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# What It's Actually Like Being A Dominatrix (According To One Dominatrix)

*There's a tendency to think of us as semi-mythical creatures who only come out at night and who don't exist in the prosaic humdrum world of everyday life.*

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As you may know from reading my bio, my blog, my previous articles, or simply by osmosis (that's how that works, right?) I make a living as a professional dominatrix. What does that mean? It means I make a living by hitting, humiliating, dressing up, verbally attacking and otherwise fulfilling men's weird fantasies about being dominated.

People as a general rule seem to be really curious when I mention my career, wanting to know how I got started, what exactly I do, why I do it, what must my husband think, and so on and so forth. And so I'm here to answer some of those questions, as well as to clear up a few common misconceptions about professional dominatrices.

So let's start with how I started and what precisely I do (and do not) do. I started domming professionally about four years ago. A professional dominant is not really something you "become." It's something you just sort of start doing, and it's a lot like -- unless you're working in one of the big city dungeons -- starting up a small business. There's no bar exam, there's no board certification, there's just you.

There are definitely some start-up costs involved as you'll need gear like floggers, bondage cuffs, hand cuffs, collars, some basic bondage furniture, nipple clamps, a sensory dep hood, blindfold, gags, riding crop, cane, paddle, and so on and so forth. You'll also need fetish wear. I mostly save the leather, latex, and PVC for photo shoots unless I'm specifically asked, but it's important to have them in your closet as they're a common request. You'll need a play space outside of your home, and money for advertising.

You'll also want someone to wait in the wings while you session for safety reasons, a working knowledge of how to use all that gear, basic first aid skills (accidents happen). That should include a knowledge of how to treat panic attacks, because you might get someone who thinks he wants bondage, only to realize he's profoundly claustrophobic. On top of that, you'll need a good working knowledge of common kinks. (You'll also want to never undercut my rates, because we're not animals and we don't do that to each other. Two hundred and fifty an hour in person and \$2.50 a minute for webcam.)

I was in some ways uniquely well positioned to be a dominatrix, as well as being uniquely stupid about what I was doing in the beginning. I started up sessioning out of my apartment when I was 20, which is a boneheaded dangerous thing to do, but I was young, and carefree and desperately needed the money. (Trust me you don't want to do that. Things will go missing, and by things I mean your underwear, and also it's basically just risky in terms of your physical safety.)

What I did have was an understanding of fetishes. I'd been reading various kink erotica, often out of weird fascination, for years. I knew all the terms, and I'd read fetish stories people (mostly men) posted online, fascinated by the insight into the private places of other people's minds. I'd also been playing with the toys for a long time (using improvised ones like wooden spoons and hairbrushes before I could legally purchase ones intended for erotic application), and I'd had dudes bugging me on the Internet to dominate them since I was 15 years old (super molesty on their parts) because I look like people's preconceived notion of a dominatrix. So I was able to speak the language, and understand where these guys were coming from.

After doing that for awhile, I went through a breakup, moved to Rhode Island and started up a proper dungeon with a more experienced friend who'd just lost their play space, and that's basically how I became a professional dominatrix.

In terms of what I do and don't do: I do a lot of things, from indulging the guy who wanted me to pretend my feet were electroshock pads (so I spent an hour putting my feet on his head and going "BZZZZZZZ" while he pretended to have convulsions) to the standard beatings and bondage, to your classic verbal humiliation, to erotic hypnosis, to the forced feminization/school scene I did in which I named the pretend school "Lady Wiggington's Remedial Finishing School For The Stupid."

What do I not do? I don't have sex with my clients, I do not touch my clients' genitals, or anuses. (Some dommes do strap-on. I do not, partially because it's illegal and partially because I'm a huge priss). My clients do not get anywhere near my junk. I won't even talk about having sexual contact with my clients over the phone, and in person I don't let them touch me above the knee. (That's the stated rule, really I don't let them get much above mid-calf, because I don't like to be touched by basically anyone who's not my husband). I also don't do golden showers, or their more horrible cousins brown or roman, because well they're brown and roman showers, and if you don't know what those are for the love of God do not Google them.

I'm not dominant. In my private sex life I'm submissive, and have a lot of kinks in common with my clients. This gives me the ability to empathize in a way I couldn't if I'd never been in their place. I've had all the sorts of implements I use on them, used on me and then some. I've licked boot, and been drizzled with hot wax. I've been the recipient of shocks from a TENs unit and violet wand, and the sting or thud of an endless stream of impact toys. I've begged lovers to slap me, bite me, dress me in humiliating attire and call me nasty names, and I loved every goddamned second of it. I also understand what guys looking for "femdom" are generally after -- they want a woman whose allure has such power over them that they'd do anything to please her. Unlike my submissives, I managed to marry the siren of my sexual fantasies in the form of a beautiful blond from New Zealand who makes an amazing spaghetti bolognese.

