

Spanking

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The word “spank,” both verb and noun, has been in English language usage since the 1700s and seems onomatopoeic in nature. To spank, according to Webster’s, means “to strike or slap the buttocks, usually with the palm of the hand” (Merriam-Webster.com). Spankings may be administered for real punishment—as in spanking children against their will—or for pleasure—as in spanking between or among consenting adults. The pain-laced pleasures of adult “erotic spanking” range from light slaps on the buttocks during lovemaking to more formal, over-the-knee (OTK) role-play to a mistress smacking her slave’s reddened rear within the couple’s D/s (dominance and submission) lifestyle.

The joys of spanking are older than humanity; bonobos and other animals playfully swat each other’s hind quarters. For humans, the butt is a veritable “seat” of pleasure, with multiple touch-responsive nerve endings in close proximity to the genitalia. Physiologically speaking, spanking elicits “cross-talk” between afferent and efferent nerve tracts at the S2 spinal level (posterior superior iliac spine), where nerves supplying both buttocks and genitals enter and leave the spinal cord, causing posterior stimulation to trigger sexual arousal. Thus the human bottom is very receptive to erotic pleasure, but because of its considerable padding—fat and/or muscle—it is not so sensitive to pain (Love 1994:117).

For sadomasochistic spanking enthusiasts, the pain is a vital part of the pleasure. Spanking catalyzes endorphin production, which assists the “bottom” in handling pain. In a “sensuous spanking,” pain and pleasure occur in tandem, as smacks are interspersed with caresses. This slow endorphin buildup can take the bottom into a trance-like “subspace,” as pain and

pleasure mix into a natural chemical cocktail of arousal.

Spanking increases blood flow to the pelvic region, often inducing penile and clitoral erection and lubrication. Some spanking enthusiasts say their buns are “wired” to their genitals, calling the lower inner buttocks the “sweet spot.” Tellingly, when one “assumes the position” for spanking, one mimics the bent over, bottoms-up stance akin to mammalian “lordosis,” in which the “bottom” invites copulation. The human bottom’s redness after spanking, also evocative of animal fertility signals, often excites the spanker or “top.” These spanking masters, mistresses, role-playing governesses, drill instructors, and doms may spank professionally or just for fun, as an art form or as a spiritual path.

Spanking fantasy settings can be anywhere, in a childhood home, boudoir, church, office, prison, or boarding school. In dominance and submission (D/s) spanking scenarios, the intense psychological dynamics of power and surrender—and the idea of being “bad,” for both the “nasty” “dom” and the “naughty” “sub”—is a big part of what feels so good.

Many find therapeutic power in spanking. This may be primarily physical, like a brisk massage. But spanking therapy can also be psychological, releasing stress and shame that stem from childhood. Cognitively speaking, being spanked often makes people feel childlike, which can be liberating. This doesn’t mean that only people who were spanked as children like it as adults; some do just because they *weren’t* spanked as children. They may become aroused from feeling helpless, punished, objectified, embarrassed, or just being the center of attention. To spank is to pay attention. To be spanked is to command that attention, even if it hurts.

SEE ALSO: BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Domination, Submission, Sadomasochism); Consensual Sex; Desire, Sexual; Domination and Submission (D&S); Dominatrix; Fantasy, Sexual; Fetish; Frotteurism; Paraphilias; Sexual Stigma

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