

BOX TIE STUDIO, LLC
CONSENT & INCIDENT REPORTING POLICIES

1. Consent Policies

a. Introduction

- i. Box Tie Studio is a community of rope and BDSM educators and enthusiasts in the Portland, ME area. At B.T.S., we strive to create a safe and comfortable space for all of our community members. Each member is expected to follow our community's consent policy in our spaces and we encourage each member to bring consent culture into every aspect of their lives. At B.T.S., we believe consent is not limited to intimate spaces.
- ii. This document details our consent framework and incident reporting policies. We have drawn inspiration from Witch City Rope in Salem, MA. This document is open source. Other groups and organizers are invited to adopt this framework for their events or community.

b. Consent Framework

- i. At its best, consent is an ongoing collaboration between two or more people in constant verbal, physical, and emotional dialogue about what each other needs to willingly, safely, and pleasurably engage in an interaction with one another. Consent must be:
 1. Affirmative: There is clearly expressed agreement to participate in an activity. We're looking for the presence of a yes, not the absence of a no.
 2. Competent: All parties have the unfettered ability, knowledge, judgment, or skill to have an intimate interaction.
 3. Informed: All parties are able to decide whether to participate in an activity based on a shared understanding of risk factors, risk tolerances, and other relevant facts. Individuals should proactively disclose STI risk factors and intoxication levels.
 4. Unpressured: A "no" should be immediately accepted without undue persuasion, influence, or intimidation to encourage someone to do something they've expressed hesitation about doing. Any coercive tactics (e.g., threats, leveraging a power relationship) or pressure (e.g., making someone responsible for your disappointment, continuing to ask for something after a boundary is stated, or emotional manipulation) are expressly forbidden.
 5. Specific: All parties are clear about what they are doing together and the boundaries of proposed activities. Where there is a lack of specificity, participants act with heightened caution and attunement.
 6. Ongoing: Consent must be given throughout the interaction, and it can be revoked at any time. If consent is revoked, play must stop immediately. Partners should check in frequently, and especially when anything changes about the interaction (e.g., introduction of new people, activities, or levels of intensity).

c. Consent in Action

- i. While the preceding section details our consent framework in the abstract, we also offer the following guidelines around seeking and obtaining consent in context:
 1. Ask before initiating: Ask for consent before engaging in any contact with another individual.
 2. Give space for an answer after making an invitation.
 3. If there's no clear "yes," treat it as a "no": If your invitation is met with anything other than a clear yes, don't move forward.
 4. Say "no" clearly: Your boundaries are celebrated in this community; expressing them clearly doesn't hinder connection, it helps it.
 5. Respond gracefully to people's boundaries: We must all participate in creating a culture that celebrates people's boundaries.
 6. Keep it informed: Discuss safer sex risks and any substance use before any type of play. If there are other things you need to know before playing with someone, don't assume they will tell you -- ask first.
 7. If they give an inch, don't take a mile: Consent to engage in one level of intimacy (e.g., nonsexual touch) does not automatically give you consent to advance the level of intimacy.
 8. Avoid inadvertent pressure: If someone says "not right now" or "maybe later", you can take this person's response as a no, and simply respond by saying, "thank you". Be sensitive to all the different ways, verbal and non-verbal, that someone might be communicating "no" to you.
 9. Check in frequently: Elicit feedback to be sure that your partner is still consenting to what's happening.
- d. Consequences of Non-Consensual Behavior
 - i. If non-consensual behavior is alleged, Box Tie Studio organizers will speak to all involved parties and witnesses. They will then recommend either no action, a Corrective Intervention, a Moderate Intervention, or a Major Intervention.
 1. Corrective Intervention: Results in a warning. You will receive an email, or direct message. Examples of transgressions in this category could include non-sexual touch without consent.
 2. Moderate Intervention: Results could include a warning, probation, suspension, mediation, or an accountability process. Examples of transgressions that could trigger a moderate intervention could include "consent accidents"; these can occur when a boundary has been crossed that was the result of a legitimate miscommunication, misunderstanding, or mistake.
 3. Major Intervention: Immediate suspension from Box Tie Studio events and removal from online forums. Other results could include: probation, mediation, an accountability process, indefinite suspension, a permanent ban from our events, and sharing information about alleged behavior with organizers of other community spaces. Examples of transgressions that could trigger a major intervention could

include unwanted sexual touch, pressuring someone to play when that pressure did lead to sexual contact, lying about STI or testing status, sexual assault, threatening or abusive behavior, an ongoing pattern of behavior inconsistent with community values and expectations, extreme intoxication, more than one moderate transgression, non-consensual photos taken at an event, or deliberate false incident reports.

