

Come Together

Whatever your kink, whatever your gender identity, you are part of a community

But, did it ever occur to you just how large and diverse that community really is? We may differ in our dress, customs, jargon, and gender identity. But we have much in common: we're engaged with our alternative lifestyle. We value trust, honor, and integrity above all. We're sex-positive in our play. And we're inclusive.

In recent decades, mainstream interest in our strange and exciting dress and customs has exploded. Some of the rights fought for by our community, including same-sex marriage and personal gender identity, have achieved some legal protections. Psychologists no longer diagnose our lifestyle as a mental illness.

But our achievements have a downside: we have fragmented. We allow age, gender identity, and the peculiar customs of our cliques and clans, to be barriers between us. Social media seem to allow us to live in our own personal echo chambers. We're losing something: the sense of a larger community of common interests and shared values. The mutual respect and celebration of diversity.

We fragment at our peril. Especially in the current political climate. Already, we are seeing that those who would deny our freedom to live our lives as we define them are feeling empowered. Already, some in our community are feeling less safe. We cannot allow ourselves complacency.

How to respond?

- The first step is to acknowledge that we are part of a community of common interest in alternatives to the "mainstream."
- The next step is to get out of your comfort zone, and build communication and trust with the other groups around you that you don't usually encounter —yes, right here in the DFW Metroplex. Share your values, and listen to them as they share theirs. Unseal your echo chamber. Celebrate what you have in common, and celebrate the diversity within our community. Learn from it.
- Then, *act* -- when any part of the community is threatened, we all are threatened. Be aware. Call out the bad actors. When someone in our community feels isolated, be there for them. Now, more than ever, it is time for the whole community to come together.



Do you agree? Then wear this symbol proudly

...and when you see another with this symbol, especially someone outside your clan, introduce yourself, and talk – about your diversity. About what you have in common.

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