

# Recognize and Resist Manipulative Communication

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## **Identify Manipulative Communication**

- What is manipulation? What motivates manipulators?
- How is manipulation different from influence?
- How can you recognize manipulative communication?

## **Stay calm, confident, and conscious during manipulative encounters**

- Reframe impressions that trigger defensiveness and anger.
- Leverage rational thought patterns to be in control of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Circumvent the internal fight or flight response to stay calm and focused.

## **Diagnose difficult people and confront manipulation at its root**

- Buy time in communications to move from reaction to response.
- Identify the root of manipulation to determine the best approach.
- Disarm manipulators to take control without escalating or triggering defensiveness.

## **Resist manipulative communication to preserve peace and approach genuine dialog**

- Separate the person from the problem to perform without intimidation.
- Master techniques for communicating with clarity, conciseness, and confidence.
- Call off game playing, and engage in genuine communication.

# What is Manipulation?

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“Manipulation is an emotionally unhealthy psychological strategy used by people who are incapable of asking for what they want and need in a direct way,” says Sharie Stines, a California-based therapist who specializes in abuse and toxic relationships.

“People who are trying to manipulate others are trying to control others.”

Actions taken by a person to try to control others, usually in a deceptive or harmful way.

Psychological manipulation involves pressure to change behaviors or beliefs by applying deceptive or distorted tactics.

Emotional manipulation uses those same tactics to trigger intense emotional reactions deliberately meant to drain another person’s energy or to destabilize their emotional well-being.

# ROOTS OF MANIPULATIVE BEHAVIOR

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Psychologists say the cause of pathological manipulation can often be toxic cycles of violence, narcissism, or unhealthy relationships in the manipulator's childhood.

- Transactional Analysis
- Child Voice
- Parent Voice
- Adult Voice Acknowledge and Redirect

## WHY DO MANIPULATORS MANIPULATE?

### **Used by the powerful against the vulnerable**

- They know your weaknesses and how to exploit them
- They use your insecurities against you
- They convince you to give up something important to you, to make you more dependent on them
- If they are successful in their manipulation, they will continue to do so until you are able to get out of the situation

### **Used by the vulnerable against the powerful**

- Lack of socio-political power is almost certainly one source of vulnerability to manipulation
- People who are less intellectually sophisticated are especially vulnerable to trickery
- Financial, social, and emotional desperation may make people vulnerable to pressures
- Sometimes people lack any other way to get what they want

# Types

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## **Negative Manipulation**

Constant judging, criticism or shaming

Complaining, negativity, or hostility

Social exclusion, pressure, or censoring

Location Advantage

Selfishness or lack of empathy

## **Positive Manipulation**

Fake friendliness

Insincere flattery,

Appeal to vanity

False promises

Excessive positive attention, charm, or giving

Favors that evoke reciprocity

# TYPES

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## **Deception and Intrigue**

Lying, cheating, stealing, unethical shortcuts

Excuse making, blaming, dodging responsibility

Constantly changing the goalposts so goals or rules shift

Inconsistent communication - ghosting, omission, forgetting

Mind games or manipulation of facts

Exaggeration, generalization, absolutes

Asking for something small as an entry point or something large to establish contrast

## **Strategic Helplessness**

•Playing weak, ignorant, or innocent

•Martyrdom

•Guilt

•Blame

•Denial

•Passive-Aggression or cruel humor

# Types

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## **Types: Hostility and Abuse**

- Physical, mental, or emotional abuse
- Bullying, intimidation, or cruel humor
- Moodiness, temper, or tantrums
- One-upping, control, or refusing to compromise
- Gaslighting – making you doubt your reality

# Signs You May Be Being Manipulated

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- You feel fear, obligation and guilt
- You feel insecure or are questioning yourself
- There are strings attached
- You're doubting your own reality
- It is emotionally intense
- You fear abandonment
- You have a gut feeling that something's wrong
- They want you to depend on only them
- They keep comparing you to others
- They've managed to get your friends and family "on their side"

## •How is Manipulation Different from Influence?

Willful psychological manipulation is different than healthy social influence, in which there's a generally equitable exchange between individuals. In a psychologically manipulative relationship, one person exploits another for selfish and unscrupulous gain.

•Way to bypass rational thought

•Pressure

•Trickery

# Stay Calm, Confident, and Conscious

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## Reframe Impressions That Trigger Defensiveness and Anger

- Personal Attack
- Incompetence
- Unfairness
- Power and control
- Tunnel Vision
- Those in Charge
- Identity Dramas

## Leverage Rational Thought Patterns to Be in Control of Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors

- How bad is it?
- Who does that belong to?
- As compared to
- Best friend
- What if I do it? What if I don't?
- Well is it? Then what am I going to do?

# Circumvent the Internal Fight or Flight Response

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Stressor: Something asking you to respond to it

Stress: Your body's reaction to a perceived threat

Event + Perception of Threat + Activation of Body's Protective Mechanism  
= Fight, Flight, or Freeze

10-second window

## **Your Body's Warning:**

- Heart rate
- Breathing
- Warm or sweaty
- Aches or pains
- Tightening or clenching
- Emotions

Event + Perception of Threat + Distract Yourself = Success

Get out of your head and into your body (breathing, stretching) or the world (count 10 things, notice colors)

# Diagnose Difficult People

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## **Buy Time in Communications, and Move From Reaction to Response**

- Reflect and Redirect
- Same = Safe; Different = Dangerous
- Match and pace nonverbals
- Gaslighting
- Labeling
- Changing the Subject
- Nonverbal Manipulation

# Disarm and to Take Control

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- Acknowledgment – I hear you
- Validation – I see you
- Empathy – I feel you
- Information, Options – Control
- Sameness – I am safe
- Fairness – Here is safe
- Perspective – You’ve got this!

## **Communicate with Clarity, Conciseness, and Confidence**

- Acknowledge – Repeat what they said or address the elephant in the room.
- Validate – They are important, justified, and safe: “It is understandable that you would be upset...”
- Empathy – Name the emotion: “You seem frustrated.”
- Information/Options – People need to feel in control.
- Sameness – Mirror and match their language, posture, rate, eye contact, formality, intensity, speech patterns...
- Fairness – Let them tell their story.
- Perspective – Ask, assure, and affirm.

# Diagnose Difficult People

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Separate the Person From the Problem to Perform Without Intimidation  
Assume Positive Intent

- Complaining
- Tattling
- Heckling
- Missing deadlines
- Arriving late
- Bullying

## **Call off Game Playing, and Engage in Genuine Communication**

- Observe don't absorb
- We aren't responsible for anyone else's feelings
- Look for recurring patterns in your relationships
- Delay your response
- Set boundaries around manipulation and find a way to let the person know you don't want to be a part of that conversation
- Be willing to walk away

## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Sherry Prindle has delivered more than 4,000 seminars and 200 keynotes over 16 years across 50 states and 6 countries in 3 languages; her topic list stands at over 75 subjects. Her specialty is technical communication, particularly in the areas of leadership, diversity, and conflict management.

A Certified Master Coach Trainer, she certifies Life and Executive Coaches as founder of the **Professional Coach Academy**. Author of multiple publications, she hosts the biannual *Star Marketing Summit* for trainers, speakers, coaches, and authors.

She has an M.A. in Business and Linguistics from the University of Texas at Arlington and a B.A. in Communications and International Relations from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri.

She lived in Fukuoka, Japan for four years and Moscow, Russia for three years successfully working as a multilingual television and radio personality. She enjoys traveling the globe, camping, singing karaoke, and participating in team trivia competitions.

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