2. Incident Reporting Policies

a. Overview

- i. If you feel that someone may not have behaved according to Box Tie Studio's consent policies, you can let us know by reporting at an event to one of our organizers. This is the process we will follow after a report has been submitted:
 1. If the reporter leaves their contact information on the incident report, or if the reporter gives their contact information to an organizer during an in-person reporting, Box Tie Studio organizers will follow-up with the reporter to discuss the report and possible outcomes.
 2. Organizers talk to others involved including direct witnesses and the reported person.
 3. Organizers may consult with character witnesses (such as other event hosts) and follow up on any leads that suggest a larger pattern of the reported behavior.
 4. Organizers will use the results of their investigation to form a consensus on recommended action(s): archive the information and take no other action; have a conversation with the participant; issue an official warning; recommend mediation, therapy, education, or an accountability process; or probation, suspension, or banning from future Box Tie Studio events.
 5. Organizers will contact the reporter to notify them of the group's decision.
 6. Organizers will contact the reported party with an official notice.
 7. Organizers determine whether to announce the decision to the Box Tie Studio community or other events.

b. Goal of an Inquiry

- i. Our goal is to gather enough information to be able to make a fair and reasonable recommendation as to whether to allow an individual continued access to events, to provide emotional support, and advocate support to those who have been harmed.
- ii. Our responsibilities are the following:
 1. To document each report
 2. To determine whether a report is actionable
 3. To gain sufficient understanding of the situation for a recommendation to be made
 4. To ensure that all involved parties are well-supported through accountability processes
 5. To offer ongoing emotional support to those harmed or recommend outside support when appropriate
- iii. Our goal is NOT to determine guilt or innocence, but to reduce harm and foster healing and resiliency.

c. Procedures

- i. Anonymity: If a reporter provides information to the organizers but does not want us to talk to the person or persons involved, we may not be able to take action. We will retain the information and may contact the reporter in the future. If requested, we will not disclose the identity of the reporter during our investigation. We will make every appropriate effort to protect anonymity, though we acknowledge that it may not always be possible to prevent someone from guessing the identity of a reporter.
- ii. Timeline: The organizers must often assess multiple perspectives on a single, complex issue, and just like all reporters, reportees, and witnesses, we may have busy schedules. It may take multiple conversations to provide a full understanding of the circumstances underlying a report. If you are interacting with the organizers (as a reporter, subject of a report, or witness), you can help keep our process moving by responding to messages from us within 1-2 days, and you are welcome to check in with us at any time regarding the status of a report.

d. Confidentiality Policy for Support Team Members

- i. In order to ensure the safety and privacy of all Box Tie Studio participants involved in a consent incident investigative process, it is our policy to protect the confidentiality and privacy of those participants who are involved in investigations of reports, and to hold confidential all personally identifying or individual information, communications, observations, and information made by, between, or about participants, including the identity of the reporter.
- ii. Box Tie Studio shall not disclose any personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with investigations or reveal any individual participant information without the informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person about whom information is sought.
- iii. B.T.S. will avoid any inadvertent release of personally identifying information or individual information about any participant. The obligation to maintain confidentiality does not end when the investigation is concluded. Confidentiality extends to all current and former investigation participants, including those whose complaints were not investigated.
- iv. Actions taken as a result of a report may at times be shared with the greater community only when all personally identifying information has been excluded.
- v. Possible exceptions include emergency situations. Leadership may disclose confidential information when there is a clear and imminent danger that is life threatening or that could result in serious bodily harm to an individual. To the extent possible, emergency services should be contacted without revealing any confidential information about any Box Tie Studio participant.

3. FAQs

- a. What sort of problem can I report?

- i. Please report any behavior or pattern of behaviors that you feel violate Box Tie Studio's community agreements, are unsafe or harmful to you or others, that makes you feel afraid or threatened, or that could endanger Box Tie Studio's reputation, relationships, or ability to hold events.
- b. Who can report a problem?
 - i. Anyone who was directly affected by behavior contrary to Box Tie Studio's community agreements, their officially designated advocate, or a direct witness to such behavior.
 - ii. We prioritize first party reports of behavior that occurred at B.T.S. events, and such reports of incidents that occur at our events will be treated with the most urgency.
 - iii. Third party reports will be recorded, but may not be acted on until a first party report is received. A third party report of behavior that would otherwise lead to a Major Intervention may trigger an investigation and the seeking of first party reports. If a third party report is made with the authorization of someone who has been harmed as a designated advocate, please indicate this in the Incident Report. However, we will need some sort of statement (whether written or oral) directly from the person(s) who was harmed, as well as answers to any necessary follow-up questions.
- c. Who can I make a report about?
 - i. Anyone whose behavior causes you concern. All reports will be handled equitably regardless of who is involved or that person's role within Box Tie Studio.
- d. How and when can I report a problem?
 - i. Reports can be filed at any time, by approaching one of our organizers at an event and communicating this to them directly, or by contacting us by email (contact@boxtiestudio.org, cait@boxtiestudio.org, griffin@boxtiestudio.org, and www.boxtiestudio.org/contact) or direct message on FetLife (@ropespaced and @Griffin207) or Instagram (@rope.spaced and @griffin_ties) We encourage you to make a report. More information rather than less is always encouraged and even if this doesn't warrant immediate action, it may support a future pattern that we would not otherwise see when no reports are given.
- e. What will happen when I make a report or ask for help about a consent violation?
 - i. If something happens during an event please come find one of the Box Tie Studio organizers. We will listen attentively to you, attend to your needs, collect more information, and decide on immediate next steps.
 - ii. If you report something through email or DM, one of the organizers will contact you. That person will focus on your needs in the moment and your ongoing needs as a member of our community. That person will take details of your story, make sure the broader team understands those details, and will help connect you with resources for ongoing support.
 - iii. If a reporter provides information to the organizers but does not want us to talk to the person or persons involved, we may not be able to take action. We will retain the information and may contact the reporter in the future. If requested, we will not disclose

