

# Guiding Principles – SexPositive World

This document exists as a manifesto, an articulation of ideology to help with the formation of new chapters and to guide established chapters as they develop new policies and programming. The aim is to help maintain internal cohesion and consistency over time. Synthesized below are the principles and values founding members, chapter representatives and advisory board associates believe are foundational to the success and perpetuation of Sex Positive World (SPW) and its affiliate chapters.

This is a living document. The values, vision and mission of the organization should be substantially agreed upon by all members and through all chapter activities, and should be periodically revised as the needs of the movement change or the vision is realized.

Actual operations manuals and other materials are available to all chapters in SPW GoogleDocs ([SPW](#)).

## Values, Vision, Mission

**Our Values:** Sexual/Bodily Sovereignty, Diversity in Representation and Expression, the C's (including care, consent, confidentiality, compassion, community, and collaboration), Knowledge (education, awareness) Egalitarianism, Economic Justice (not focused on money), Mentorship.

**Vision:** A world where all expressions of sexuality are respected and protected, and consensual sexuality and pleasure are seen as natural, healthy, and connecting.

**Mission:** To nurture local and online communities that transform cultural attitudes about sexuality by enabling educational, social, and experiential events that promote acceptance of diverse gender, orientation, sexual expression, and relationship styles, while keeping our offerings accessible and affordable.

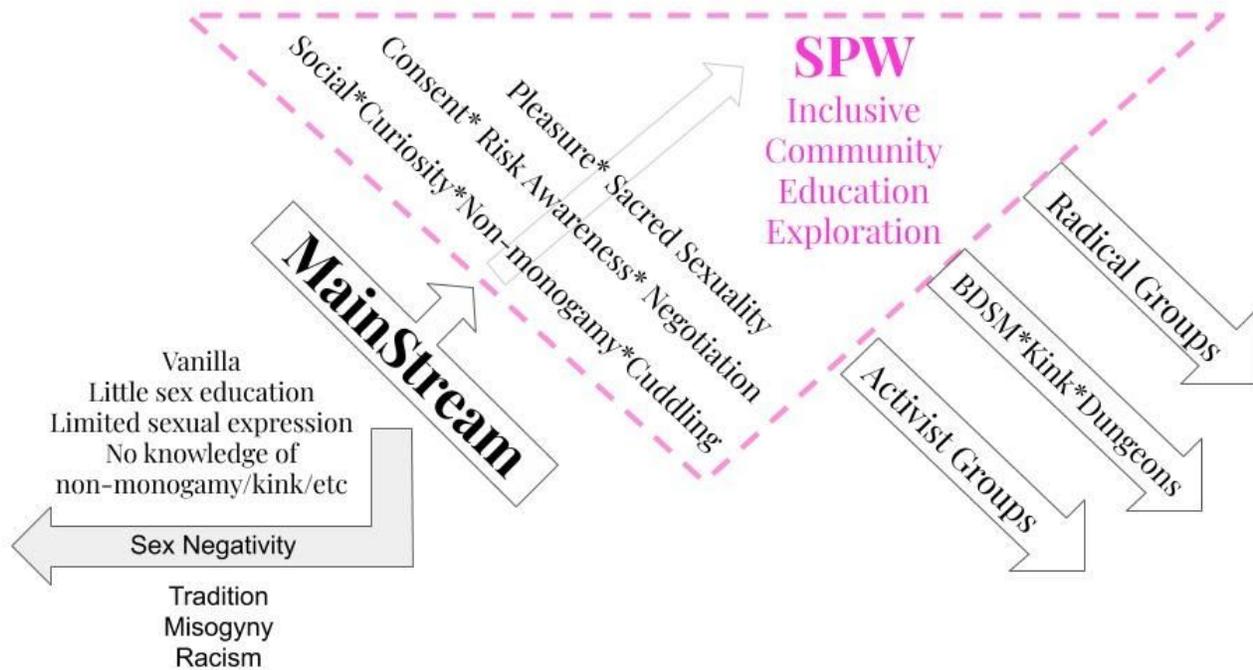
## Our Core Principles ([Click here for the summation](#)):

- [We act as a Bridge between Mainstream Society & the larger Sex-Positive Movement](#)
- [We are a Container that Holds most Aspects of the Sex-Positive Movement](#)
- [We seek to have the Greatest Impact on the Greatest Number](#)
- [To Change the World we have to Change the Power Structure](#)
- [We Balance Safety with Freedom](#)
- [Money is Never a Major Factor in our Decisions \(we are a do-aucracy, and we practice contributionism over capitalism\)](#)
- [Mentorship: We are an Incubator of Sex-Educators and Change Agents](#)

## We Act as a Bridge Between Mainstream & Sex-Positivity

Numerous, wonderful organizations are doing invaluable work in advancing sex-positivity, such as those advocating for marriage equality, sexual and reproductive choice, body positivity, trans rights, sex-workers' rights, and more. We support their work through sponsorship, partnered projects, and encouraging participation by our members. We believe that the movement is stronger when each organization is working from their own strengths while focusing on what they do best.

