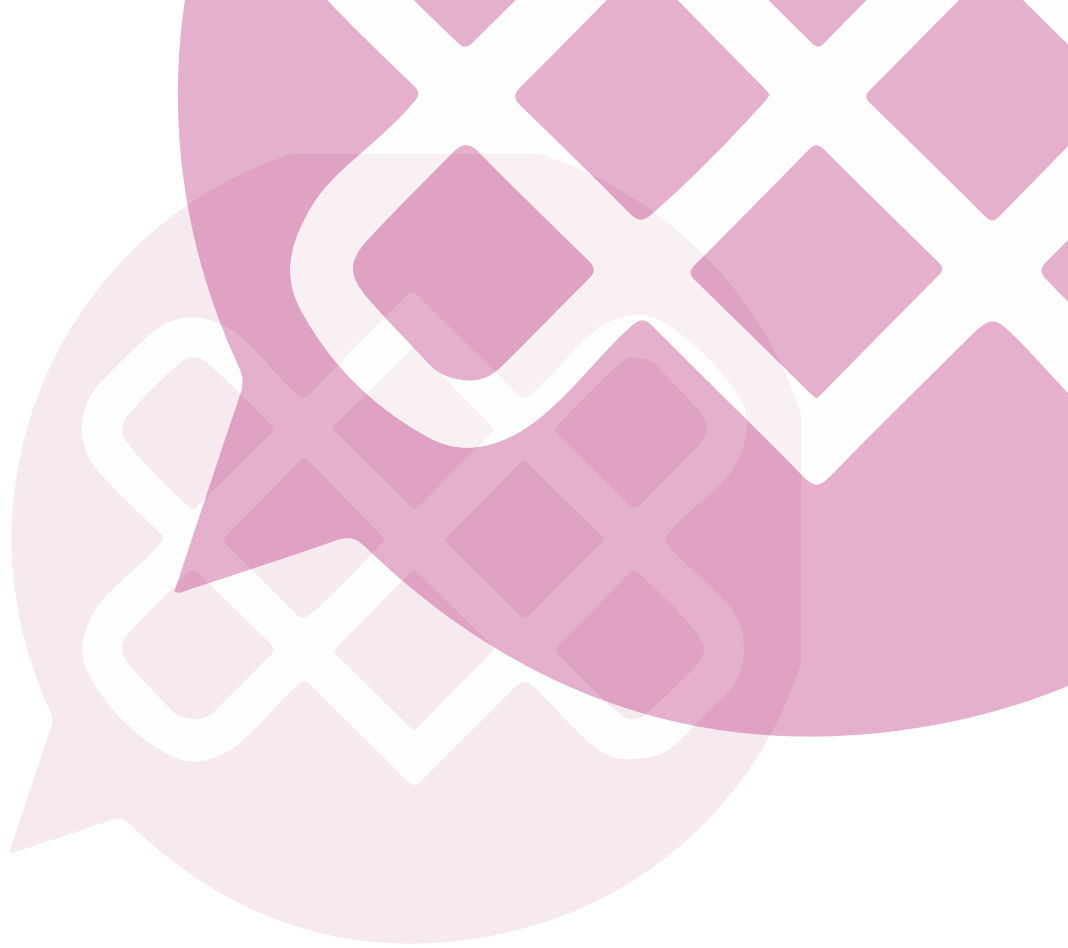
The culture of BDSM

Finally, because the overall culture of BDSM often involves one of the parties giving up control, participants of the kink community live by the motto "safe, sane and consensual".

This means their core principles are that of open and honest communication on what people are or are not willing to participate in. For those with disabilities these discussions can include what they can or cannot physically do or may need extra support in. It is also understood by the kink community their activities are not limited to penetrative sex. They can include:

- how someone behaves
- how they are spoken to
- how they dress

This is an understanding that can still be limited within wider society and can be important to those with disabilities. Often these elaborate interactions, known as scenes, take planning and preparation time which challenges the media portrayed concept of spontaneous sexual activity.



About us

'Undressing Disability' is a global campaign which aims to raise standards in sexual health and sexual awareness for disabled people. Issues around sexuality and sexual frustration are frequently raised by disabled people who feel that they have less opportunity and ability to explore their sexuality than others. Through a lack of understanding, education and a general lack of services, disabled people frequently cannot access the support that would make it possible for them to make the sorts of choices about their lifestyles that most of us take for granted. As part of our campaign we run the Love Lounge, an online forum providing free advice on all things sex, love and disability. We also have free downloadable resources. As a user-led charity, our aim is to change the way people view disability, which often involves removing the 'fear factor' that so often surrounds the subject. We support businesses to be more inclusive by providing disability awareness training, British Sign Language workshops and accessibility audits, amongst other things.

e: hello@enhancetheuk.org
w: www.enhancetheuk.org
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CHANGING SOCIETY'S VIEWS ON DISABILITY