

Auto-erotic asphyxiation ^[1]

Dear Alice,

What is auto-erotic asphyxiation?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Auto-erotic asphyxiation (AEA) is the practice of cutting off the blood supply to the brain through self-applied suffocation methods while masturbating. By limiting the blood supply to the brain, AEA can induce cerebral anoxia, a deficiency of oxygen in the brain. Oxygen deficiency in the brain is thought to intensify sensations, producing feelings of giddiness, lightheadedness, or exhilaration that can heighten the orgasmic experience. It's also possible that the helplessness and self-endangerment inherent in the AEA enhance sexual gratification for some people.

Of course, this same self-endangerment that may provide a thrill to the person carrying out AEA also weakens one's self-control and judgment, which can result in accidental death. Because of taboos surrounding AEA, the practice almost always remains a secret until a person dies accidentally. Although a death from AEA may often be labeled as a homicide or suicide, it's estimated that between 500 and 1000 deaths occur annually in the United States from this type of masturbation. Both men and women can participate in AEA.

Depending on how long the brain and body are deprived of oxygen, brain damage could occur even if death does not. A person participating in AEA also risks lacerating, cutting, or bruising their neck, depending on the suffocation or strangulation technique used.

Auto-erotic asphyxiation is a dangerous activity because of the risk of death and brain damage. For those interested, a safer option would be to fantasize about suffocation, rather than trying to walk the fine line between heightened sensation and serious brain impairment.

Alice!

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