

Tested Tips to Help You Identify Manipulative Behavior When It Strikes

I am not naive to the fact that we live in a fear-driven world; you don't have to look far to see that it is sorely infected by an epidemic of mistrust. With that being said, I cannot allow my highest and best to succumb under the weight of pessimism and cynicism. I refuse to believe that every person is out to get me. I have lived that way in the past, and it did not serve me well. In fact, it frustrated my purpose and kept me from fulfilling the call of God on my life. I now must continue to live and lead believing that people are inherently good as I choose to extend trust and believe the best of others.

However, I do not have my head in the sand, and unfortunately, I do have a boatload of experience with liars and manipulators. The school of hard knocks has become a springboard of understanding that has armed me with tools to recognize and confront manipulation.

2 Types of Manipulators

Subconscious Controllers: These manipulators feel powerless and, as a result, develop character traits of taking and getting rather than contributing and giving. Almost every human being steps into these characteristics when motivated by fear. This type of manipulation is much more common than we often think. It can manifest differently for all of us but at times may look like withholding affection, the "silent treatment," emotional and mental games, assuming that another can "read our mind" and know what we want and need, and even seeking pity in order to gain attention. These subtle acts are often our silent attempts at meeting our own needs. We all can

fall prey to this type of behavior; however, if we remain teachable and hungry for growth and maturity, we have a great opportunity to recognize and overcome these fear-based tactics. As we continue to become more self-aware, grow and heal, and go to our ultimate source of life in God to fill our cup, we will begin to make the healthy choices to repent from this manipulative way of living and instead become mighty contributors who are now so full of life that we can overflow to bless our world.

Conscious Manipulators: This second type of manipulators perfect their deceptive trade. They become skillful in their dishonesty, and their practices are immoral and devious. These are the ones who knowingly abuse their power to use someone else in order to profit for self-gain.

Here are some ways to help you identify these perpetrators of injustice. First of all, manipulators make you feel that only they are the solution. This is the worm on the hook because at this point, the lie is so hidden that you can't see that you're being baited.

Here is an example: My almost 92-year-old mother had a problem with her computer, and she came to me for help. I was on the phone with tech support—or so I thought—as they assured me that they could solve the problem. Everything about the conversation was initially professional, and I felt secure—this was the trap! As the conversation continued, I began to see the red flags of a manipulative perpetrator. These cues began to become more evident as the speaker tried to silence my questioning, and I observed his customer service protocols. It did not take long before I recognized that my mother was being targeted by a manipulator.

Red Flags of Manipulative Behavior

Red Flag No. 1: Quickly irritated. A manipulator has an objective to take something from you. The moment you question,

challenge or ask for authenticity, they begin to display an edge of impatience. If a person is genuine, on the other hand, they welcome inquiry, knowing they are able to substantiate their claims and validate their honorable motives.

Red Flag No. 2: Degrading demeanor. This individual will treat you in a way that portrays their superiority. If you require accountability, request proof for what is presented or require explanations for actions, their anxiety will begin to leak out through their subtle or overt lecture of how inept you are.

Red Flag No. 3: Escalated emotional response or hard-line reactions. The manipulator is now losing their sense of power as you are becoming more aware of their identifying traits of manipulation. Their fear of exposure thrusts them into an aggressive posture.

Red Flag No. 4: Threats and intimidation. Several years ago, one of my staff received a call saying she owed a certain amount of money that needed to be paid immediately or the police were going to come and arrest her. Now, she did not owe money and it was an obvious scam artist, but the threat left her so fearful that she was ready to pay the money. A manipulator's last-ditch effort is to create fear. Threats of loss, harm, failure, rejection and a barrage of impending doom are thrown at you. The manipulator must keep you in a subservient position to remain in control and take from you what benefits them.

As justice-minded leaders, we give ourselves to noble causes and business endeavors that can impact our society for good. We join in relationship and partnership with others all the time. We must protect our vision from the toxicity of manipulators and those who piggyback on our labor for their own gain at our expense. To be very clear, this is not everyone, and we should not live or lead in suspicion that every person is out to take advantage of us.

We will never lead perfectly, and we won't always see the hidden agendas of practiced manipulators immediately. However, when the red flags become visible, we must confront them to protect the vision and the precious lives that have been entrusted to us. This process builds us, gives opportunity for change and justice, and gives us the courage to face our future with optimism. {eoa}

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