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Cuffs

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Being tied up is a very powerful sensation for Alexandra Goldina, or "Sasha," as she is more commonly known. She loves the feeling of rope. She loves the way it diggs deep into her skin. When she's bounded, she loves the marks the ropes leave behind, a feeling shadow of the thrilling experience. She feels beautiful while tied up and suspended.

"The sensation in advertising is one of the most courageous people you ever meet," she says. "It's blue hair, dark lips and edgy, gothic-meets-groovy inspired style don't make her stand out on campus, her position as president of Cuffs certainly does.

Cuffs is the first and longest running student organization devoted to alternate sexuality and lifestyles—such as BDSM, or Bondage and Discipline; Domination and Submission; and Sado masochism—in the nation, and it just so happens to be located right here on the Iowa State campus.

While combing through the maze of the MU Student Offices on the day of our interviews, I ask a girl from another club if she knows where the Cuffs cubicle is located. She quickly shakes her head and says, "I have no idea." Do I detect a hint of judgment?

Sasha and the rest of the club are used to this kind of reaction. Every year at ClubFest, freshmen walking by the Cuffs booth gasp, others stop to read the signs, or peer into the cubicle is located. She quickly shakes her head and says, "I have no idea."

"I think the most important thing for people to understand is that we're not a sex club. We don't just meet to talk about what we're going to do to each other," Sasha says. "But they do talk about it. Bondage and fetishes, I mean. Every meeting, a group member or guest presenter leads a discussion on a particular form of play."

"To write a list of all the things that people are into would be absolutely impossible," Sasha says. "Because as soon as you think you've done, there is something else."

"People who are tied to suspension are the most popular," she says. "They know their club and BDSM is not for everyone, and that's perfectly fine with them."

"But the kind of conversation that's going on here is demystifying. "

"We have potty breaks, don't participate with people you don’t know well or fully trust."

"Cut off circulation (try not to bind anywhere you can feel a pulse and watch for discoloration)."

"Leave a bound partner alone.

"Buy cheaply made toys and restraints that can damage skin (buy thick leather cuffs instead of thin metal cuffs)."

"Try not to bind anywhere you can feel a pulse and watch for discoloration.

"Get plenty of fluids and keep your hands on the Blackout Safety Scissors handy in case there’s a blackout or a problem that means stop (Cuffs recommends a monosyllabic word other than “no” or “stop” so those can still be used recreationally)."

"Have a safe word that means stop (Cuffs recommends a monosyllabic word other than “no” or “stop” so those can still be used recreationally)."

"Establish constant consent.

"Participate with people you don’t know well or fully trust.

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