**Figure 1. The Place of SPW in relation to Mainstream Society & Specific Sexual Groups**



What we do best is create community, deliver education, and produce events that offer an embodied experience of sex-positivity. We are a taster group that acts as a bridge or filter between mainstream society (deeply influenced by patriarchy: unnatural- hierarchy, shame, guilt, and fear) and more specialized, focused, or activist sexuality communities. Due to our 501c3 tax exempt status, SPW cannot take part in expressly political activism. We are not a research institution, and we, unfortunately do not have a dungeon. Instead we seek to create a safer, welcoming, and ever-expanding container that accommodates every sexuality community allowing us to impact each other through play, education, and exploration.

We are pleasure activists and change agents declaring that pleasure is a birthright, that it is life-giving, healing, and connecting and that maintaining personal sovereignty is a revolutionary

act. Part of the way we accomplish this is by having balance and equitable access to topics and subgroups that our members may be interested in.

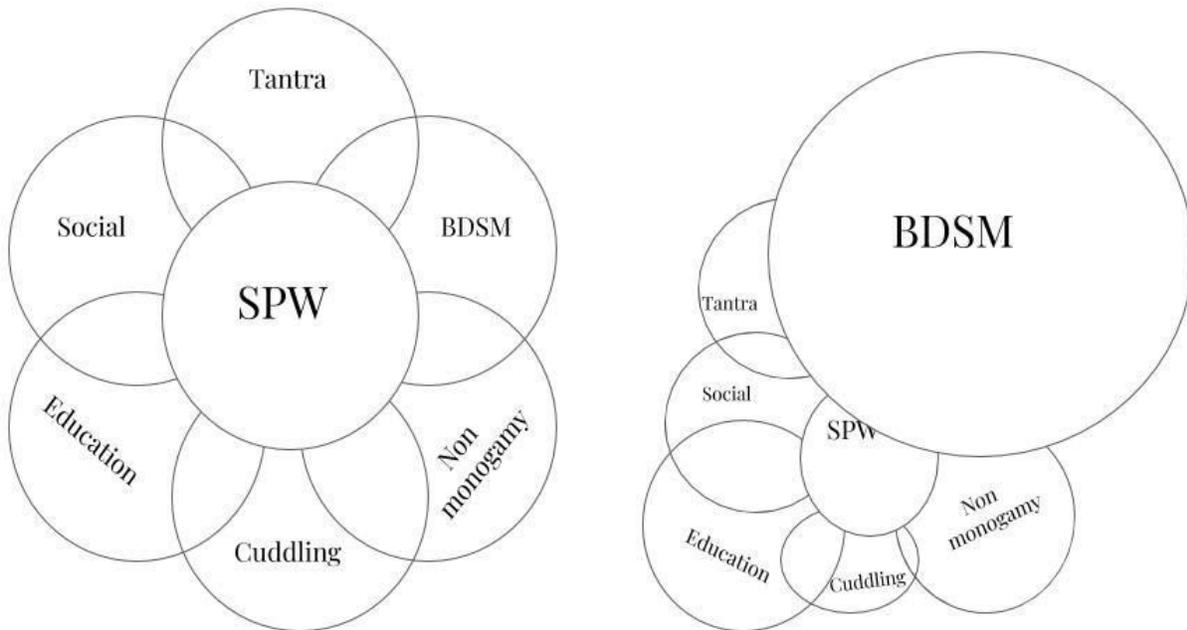
## SPW is a Container that Holds the Sex-Positive Movement

The sex-positive movement is broad and multifaceted and covers every aspect of human sexuality, including:

- Who we are: gender, identity, bodily sovereignty, body-positivity
- Who we love: orientation, relationship styles (monogamous, non-monogamous, etc)
- How we love/play: kinks, BDSM, Tantra, swinging, vanilla, fantasies

The SPW container or space should be large and nimble enough to include every major aspect of sexual identity and expression, and should utilize multiple means to bring about our mission, including education, outreach, and activism, while maintaining an equitable balance between them. No one should take up all the space. Occupying no more than, say, 25% of the group space and resources would diminish the variety that makes our organization so rich. We are not solely a Kink/BDSM group, a sacred sexuality group or an ethical non-monogamy group, we are all those and more combined. By striving for balance, we remain broad reaching rather than specializing in one topic. This does not negate the reality that some chapters may have more specific proclivities, but is rather a goal to strive toward and respects new and exploring members entrance to the group. See below.