the identity of the reporter during our investigation. We will make every appropriate effort to protect anonymity.

- f. What will happen if I report a consent violation?
- i. Your experience will never be questioned. However, everyone's perspectives on any given situation may be different, so we always want to talk to all parties involved before making an assessment and moving forward. You'll be asked four questions:
 1. What was your experience and its impact on you?
 2. What support do you need to move forward?
 3. Are you open to mediation?
 4. If there is an accountability process, would you like to be involved?
 - ii. Following an investigation, the organizers will recommend one of the following consequences:
 1. Record the information and take no action.
 2. To have a conversation with the reported person regarding the incident/their behavior.
 3. Issue an official warning to the reported person with suggested actions for accountability and changing problematic behavior.
 4. Issue an official warning with probation and suggestions for accountability, repair, and reentry (if that's an option). If mediation is desired by the reporting person, Box Tie Studio will provide one free mediation session. Possible repair requests may include a public letter to the community, repair conversations with the involved parties, checking with other partners about unreported incidents that may have impacted them, or reporting back to the Box Tie Studio organizers about what you have learned.
 5. Ban the reported person from Box Tie Studio events either temporarily or permanently. In some cases, reentry may be possible following a completed accountability process. If the organizers determine that a person has completed an accountability process and poses little ongoing risk to the community, the person harmed will be contacted. The person harmed will be given an opportunity for a mediated conversation to aid in healing, restoration, and completion of the process.
 - iii. In addition, Box Tie Studio organizers reserve the right to take the following actions at any time:
 1. Revoke tickets to events (in this case the cost of the ticket will be refunded).
 2. Remove anyone from our online forums or mailing list.
 3. Remove anyone from our events.
 4. Communicate about details of allegations with other community leaders (protecting the privacy of the person who was harmed).
 5. Make a public statement about the alleged transgression or the circumstances/consequences of a report.
- g. What will NOT happen if I make a report?

- i. If you make a report we will not reveal your identity or any details related to the report to uninvolved parties without your explicit consent.
- ii. We will not take any sort of retaliatory action against you for reporting (or not reporting) a problem.
- iii. We will not make a recommendation for action without interviewing the person the report is about (the reportee) and any witnesses to the behavior in question.
- h. Will I find out the results of my report?
 - i. Box Tie Studio values transparency in our process. All parties will be reported back to regarding our process and what, if any, actions have been taken. If reports are coming in from outside our group, membership privacy might take priority over transparency. We may also remove specific identifying details of a story to prioritize privacy.
- i. What will happen if I've been accused of a consent violation?
 - i. While we will always err on the side of safety and treating all reporters' experiences as valid, we assume that there are multiple experiences to anyone's story and we will approach the conversation with this in mind.
 - ii. For moderate or major interventions, the person who is accused of doing harm to another individual or the Box Tie Studio community may be asked to step away from Box Tie Studio events until the issue has been resolved. Resolution can take place between a transgressor and the community or between a transgressor and the individual(s) they've harmed. Ideally there will be opportunities for restoration in all of the relationships involved but that is not a prerequisite for accountability.
 - iii. Our default stance is to be open to the possibility of restoration with the community. Someone who has crossed another person's physical boundaries may be asked to leave the community for an indeterminate period of time.
 - iv. If the person who was harmed does not want to participate in community accountability processes that is their prerogative. It may not, however, prevent someone who has completed a community accountability process and deemed appropriate for reintegration into the community from returning.
 - v. Anyone who has received a moderate or major report and who is allowed back into Box Tie Studio events after successful completion of an accountability process will be on probation for a minimum of 1 year, depending on the transgression committed.
- j. What happens if someone makes a false report about me?
 - i. If we find that someone deliberately makes a false report about you, the organizers will treat it as a moderate to major violation.