



9 COMMON TACTICS OF MANIPULATORS

Most individuals who regularly use manipulative tactics do not intentionally set out to do harm. They may not even be aware that their relational style is one of manipulation. It is what has worked; it is what they know.

Healthy people engage in dialogue where they discuss, negotiate, compromise as well as respect one another's differences, feelings and desires. A manipulator pushes and pressures to get his/her own way by ignoring stated or implied boundaries, trying to get you to back down, make you feel guilty or afraid so that you will give in and give them what they want.

The manipulator's goal is to control your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. They want to get what they want regardless of what it costs you. They often use multiple combinations of these techniques, but the most common ones are:



1. **Guilt tripping or making you feel bad about your own feelings, thoughts and needs**

"If you don't sign for this home equity loan, I will lose my business, and it will be all your fault."

"Donna's husband says she doesn't mind that he is professional friends with other women. What's wrong with you?"

"Everybody else can go to the party; why do you have to be so controlling?"

"I guess I'll manage if you can't come over to help me today, but I don't know how."

"I thought you loved (cared about) me. I guess I was wrong."

2. **Misquoting**

"You said you would sign for the loan." (When you only said maybe you'd sign for the loan).

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“You told me you would support me in my business, and now you’re not.”

“Jesus said that we’re to forgive and forget the past. Why do you keep bringing it up?”

“God says I’m the head of the home. Why do you keep questioning my decisions?”

3. **Bullying and Threats**

“If you don’t sign that bank loan, you’ll be sorry.”

“If you don’t forgive me and take me back soon, I’m filing for divorce.”

“If you leave me, I’ll take the kids, and you’ll never see them again.”

“If you don’t shut up right now, I’m going to leave.”

4. **Pleading, begging and repeating something over and over and over again until you wear down**

“Please? Please? Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee?”

“I just want to talk with you. Why can’t we talk? I only want to talk with you. I only want 10 minutes of your time (which stretches into hours if you allow it) to talk to you.”

“Why can’t you come to our house for the holidays? It would mean so much. You know dad and I aren’t getting any younger. Everything is going to be there. Please come? We’ll really miss you. Why wouldn’t you want to come?”

5. **Crying, acting dependent, despondent, sulking, withdrawing**

“I need you so much right now and you don’t care.”

“I can’t talk to you, you just don’t understand.”

These forms of manipulation are often more non-verbal: the silent treatment, bad moods, nasty eye contact, uncontrollable sobbing, banging things, slamming doors, etc., until you give in and do what he/she wants.

6. **Name calling, personal attacks, criticism**

“You’re so mean.”

“You’re so selfish.”

“I can’t believe what I’m hearing. This is not the person I knew. What has happened to you? You used to be such a wonderful person.”

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“You’re such a jerk. I can’t believe I married you.”

“You’re an idiot--a real moron.”

“I thought you were a Christian.”

“You’re crazy (sick). Everyone else agrees with me.”

7. Empty promises

“I’ll never do that again, I promise.”

“I will take care of the kids on the weekend; just let me go out tonight.”

“You don’t have to come next Thanksgiving, just come this Thanksgiving.”

“If you let me back home, I promise I’ll go to counseling.”

8. Appealing to a higher authority

“You know you’re supposed to submit and do what I want you to do.”

“God hates divorce. You’re sinning if you divorce me.”

“You are to honor your father and mother. That means you should come to Thanksgiving at our house.”

“The Bible says you should forgive and reconcile. You’re disobeying God.”

9. Lying, either by omission or commission

“I never said that.”

“I don’t know what these charges on the credit card or cell phone bill are for; it must be a mistake.”

“It’s just a friendship, nothing more.”

“I’ll do it tomorrow.”

You will never change the manipulator when you confront their manipulative tactics directly. They will just switch to another tactic. So if you want to change, change begins with you. **You must recognize that someone is attempting to manipulate you.**