

Understanding Consent Models in BDSM: From Authority Transfer to TPE

SEO Title Tag: *BDSM Consent Models Explained: Blanket, CNC, TPE & More | Love Psychotherapy*

Meta Description: *A detailed guide to consent models in BDSM — specific, broad, dynamic, transferred, blanket consent, CNC, and TPE — plus the difference between violation, incident, and revocation.*

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Quick Takeaways

- Traditional/Core BDSM often consents once to an Authority Transfer; modern practice favors ongoing Enthusiastic Informed Consent.
- A consent violation, a consent incident, and revoking consent are three distinct things — conflating them distorts what actually happened.
- Specific, broad, tiered, dynamic, and transferred consent are different structural models, not interchangeable synonyms.
- Blanket consent and TPE require deep, established trust — they're not shortcuts around negotiation.
- Negotiating with someone who's intoxicated or still endorphin-flooded is high-risk, since their capacity to truly consent is in question.

Consent sounds simple until you actually try to structure it: permission for what, given how, lasting how long? Kink communities have spent decades building out a surprisingly detailed taxonomy of consent models, precisely because "did they say yes" turns out to be nowhere near specific enough on its own. Knowing this taxonomy gives you sharper language for negotiation — and a clearer eye for when something described as consensual actually isn't.

Two Starting Points: Authority Transfer and Enthusiastic Informed Consent

Traditional or "Core" BDSM approaches consent differently than most modern kink practice does. In that older model, consent is given once, up front, to an Authority Transfer — a negotiated agreement that hands ongoing authority to a dominant partner, rather than to each individual scene or activity as it happens. Once a submissive consents to that transfer, they're understood to be under their partner's authority within the agreed limits; in a Total Authority Transfer to a slave role, there's generally little or no retained agency for individual moments. The only real recourse at that point is withdrawing consent from the dynamic itself — functionally, ending the relationship.

Most modern kink practice instead centers Enthusiastic Informed Consent: an ongoing, situational standard where consent is understood as ongoing rather than a single up-front transaction. It requires genuine enthusiasm (not just absence of objection), full information about risks and likely experience, and explicit agreement to the specific things being negotiated. Frameworks like SSC, RACK, RASH, and PRICK all build on this same underlying idea, even though they differ in emphasis.

What Negotiation Actually Covers

Effective negotiation, whatever the timing or format, tends to touch the same core elements:

- **Type of activity:** what, specifically, is going to happen.
- **Body contact and awareness:** which parts of the body are involved, and how.

- **Limits and limitations:** the personal and physical boundaries everyone needs to stay inside.
- **Safewords and signals:** how anyone can pause, check in, or stop — verbally or otherwise.
- **Aftercare:** what participants will need once the activity ends.

Timing varies widely — a quick conversation before pick-up play at an event, a longer discussion spread over days, or an exchange of written limit lists followed by a conversation. What matters isn't the format; it's that it happens before the activity, with enough clarity that nobody is guessing.

Who Can Actually Consent

Consent requires the capacity to give it — someone who's insufficiently informed, physically unable, or mentally unable to consent isn't consenting, regardless of what they say in the moment. This gets genuinely murky in everyday situations (two people who are both intoxicated, for instance), which is exactly why negotiating with someone still riding high endorphins, intoxicated, or otherwise compromised is treated as high-risk by experienced practitioners — the agreement reached under those conditions may not hold up as real consent.

In-Scene Negotiation: Useful, but Risky

Adjusting an agreement mid-scene does happen, usually in response to an unforeseen safety issue or environmental change, and it typically means pausing the activity to renegotiate rather than improvising while continuing. Relying on in-scene negotiation as your only consent model carries real risk, since a person can become physically or mentally unable to consent in the middle of an activity — which is exactly the situation pre-negotiated limits and safewords exist to cover.

Violation, Incident, and Revocation — Three Different Things

- **Consent violation:** a clear crossing of an agreed limit, intentional or accidental, that leaves the affected person feeling their consent wasn't respected.
- **Consent incident:** a less clear-cut crossing, where intent and response matter — what someone does after realizing a limit was crossed, and how they support the affected person, often determines whether it's later described as an incident or a violation.
- **Revoking (or discontinuing) consent:** choosing to stop an activity that was previously agreed to. This isn't automatically a violation or incident — it can simply be a wish to stop, and from that point forward, continuing would be the violation.

These distinctions matter because they shape how a situation gets processed afterward — conflating a straightforward change of mind with a violation, or minimizing a real violation as "just an incident," both distort what actually happened.

The Consent Model Taxonomy

- **Specific consent:** explicitly naming exactly what's allowed — a whitelist. Common for first experiences and demos, since only pre-approved activities happen.
- **Broad consent / limit-listing:** naming what to avoid instead, leaving everything else open to explore. Often built from sub-lists marking hard limits, soft limits, and curiosities.
- **Tiered / intent-based consent:** a middle ground — a broad category or intent is agreed to, with room to explore similar activities within that intent.
- **Dynamic consent:** ongoing negotiation during play itself, including in-scene negotiation and implied or progressive consent between partners with established history — higher risk if used alone, since it depends on continuous capacity to communicate.

- **Transferred consent:** one partner, typically a D-type, consents on behalf of an s-type partner for activities with others — specific to certain power exchange structures.
- **Blanket consent:** broad, standing consent for activity at any time, typically only between long-term partners with deep mutual trust and understanding of each other's limits.
- **CNC (Consensual Non-Consent):** consent negotiated in advance for scenes designed to feel non-consensual — rape play, interrogation, forced scenarios. Healthy CNC involves substantial upfront risk assessment and firm agreements about safewords.
- **Consent contracts and TPE:** written agreements, often ceremonial and symbolic in M/s dynamics, expressing intent rather than functioning as legally binding documents. Total Power Exchange extends this to nearly all activity within the dynamic.

Why the Vocabulary Matters

None of these models are inherently safer or riskier in the abstract — what matters is whether the model actually matches the people using it, whether it was genuinely, clearly negotiated, and whether everyone retains real capacity to end it. A precise vocabulary for consent doesn't just describe agreements more accurately; it makes it much harder for someone to misuse a term like "blanket consent" or "TPE" to paper over the fact that a real conversation never actually happened.

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Pronouns: They/Them

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