This brings me to how my husband feels about the whole thing which can be summed up in one word: amused. My husband thinks my clients are basically funny, and at worst either depressing in their loneliness and desire for companionship or irritating with their whining and calls at all hours. Sexual jealousy is a non-issue, because for me what I do at work is nonsexual.

I guess what I really want to say about my job, is that frankly, it's almost exactly like any other freelance creative job. You spend a lot of time dealing with people, you play therapist a lot, you have clothes you wear to see clients, and clothes you wear when you're writing emails and taking phone calls laying on your sofa (pajamas, the word you're looking for is pajamas) and sometimes you wear half of your outfits so you don't have to be all the way dressed during videos. Your clients often don't understand what it is you actually do and are always trying to get out of having to pay you.

People often glamorize what I do for a living, make it seem exotic, give it an aura of sexy intrigue, and I mean, I DO get to dress up pretty for work. I won't lie, my job can be a lot of fun at times. This is usually when I can convince a sub to do something particularly weird, like the time I made a guy dress up like a slutty clown and roll around on a tarp covered in jelly-filled donuts, or the time I told a guy he could only masturbate while listening to the Benny Hill theme song, or when a sub has done something inexplicable on their own, like the time I got call from a sub that opened with "Mistress, mistress, I injected rubbing alcohol into my balls, what do I do?" Of course I answered with "CALL 911 RIGHT NOW" and he ended up having a doctor give him a free vasectomy.

However, the paycheck probably isn't as big as you think. If you stick on the right side of the law, and aren't one of the top dommes in a big market like say New York, you're looking at a comfortable middle class income. That's if you've got the standard issue hot dominatrix look (basically tall with dark hair, dramatic bone structure, red lips, and generally fitting the hegemonic beauty standard of your era) and you really hustle.

It's not something you do looking for a huge paycheck, it's something you do because you need a reasonable income and a lot of free time and for the love of it. Despite the infuriating nature of having to wake up at six in the morning to take a call from a drunk guy who wants you to dress him up in a French maid's outfit and humiliate him by making him serve you and your friends at a tea party, I do love it.

I'm a good listener, empathetic, and I enjoy comforting, counseling and consoling people who are coming to terms with whatever variation of the beautiful mess that is human sexuality they have. I'm good at improvising, running with the ideas my submissives throw out and I love the mental athletics of that. And frankly, I love the tools of my trade, the pride of knowing that I'm good with them, good at my job, and that at the end of the day what I do makes people happy.

It's a weird place though, being paid to see people's most intimate, most vulnerable parts while maintaining a professional distance. I imagine it's similar in some ways to being a therapist. I get so many clients who just come in to talk about their about their emotional issues I often feel like I've been mistaken for a psychologist in thigh high boots. You see parts of people they cannot or will not show to the outside world. You also see dicks, a whole lot of dicks, which is something therapists probably don't deal with quite so much.

It's human drama, tragic, comic, and often weirdly touching and it's also just a job. Sometimes I don't want to get up and put on my goddamned work clothes and go down to the dungeon.

It's a job that lets you in on other people's secrets, and if you're good at it, and you do it long enough you develop a cold read so sharp and quick that you could do a sideline working as a psychic. You get a damned good understanding of human nature when you work fulfilling other people's fantasies. The clients run the gamut from young body builders who've built up muscles to compensate for the perceived inadequacy of their dick (who have come to me to have it insulted) to grandfatherly types whose arthritis prevents them from kneeling before me and must sit on a cushion, to cocky CEOs whose guilt over the wreck they've made of underling's lives drives them to seek punishment, to cheerful well adjusted guys who just want to be spanked.

I have friends I've made through work, other sex workers, prodommes, porn stars, strippers, and escorts. We get together, swap funny client stories, messed-up client stories, and tips and tricks of our various trades. We have a solidarity in our work, we band of sisters (mostly sisters, men who do sex work seem to live in a whole different and oddly separate world) because we know what it is to have people fall in love again and again with the idea of you. Not the real you, but whatever fantasy version of you they're projecting.

There's a tendency to think of us as semi-mythical creatures who only come out at night and who don't exist in the prosaic humdrum world of everyday life. But we do, we're all around you, sitting a table over at that little restaurant you love, at city hall paying our taxes, buying a suspicious amount of chain at Home Depot, and picking out produce in the grocery store. We watch Netflix and have obsessions and families and lives.

It's just a job, and we're just people.

Then again, perhaps from an outside perspective, my life is terribly exotic and glamorous. Maybe you think getting a call from a guy who wants you to call him "Grampa" and make fun of him for being a creepy old pervert who stares at muscular jocks at the gym at four o'clock in the morning is glamorous. Maybe it is. Maybe I'm a testament to the fact that you can come to think of just about anything is normal if you do it long enough.