

The Six Flavors of Dominance

Different people mean very different things when they say that they want to dominate or to submit. The Six Flavors describe six broad themes that people with a passion for power exchange are attracted to or repelled by in different measures. You can form a rough understanding of a person's power exchange desires by knowing which flavors they crave most, which they're lukewarm about, and which they want nothing to do with.

Conquest is the flavor of struggling for power or enforcing authority. It can be a matter of physical wrestling, or a battle of wills. In some dynamics, the winner is preordained. In others there is a genuine contest, with both partners excited to be either victor or vanquished.

Control is the flavor of authority and obedience as ends unto themselves. It is ritual, protocol and structure. It is precise, disciplined obedience. People with a strong focus on control often enjoy micromanagement, or tasks that serve no practical purpose beyond being opportunities to obey.

Devaluation is the flavor of the submitting partner feeling lowered in worth or dignity. It may be called humiliation or degradation. It plays with dark emotions like shame and feelings of worthlessness. It taps into the dominating partners dark places too, creating a space to let out cruelty and emotional sadism.

Nurture is the flavor of dominance "for your own good." It is accountability for the submitting partner's self-improvement, or a sheltered space where they can be safely small and vulnerable. It often has a parental feel, or works well with animal/owner dynamics as well.

Objectification is the flavor of removing the submitting partner's agency and making them an object for their partner's use. It includes literally serving as a footstool or table, but also more figurative objectification, like being a sex object whose own pleasure is unimportant.

Service is the flavor of usefulness. The focus is on the submitting partner providing genuine benefits to their dominant's life, whether that's washing dishes or doing their taxes. The submitting partner gets to feel helpful and be appreciated for their competence. The dominating partner gets to feel like royalty getting catered to.

For example, imagine a simple scene where the dominating partner has ordered their submissive to serve tea.

A dominating partner with a primary focus on service might want to get elegant tea service with a minimum of attention required on their part. They want to say "serve tea," and have everything happen smoothly. A submitting partner who shares that primary focus on service will likely be delighted with this. They want to feel useful and to show off their skill in providing this service.

A submitting partner who has more of a focus on control might want to be precisely directed in each step of the tea serving process. They want to feel held securely in their partner's control in every action they take. A dominating partner who shares their focus will be all too happy to deliver a detailed set of instructions for preparing and serving tea just so, and to watch them like a hawk to ensure scrupulous compliance.

A dominating partner with a love of conquest might actually be disappointed if their partner provides gracious, precisely correct tea service. They were hoping for some sign of truculence or sloppiness that would give them an excuse to deliver a harsh and satisfying attitude adjustment.

To know how to inspire and fulfill your partner's power exchange passions, first understand which flavors they crave.