**Figure 2. Ideal Balance of Topics & Subgroups contrasted with Imbalance**



## We seek to Have the Greatest Impact on the Greatest Number

### Compassion and Capacity

The competing values that impact our organization are the right for individuals to participate and reap the benefits of membership vs. the needs of the organization to have balance, growth, and make a maximum impact on society. Therefore, when considering recruitment or membership we must keep the following in mind.

Two particularly complicated factors membership must consider are trauma and severe mental illness. We understand that trauma and conditioning deeply affect individuals and their tastes, preferences, and decisions, so we try to balance safety with opportunities for exploration and growth. We have deep compassion and seek to be trauma informed when interacting with those who have been affected, yet we need to recognize that some trauma and mental health conditions are beyond the capacity of our volunteers to hold space for. We are not qualified sexual and mental health professionals. Additionally, medical, legal and psychological professionals in the group are expressly prohibited from providing healthcare advice or diagnosis outside of their practice.

So although the below are often side effects of membership in an Sex Positive Chapter, we are not an organization expressly focused on:

- Sexual healing
- Mental or emotional health
- Giving medical advice

While we try to accommodate most aspects of sexuality, there are some that we are ill-equipped or unable to. We expressly avoid activities that are illegal, dangerous, or would trigger or “squid out” too many people, examples include blood play, rape enactments, degradation play of women or minorities, anal fisting. We have no moral judgment about these things, but they would limit our reach to the general public.

Remember that we must balance compassion with capacity; each chapter must decide for itself what their capacity is to accept members who may create an imbalance in the group or disproportionately affect the amount of people that can benefit from this organization.

### Social and Political Activism

We seek to be informed by social activism and to adopt policies that lessen institutionalized marginalization and we seek to uncover and correct conscious and unconscious behaviours when we become aware of them. We absolutely do not tolerate expressions of **homophobia, racism, sizeism, classism, ableism, misogyny, misandry, or transphobia**. We see our approach of acceptance, exploration and education as social activism addressing these issues. From small acts of befriending a newcomer to chapter hosting of rally’s and slutwalks, cultural change is happening, radical love is happening. We see this as the kinds of change we can support within the confines of our organization and our non-profit status.

As a registered 501(c)3 non-profit, SPW would lose its status if it endorses political candidates or rallies strongly to affect legislation. Chapters operate as independent legal and fiscal entities, therefore they have the option of engaging at a level the World organization cannot. However, activism should not become the prime directive of a chapter for two reasons: it would dilute the mission of education and community building, and it could set members apart if they too hold strong beliefs or values that differ. (Example spirituality vs. atheism or women's empowerment vs. those who say that gender isn't real.)

To have the greatest impact on the greatest number means that we are also welcoming of conservatives, religious people, monogamous people, or any other groups typically not associated with the sex positive movement. In other words, we accept a broad difference of opinion, so long as all sides remain respectful, caring, open-minded, and embrace the rest of the principles spelled out.

## **To Change the World we have to Change the Power Structure**

### **Intersectionality & Group Composition**

We recognize that deep-seated and institutionalized discrimination (racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, and others) influence our preferences, resources and access, so we seek to help members and those we influence to recognize and address when this is happening in their behaviors. We understand that unequal opportunity and privilege make it difficult for some to understand what it feels like to be marginalized, oppressed, or fetishized. It is essential that we take this into consideration in the course of executing our mission and in our educational programs.

Cis gender women have long been dissuaded by society from claiming their sexuality, therefore, they traditionally apply at one-third to one-tenth as often as cis men do. The number of applications we get from LGBT folk is even lower, as are those from people of color. Older men, for the most part, apply at a greater rate than anyone else. Accepting everyone who applies means that some demographics will not feel as safe or as welcome.

