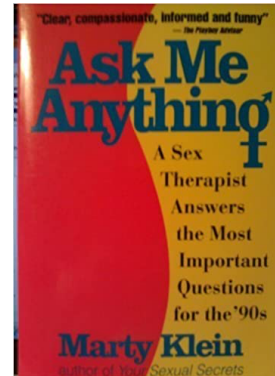


**"Ask Me Anything:
A Sex Therapist Answers
the Most Important
Questions for the '90s."**

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Question #277 from "Ask Me Anything," page 153

277. Can you explain this whole leather/whips/S&M/spanking thing?

It's a lot more than one single thing. For example, some folks like to dress up in leather, talk mean and get very excited, and have more or less regular sex. Others like to hit or be hit, experiencing most of their sexual arousal or release mixed with pain. There are dozens of "scenes" in between.

What all of these have in common is erotic power play; that is, the conscious manipulation of the power aspects of eroticism and the thresholds of stimulation and pain. And they experiment with surrender and control, a profound part of sexuality little discussed in the West.

Erotic power play should *always* be consensual. In reality, two people do it together, rather than one doing it to the other. And as one expert says, "It feels totally different from what it looks like." See question 169 for more information.