



DSM Revision Project Timeline

The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) is the definitive resource on the Diagnostic Criteria for all mental disorders.

1987 - The DSM-III-R introduced the concept of paraphilias, changing the classifications for BDSM and kink from “sexual deviation” to actual disorders defined by two diagnostic criteria. Guy Baldwin and Race Bannon decided to change that since the APA’s DSM-III and the “sexual deviation” language was contributing to the stigmatization of sadomasochism. They hosted a panel discussion at the 1987 March on Washington for mental-health professionals in the State Department auditorium, where they announced the launch of what would come to be known as **“The DSM Revision Project.”**

1993 – On April 25th at the March on Washington, a set of workshops organized by S/M activists including another gathering for mental health professionals on the DSM Revision Project. Susan Wright attended the DSM workshop presented by Race and Guy to address the draft criteria for the DSM-IV that had been put out by the APA. While the language was better than the DSM-III, it was determined that this politically motivated interpretation of the paraphilias subjected S/M practitioners, fetishists and cross-dressers to bias, discrimination and social sanctions without any scientific basis.

1994 – The DSM-IV was published with the paraphilias section stating: “fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors” must “cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.” This was marginally better for practitioners but still caused discrimination because of the negative social stigma associated with S/M which could cause significant distress or impairment.

1997 – The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom was founded with one of the primary goals to depathologize S/M, with the APA’s DSM cited as the main culprit for causing discrimination. Susan stated that the next DSM should differentiate the paraphilias as sexual practices from the mental disorders so that consensual S/M would not be considered indicative of an illness.

1998 – NCSF’s first Violence & Discrimination Survey proved large amounts of discrimination were occurring against S/M practitioners, including in child custody cases where the parent who could be proved to be kinky lost custody because they were “diagnosed” with a paraphilia by the judge who consulted the DSM.

2000 – The DSM-IV-TR was published by the APA stating “there is no assumption that each category of mental disorder is a completely discrete entity with absolute boundaries dividing it from other mental disorders or from no mental disorder.” NCSF began its educational campaign with social workers and family court legal professionals to combat the erroneous perception that people who practiced sadomasochism may also have other paraphilias, i.e. pedophilia.

2004 – Discussions with mental health professionals at the AASECT conference in June confirmed that the APA was preparing to revise the DSM. Race and Susan discussed what to do about the DSM Revision project, and Susan offered to take over the DSM Project with the intent of having NCSF manage it.

2005 – Discussions continued with Race about transferring his [Kink Aware Professionals](#) list to NCSF to grow and maintain. KAP is an essential networking tool for mental health professionals who would be needed to assist in changing the DSM. After creating the website infrastructure and transferring the KAP listings, NCSF launched Kink Aware Professionals free referral database on its website in February 2006.

2006 – An important paper, co-written by sexual-medicine physician Charles Moser and sexologist Peggy J. Kleinplatz, was published in the *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, titled [“DSM IV-TR and the Paraphilias: An Argument for Removal.”](#) This paper summed up opinions of mental health professionals that sexual activity shouldn’t be included in the DSM. At the time NCSF’s success rate was approximately 20% when it came to refuting the false contention that parents are unfit because they are kinky.

2007 – Susan Wright launched the 2nd Violence & Discrimination Survey in April to document discrimination 10 years later and to gather additional information about mental health professionals discriminating against BDSM practitioners. Published in 2008, the survey found that over 37% of more than 3,000 respondents said they had been discriminated against or experienced some form of harassment or violence.

2008 – NCSF launched the next phase of the DSM Revision Project in April when the APA announced they would revise the DSM-TR-IV. Susan led a community discussion on “Revising the Paraphilias in the DSM” at the Leather Leadership Conference in April. The [DSM Revision Petition](#) was launched in June to run until December 2009 and gathered 3,239 signatures. Susan began outreach to the members of the APA’s Paraphilias and Gender Identity revision committee.

2009 – Susan attended a panel discussion at the at New York City’s Philosophy Center on why people practice BDSM. Psychiatrist Richard Krueger was a panelist - his expertise included the diagnosis and treatment of paraphilias and sexual disorders and he was on the DSM Revision committee’s paraphilias subworkgroup. Over the next year, Susan sent him data from her two surveys, the DSM Revision petition, data from NCSF’s Incident Reporting & Response documenting discrimination, information on the consensual paraphilias, and information on the BDSM subculture consisting of over 500 educational and social groups. Susan and Charles Moser presented a workshop entitled “Revising the Paraphilias in the DSM” for the AASECT conference in June 2009.

2010 – The APA announced its proposed revisions in February, splitting the paraphilias from the Paraphilic Disorders. Susan Wright documented the BDSM subculture’s position on depathologizing BDSM in [Depathologizing Consensual Sexual Sadism, Sexual Masochism, Transvestic Fetishism, and Fetishism published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior](#), Volume 39, Number 6, 1229-1230.

2013 – In May the [DSM-5](#) was published. The DSM states: “A paraphilia is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for having a paraphilic disorder, and a paraphilia by itself does not necessarily justify or require clinical intervention.” (DSM-5 p. 686) It also states: “The majority of individuals who are active in community networks that practice sadistic and masochistic behaviors do not express any dissatisfaction with their sexual interests, and their behavior would not meet DSM-5 criteria for sexual sadism disorder.” (DSM-5, p. 697)

2014 – Susan documented the decline in child custody removals from kinky parents due to the change in the DSM-5 in [Kinky Parents and Child Custody: The Effect of the DSM-5 Differentiation between the](#)

[Paraphilias and Paraphilic Disorders](#) published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Volume 43, Number 7, 1257–1258.

2015 – In January, *The Atlantic* published the history of the DSM Revision Project going back to the 1980s entitled [BDSM Versus the DSM: A history of the fight that got kink de-classified as mental illness](#) by MERISSA NATHAN GERSON.

2018 – *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* published [De-pathologization of Consensual BDSM by Susan Wright](#) documenting the sharp drop in child custody removals since the publication of the DSM-5 in 2013.