



MOVING BEYOND THE MANIPULATOR’S TACTICS

In a previous article, I wrote about [the nine \(9\) most common tactics of manipulators](#). It’s important that you understand that 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.

Awareness is the first step of all change, but you are not going to change the person doing the manipulating. You are going to change you. Manipulation is only effective if it works to control you. Therefore, you must begin to identify what is going on in you that keeps you easily manipulated by others.

Identify the three (3) triggers that keep you within the manipulator’s power.

The three most common triggers that manipulators use to keep us in their grasp are guilt, fear, and our constant need for approval and acceptance from others.



1. **Guilt:** Manipulators imply that it’s ungodly or wrong for us to ever say “no” or put our own needs ahead of theirs. They will say things like, “If you loved me, you’d...” or “If you were a godly wife (or spouse), you’d certainly do...” These statements make us press pause and reevaluate ourselves, and we may feel guilty because, on the surface of things, our behaviors may appear unloving or unkind. Think of a small child who says to their parent, “You don’t love me if you won’t buy me that toy” or a teenager who says, “If you don’t let me go to that party, you’re a terrible parent.” Manipulators define love as always doing what I want/or need you to do.
2. **Fear:** Fear comes in many forms. We may fear making someone unhappy with us or the loss of relationship if we don’t do what they want. We also fear the threats and consequences of the manipulators actions. What if they actually succeed at doing what they threaten?

MOVING BEYOND THE MANIPULATOR'S TACTICS

- 3. Need for approval and acceptance from others.** When we are ruled by our approval ratings, people will have us under their power. The slightest hint of disapproval or anger can cajole us into doing his or her bidding. We can't bear that someone would think less of us or be upset with us in any way.

Breaking Free from a Manipulator's Grasp

- 1. Discern the difference between true guilt and false guilt**

Jesus was perfect and therefore never guilty of sin, yet he disappointed people and didn't always do what they wanted him to. Jesus asked the Father to help him discern between the good things and the best things. Just like we do, Jesus had to make some hard choices—to please God or to please others. He chose pleasing God. Jesus describes himself as always doing what his Father wanted him to do. That focus regularly cost him the disapproval and disappointment of others including his disciples, religious leaders, and family (see Matthew 26:8; Mark 3:21-22).

Manipulators will exploit our sensitive conscious and try to make us feel guilty for not making them a priority or making them happy. When we allow ourselves to feel guilty for those reasons, we are putting them as our center and falling captive to the fear of man, which the Bible tells us is a snare (Proverbs 29:25).

- 2. Learn to say “no” in the face of someone’s disapproval.**

Healthy people live in reality. The truth is, when we can't accommodate someone else's desires nor needs, they naturally will feel disappointed. That's human, and most people will adjust and move on. Healthy people know that they don't always get everything they want even if what they want is legitimate.

However, if we cannot tolerate someone else's disappointment or disapproval when we say “no,” then it's harder for us to say it or have boundaries. Manipulators capitalize on this weakness and use disappointment and disapproval in extreme forms to get us to do what they want.

- 3. Face your fears instead of giving in to them.**

When a manipulator realizes that you aren't going to give in to his/her demands no matter what, usually one of two things will happen. Either the manipulator will begin to back down and learn to treat you with respect, or the relationship will deteriorate and possibly end for a season because the manipulator is retaliating.

Most of us don't want our relationship to end with someone, but consider the alternative. Do you want to be held hostage by your fear of what might happen, your fear of being rejected, your fear of losing the relationship or the unceasing demands on your time, your energy, and your money?

MOVING BEYOND THE MANIPULATOR'S TACTICS

As we center ourselves on God's love and aim to please him first, we can trust him with the outcome of our relationship.