

least the end of the nineteenth century) a secondary status as the focus of contemplation by gay men. Of course it was not the aim of Christian hagiography and art to stimulate S/M thoughts. It may be, however, that these legends of fortitude under suffering were one of the elements that helped, however unintentionally, to prepare for the modern S/M sensibility.

The adage "spare the rod and spoil the child" attests to the use of flogging by parents and schoolmasters. In the English public school this practice became a veritable cult, with masters and pupils alike developing erotic feelings in conducting it. Through this imprinting some members of the upper classes developed a life-long flagellomania; hence the expression "English vice" for erotically stimulating caning.

There may even be phylogenetic sources for the connection between corporal pain and sexual performance, as with cats where the male cat bites the neck of the female during intercourse. Some students of the question hold that the human experience of erotic release of pain is governed by a distinctive physiological process, characterized by the release of certain endorphins; this physiological dynamic is, however, still imperfectly understood.

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SAFE SEX

Safe sex refers to activities with no risk, or very small risk, of undesirable consequences. Safe sex need not be conservative or monogamous sex, and it certainly does not mean less sex. Sex can indeed be "safe," not just "safer."

Disease. Partners who are free of **sexually transmitted diseases** can engage in any sexual activities they wish. Since there are diseases which can be transmitted sexually although the carrier is symptom-free and is even unaware he or she has been exposed—hepatitis and AIDS are by far the most serious—such a disease-free state can be known only through medical examination. In the case of AIDS, since it takes months before tests can detect antibodies to the HIV virus, testing indicates the subject's infectious state as of several months previously. For a result valid at the time of the test, the test must follow a period of no potential exposure. As a practical matter, activities which can transmit disease can only be safe within a relationship monogamous so far as those activities are concerned.

There are, however, many ways of having enjoyable sex, even kinky and adventurous sex, with little if any risk of disease and without need for examinations and tests. **Masturbation** in pairs and groups is totally without risk. Among consenting partners, dirty talk, exhibitionism, and photography are safe. No one has gotten a disease from an odor, from **fantasy**, role-playing, erotic clothing, or bondage. One can safely be promiscuous with such activities, if desired, and those who are HIV-positive can fully participate.

Kissing and licking of unbroken skin cannot transmit AIDS. Intercourse with a barrier, such as a strong condom (extra-strength condoms are available and recommended for anal sex), is safe as long

as the barrier remains unbroken. Ample use of a water-based lubricant reduces the risk of breakage.

The activities which can transmit disease are those in which one receives orally, anally, vaginally, or through broken skin a substance from inside someone else's body: semen, seminal fluid (pre-cum), vaginal secretions, blood, urine, feces. Sexual toys can harbor microorganisms, and if they cannot be cleaned thoroughly or covered with a condom they should not be shared. A finger or penis can transfer disease organisms from one orifice to another, or one partner to another; washing before changing to a different orifice or partner is sensible. If fingers are inserted into the anus, a rubber glove is recommended; it also prevents dangerous internal scratches from fingernails. While the HIV virus is absorbed through the colon or breaks in the skin, and there are few known cases of its transmission via oral-genital sex, the hepatitis viruses, gonococcus, and other microorganisms are hardier and are readily transmitted orally. A condom or (for women) a dental dam makes oral sex safe.

Injury. Sexual play, like other recreations, has various additional hazards; pornography tends to ignore these. The colon is easily injured, and such injuries require immediate medical attention. Sharp or breakable objects should never be inserted into the anus, and any anal play should be slow and careful, with lots of lubricant. While restraint (bondage) can be very erotic, for safety it should be limited to partners one knows and trusts. Ropes can injure the skin or nerves, and specialty stores sell safer hardware, such as padded cuffs. Abnormal weight distribution, as in suspension, can cause injury. Restriction of breathing is potentially fatal, and gagging or any other type of restraint requires constant monitoring and provision for immediate release in an emergency.

Planning, negotiation, and communication are essential components of

safe erotic play. An agreed-upon "safe word" can be used to signal the need to lessen or stop activity which is undesirable. The use of alcohol or other drugs increases risk.

Eroticism and Danger. For many people a touch of danger enhances a sexual encounter, and there are those for whom sex without danger is uninteresting. One may rationally decide that the enjoyment an activity offers makes its possible negative consequences acceptable. Some behaviors have such a high risk, however, that they must be considered self-destructive, and may indicate the need for *psychotherapy*; these include unsafe sex with partners not checked for disease, public or semi-public sex without concern for possible legal consequences, and exposing oneself to assault from unstable partners (e.g., rough trade). It is possible, though, to incorporate limited and controlled danger in sexual activities. The presence of a caring and vigilant third party reduces risks. Some semi-public sex involves only minimal risk, and for willing partners to enact fantasies of danger—a pretended assault and rape, for example—can be very enjoyable.

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SAIKAKU, IHARA (1642-1693)

Japanese novelist. The novels and short stories of Ihara Saikaku rank among the masterpieces of the literature of Japan. His work is a product of the urban townsman class that developed in the cities of Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo (modern Tokyo) in the early decades of the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). Saikaku was known for most of his life as a poet of comic linked verse, but in the last decade of his life he turned to writing prose fiction. One of his favorite topics was male homosexual love, which in his day always took the form of a rela-