Through outreach and recruitment, we endeavor to attract diverse heritage, orientation, gender identities, abilities, and ages. While we include all members of society in our organization, we foresee reserved membership, time and space for minority groups, young people and those of low-income, in order to not duplicate the privileges and stratification found in society. It is recommended that decision-making bodies within the organization consists of a diverse range of the above.

## **We Balance Safety with Freedom**

### **The Level System**

We have a level system for the protection of both members and the organization. The level system has been a cornerstone of our organization that has substantially helped protect us from predatory behavior while allowing members to advance at a pace that is suited to their comfort. It is in alignment with trauma informed care of our members. One level is not better or more important than another and many people choose to remain at a lower level indefinitely.

Decisions related to leveling up or down need to be based on the best interest of the group, rather than on perceived fairness. This is left to the discretion of the leadership of each chapter. Those with more extensive experience or training in sex positivity may level up more naturally or quickly. However, it is recommended that members participate in the initiatory classes and trainings to most importantly, establish a common language and vocabulary between members. Core classes include healthy boundaries, consent, care, confidentiality and the safer sex talk (STARS class is one option). The beginning classes and social outings are the primary way new members are socialized into the community and are able to observe its already existing role models.

We cannot be “fair” at the expense of the wellbeing of the group and of other members especially since there are a certain number of people who simply will not be able to be safe, to care for the safety of others, or who put their own needs too far above those of other members and volunteer leaders. They should not be leveled up. Remember that all leaders are volunteers, and there is only a certain amount that can be asked of them.

We must also have the courage to sometimes level members down. A mistake may have been made in the decision to level up, sometimes new information becomes available, other times, the member’s mental health or situation changes. In this case, we may direct the individual to a certified care provider who may be able to support them, before reapplying to the community or higher level events.

### **We Recognize Power Imbalances**

Additionally, we recognize power imbalance in relationships and have strict policies preventing those in leadership from dating newcomers. This policy has kept our members safer from predatory claims or conflict of interest related issues. Leaders must avoid becoming sexually or romantically involved with someone until they’ve been active in the group for three to six months AND have developed community. Volunteers should not pursue romantic and/or sexual relationships during their shift. Leaders who are in a sexual or romantic relationship with a member must recuse themselves from making decisions related to that member, such as leveling up, demotion, removal from the group, or other disciplinary actions.

## **Money Can Never be a Major Factor in our Decisions (we are a do-aucracy, and we practice contributionism over capitalism)**

### **On Money & Sustainable Practices**

While money is vital to the fulfillment of our mission, it should never be an end in itself. We understand the corrupting potential of money and the dangers of becoming dependent on a particular person, organization, government, event, or venue, long after it no longer serves the best interest of the group or the movement. Therefore, we endeavor to remain lean, flexible, and capable of making decisions from an ethical standpoint, even when it would cost a great deal.

To keep expenses low and remain lean, we use - almost exclusively - volunteer labor and donated spaces and equipment, and primarily use intellectual property which we own or that is open source. However, in rare circumstances, paid positions may be created, at the discretion of the board, to keep consistency in general organization, volunteer cultivation and core classes.

Offering free and low-cost events is an essential part of our mission. Not only because we value economic justice, but also because it is better for the group in the long-run as it allows more access to those who have historically been marginalized, including young people, women, trans persons, and people of color, all of whom tend to be under-represented in sex-positive communities and over-represented among people who struggle with poverty.

Chapters should remain vigilant about sponsorship and partnership and always seek to collaborate with other individuals and organizations who mission and principles are similar to our own.

### **Volunteering and Economic Justice**

Volunteers are the essence of all nonprofit organizations. We are servant leaders, taking turns giving what we can and taking what we need. We recognize that serving others is a source of wellbeing and happiness and that our members benefit from this. We discourage programs where volunteers are offered free or discounted admission to events. Not only does it perpetuate a system where people in need serve affluent members, but it discourages those well-off members from volunteering, as they may deem it best to leave the volunteer positions to those in need.

Though for some, contributing money is easier than providing time, our goal of promoting egalitarianism and avoiding the recreation of a stratified society - where the wealthy are served by the poor - requires we ask everyone to do their part. We encourage everyone to volunteer to the extent they feel happy and intrinsically rewarded. We find that those volunteers who are wholly or partly motivated by external rewards are not always the ones who bring the most joy and love to their work.

Please note that in most non-profit organizations, including churches, schools, hospitals, and educational organizations, volunteering is done strictly for the love of the cause and seldom if

ever have quid pro quo arrangements. Instead, volunteers are recognized at an annual dinner with a celebration and promotional items.

