

Autoeroticism etiquette

Good manners make good roommates

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In 1994, then-U.S. Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders got canned (not caned) for advocating masturbation lessons for America's youth. I just got the job of section editor, so this will not be a how-to manual on autoeroticism. There's a whole internet out there for that kind of information, and I'd like to stick around for a while.

No, this is an etiquette guide. If unfamiliar, etiquette guides were all the rage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the middle class gained more income and access to potentially awkward social settings with complicated rules: fancy schmancy dinner parties, golf courses and stripper bars. Etiquette guides prevented the suddenly-washed masses from publicly embarrassing themselves at the Rockefeller estate:

“It is bad for for one to attend a wife-swapping party with a prostitute, and downright unscrupulous to offer said harlot in exchange with another gentleman's betrothed.”

When we fast-forward to today – the early 21st century – we find a larger percentage of bourgeoisies attending college, many of who packed their stash of pornography. In the Spirit of '06, I humbly present the modern etiquette guide to autoeroticism in the dorm.

1. The conscientious gentleman or lady shall not post his or her daily schedule in a visible location, lest he or she wish to make a scene.

2. When materials cannot be stored electronically on a personal computer, a drawer shall be necessary, preferably with a covering layer of undergarments to disguise said materials.

3. A gentleman or lady does not tell; therefore, he or she will use headphones so as not to embarrass passersby with the sounds of digitized coitus.

4. Like a pious gentleman or lady awaiting the Rapture, one must always have the end in mind: it is fitting to prepare beforehand with a handkerchief or toilette.

5. If engaged in online debauchery, it is acceptable – and, in some social circles, expected – for a gentleman or lady to mask his or her identity with an anonymous screen name. If so engaged in disguise, it is bad form to use one's roommate's screen name in place of one's own.

6. Should one encounter his or her esteemed roommate in a compromising position, it is far more honorable to exit quickly without comment or criticism, unless one's property is in use.

And there you have it: six simple rules to avoid embarrassment while fulfilling a basic bodily need. Though it seems atrocious, and I do not suggest admitting to the practice in public, autoeroticism is a healthy way to unwind, improve your ping-pong game and relieve the often unbearable stress of sexual tension. Some may consider it a sin, but it is probably safer than smoking, if practiced with etiquette.

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