



What is Subspace?

Subspace is a metaphor for the state the submissive's mind and body during a deeply involving play scene. Many types of BDSM play invoke strong physical responses such as extended [adrenalin](#) surges that can cause exhaustion. The mental aspect of BDSM also causes many submissives to separate themselves mentally from their environment as they process the experience. Deep subspace is often characterized as a state of deep recession and incoherence. Many submissives require aftercare after experiencing subspace.

Physiological Processes

During the scene, the intense experiences of both pain and pleasure trigger a sympathetic nervous system response, which causes a release of epinephrine from the [adrenal glands](#), as well as a dump of [endorphins](#) and [enkephalins](#). These natural chemicals, part of the [fight or flight response](#), produce the same effect as a morphine-like drug, increasing the pain tolerance of the submissive as the scene becomes more intense. Producing a sort of trance-like state due to the increase of hormones and chemicals, the submissive starts to feel out-of-

body, detached from reality, and as the high comes down, and the parasympathetic nervous system kicks in, a deep exhaustion, as well as incoherence. Many submissives once reaching a height of subspace will lose all sensation of pain, as any stimuli causes the period to prolong.

Would you like to discuss subspace with others? Check out the forum thread on FetLife:

https://fetlife.com/groups/7478/group_posts/8492970

Subspace Do's

Do learn and share how your body will respond in subspace.

One of the keys to a positive play experience involving subspace, is knowing what tends to trigger subspace and how you respond to sensations while in subspace. Often, submissives can no longer vocalize or sense pain/pleasure as they did prior to the scene.

Do let your Top know how you typically reach subspace and what your personal signs are that you are nearing subspace.

Everyone reaches subspace differently and letting your Top know how you reach subspace and what your responses are to play will help him greatly with controlling the flow and energy of the scene. Do you get quiet or perhaps giggly? If you don't yet know how you get to sub space, let them know that also.

Do trust your Top to know when to stop when/if you reach subspace.

If you've been able to share how you end up in subspace you should also communicate if you wish them to stop, dial back on the sensation or continue. Many submissives can not vocalize while in subspace so having a plan in place before playing is always recommended. Again, if you don't know how you are in subspace, you should have a plan to stop play and begin aftercare if you are in subspace.

Do learn how to get out of subspace and communicate that with your Top.

There are ways to come up out of subspace safely within the scene. Experiment and learn what works for you. I know that unexpected pain or sensation works for me and tickling has been remarkably effective without blowing the whole scene. Avoiding subspace can prolong some scenes and knowing how to get back to surface consciousness can help avoid severe cases of [subdrop](#).

Subspace Don'ts

Don't try to reach subspace the first time you play with someone.

When you are in subspace you are less able to respond to stimulus and use your safeword. Things get blurred, slower and harder to comprehend. So, if you are playing for the first time, and don't know how someone plays or if you can really trust them (and you can't judge that, it develops over time) subspace can be dangerous. Especially if the person you are with turns out to be a turd, an ass or worse, a predator. You need your wits about you when playing with someone you've never played with before.

Don't forget to negotiate what the Top is to do if/when you reach subspace.

As I said in the Do's section, after you've told them what subspace looks like for you, then negotiate what is to happen if you reach subspace. And renegotiate that every time you play. Subspace doesn't have to be the goal every single time, and shouldn't be an obligatory end goal.

Don't expect to reach subspace every single time you play or at all. Not everyone has the same effects from endorphins and those other lovely hormones, and some people have no noticeable reactions at all.

If you set a requirement to reach subspace when you play, and you focus on it too hard, it will never happen. Subspace happens when you aren't intently focused on it and are, instead, relaxing in the sensations of the scene. Your susceptibility is completely related to how your body reacts to the cocktail of hormones that your body releases in response to the play.

Don't feel like a failure if you didn't reach subspace and don't allow anyone else to try to make you feel that way.

The way you experience the sensations of play are completely your own. Subspace is not something everyone can get to or wants to experience. Don't pressure yourself to try to get to subspace. It will happen if and when your body allows you to get there.

Don't set subspace as your goal for play. There are many other ways to reach fulfillment during a scene; subspace isn't the end all be all of playing.

Many submissives who push themselves to try to get to subspace can't enjoy the scene because they are so single-focused. BDSM play really is about the journey and not the

destination. Learn to find fulfillment in all ways and even if subspace or orgasm doesn't happen, you can enjoy what you experience and the scene can be a huge success without those things. Remember that.

Further Reading

- [The Many Layers of Subspace](#)
- [Chat Night Transcript from Subspace Talk](#)
- [Subspace: The Ultimate Frontier](#)

[Subspace Group on FetLife](#)