



How to recognise you are being manipulated

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Manipulation in the psychological sense means being controlled, coerced, or influenced, either directly or subtly, and sometimes even subconsciously, for someone else's benefit. If you are the person being manipulated then usually it is not to your benefit, because if it was to your benefit you would just do what is asked and there would be no need to manipulate you. Manipulation happens because someone wants something that they feel you will not want, or that is not in your best interest.

If you are a human being then it is likely that you will experience psychological manipulation at some point in time, if not fairly often. Sometimes you will be aware of it and sometimes you won't. Some manipulators are very subtle and it is not always easy to recognise if you are being manipulated. Manipulation varies from mild to extreme. Subtle manipulation could include types of marketing; getting you to buy products you may not ordinarily buy. Extreme manipulation may involve intimidation and threats of physical violence if you don't do what someone else wants. Thus, it can be difficult to realise at times that we are being manipulated. Usually though we will experience some feeling of being uncomfortable and ill at ease when someone is trying to manipulate us.

Manipulation can come from family, friends, colleagues, bosses, neighbours, and businesses. (And you could probably add to this list.) Signs you are being manipulated include:

1. You feel confused. Manipulators often try to get you to see things differently to how you see them and how they actually are. They try and get you to doubt your own reality. If this happens a lot you feel very confused, tired, and sometimes wonder if you are losing it all together.
2. In order to control people manipulators will twist your words. They will take your words and add to them or change them slightly to suit their meaning and their purpose. If you feel that someone is constantly distorting what you are trying to say then you are being manipulated.
3. Failing to communicate with someone can be a form of manipulation. Communication is a way of informing people of what is happening. People need information to know what

is happening around them and to make decisions in their life. Failing to provide needed information is a common way of manipulating people.

4. In order to succeed with their manipulation, the manipulator needs you to believe them. Manipulators know that if you have other people you can go to in order to discuss the matter or check your understanding you may find out you are being manipulated. Thus, manipulators will often try and isolate you from your support system. They don't want others confirming your views. They want you doubting yourself – which they can only do if you are isolated from friends and support.
5. If you fear the reaction or response from someone the chances are good they are manipulating you. If you fear interaction with someone then you are not able to express your feelings or thoughts and not able to challenge them on any issues. Manipulators love that.
6. Manipulators are usually masterful at lying. This way they get many people on their side to gang up on you. They lie about things they did or said. They lie about what you did or said. They lie about what other people did or said. They lie about what other people think of you in order to get what they want.
7. They act as if you don't trust them and pretend to be hurt that you don't trust them. They will make a point of asking you if you don't trust them and then be upset that you may not. Everyone knows that trust is earned. It is naïve and silly to trust a total stranger with important information or money. Any decent person knows this. People you can trust usually don't make a big thing about whether you trust them or not. They just act the way a reasonable person does.
8. A more subtle way of manipulating is to change a topic of conversation if they don't like where the current topic is heading or they don't like what may be exposed through discussions around the current topic. This is not always easy to see, but it is done more often than we realise.
9. A manipulative person may play dumb to avoid accountability or responsibility. Rather than admit to what they have done they will just pretend to know nothing about what you are talking about. Manipulative people usually don't take accountability and responsibility.
10. If someone mocks you in public or belittles you in public, or makes jokes about you in front of others, you are being manipulated. They are shaming you and trying to get other people to discount anything you say or do.

Because there are manipulators in society and in fact there have always been since the beginning of time, you want to learn to recognise the signs of a manipulator and you want to know when you are being manipulated. The harm caused from a manipulator can include harm to your self-esteem and sense of worth, damaging consequences for your career, damage to your relationships, damage to your home and property, as well as financial damage. Some people will take things which you can get back, and some will take away from you things that it is almost impossible as well as costly to get back. If you are feeling confused, unhappy, unsure, then never agree to something. Always check it out. And always make sure you keep yourself surrounded by good people who are trustworthy. Checking things with another person can help you realise when someone else is manipulating you so you can put a stop to it.