We provide free and discounted tickets and believe it is a far better way to allow those in need to participate, especially considering that many financially disadvantaged and marginalized people are sometimes too busy to volunteer.

While it is sometimes necessary to give minimal stipends to regular contributors, it is important not to privilege one type of volunteer over another, for instance, we discourage giving facilitators/teachers a percentage of ticket sales. Doing so in the past has resulted in a few charismatic individuals monopolizing some of the most popular and lucrative events while simultaneously hampering mentorship. (see Mentorship, below)

### **We Use Open-Source Content and Creations**

SPW exists to support the global sex-positive movement, and as such, a cornerstone value is the creation and dissemination of open-source material for use by all SPW chapters. Everything we do as a volunteer is for the good of the organization and the movement. Using open-source content helps us remain lean and allows us to fulfill our mission of impacting the greatest number of people by keeping our offerings low-cost and accessible. Open-source creations benefit the organization and the movement by encouraging multicultural/multi-generational/and multimedia collaboration. Using our own internally created material promotes the development of even more new content and encourages constant innovation and change. It maintains SPW chapters as an incubator of ideas and future presenters and leaders. This policy lessens the chance that some might become motivated in any part by personal gain, and it treats all volunteer/contributors equally (social media, web management, admin, events team, etc.)

Standard protocol in non-profit organizations is that all volunteers and employees sign away rights to copyright or trademark anything they create for the organization during their involvement, including, but not limited to logos, website, programming, manuals, books, audio and visual content, etc. Whereas, in SPW, anything a member/volunteer or employee creates or helps create becomes the joint intellectual property of BOTH, the creator and SPW (for use by chapters), and creators are free to do what they want with it.

This does not prevent a chapter from utilizing copyrighted or trademarked works when it is in the best interest of the group to do so, but, our policy promotes doing so only in the absence of open-source or SPW-owned material and only to such an extent that it does not limit the opportunity for others to present similar content (for instance, we don't do Cuddle Parties™, but we have an open-source outline for Snuggles).

## **Mentorship: We are an Incubator of Sex-Educators & Change Agents**

To achieve our mission of positively changing cultural attitudes about sexuality through providing education and connection opportunities, we must empower as many sex-educators,

workshop leaders, retreat creators, and event hosts as possible. Therefore chapters should focus on recruiting and developing new talent while discouraging any one person or a small number of people from doing the bulk of the offerings. In the spirit of volunteering and helping grow the chapter, existing presenters and party throwers should be encouraged to share their knowledge and train others. Everyone with sufficient talent and inclination should be trained to deliver the material and have the opportunity to make a contribution.

We measure success by the number of groups and institutions that have been birthed by our members over the decade we've been in existence.. We are most pleased to watch and encourage our progeny as they go forth and create podcasts, musical or theatrical production, create workshops, trainings and festivals, become healers, writers, and visionaries, and when they open their own chapters.

## **Summation:**

Sex-negativity has been a yoke upon civilization for nearly ten thousand years. Hoisted upon us by dominator/patriarchal culture as a system of control and exploitation. There have been numerous sexual liberation and free love movements in the past, which have tried to free us and return the world to balance and sanity. Those who came before us worked hard and sacrificed much to bring us where we are today. People, places, and institutions, from Emma Goldman, Victoria Woodhull, Audre Lorde William Blake, James Baldwin, the brave men and women of Stonewall, Masters & Johnson, and Studio 54 have been instrumental in moving the needle forward. Now it is our turn.

Sex Positive World and it's chapters exist as a bridge between the mainstream world that is still steeped in sex-negativity, and the organizations that are on the forefront. We also act as a filter: a place for people to become acclimated before they venture further out into the world (and hopefully return as teachers and leaders). We do this by providing a safer container for the various aspects of the movement to be explored and celebrated and where every gender, orientation, race, relationship style, and sexual proclivity to learn from each other and create community. By doing so we hope to have the greatest possible impact on the largest number. And in order to do that, we have to change the power structure, returning sexual sovereignty into the hands of women, minorities, and other marginalized groups. We know it's important to begin the journey to freedom by taking baby steps through the level system.. To fulfil the principle of reaching the largest number, we also have to ensure that participation remains within reach. And because money can have a corrupting effect on organizations, we're committed to remaining lean and not comodifiable. It is through mentorship and the activation of new leaders - a cadre of change agents - that we will go into the future and make our mark.