

6 Ways to Deal With Emotional Manipulation

Over the weekend, I posted a Facebook graphic titled “9 Sure Signs You’re Being Emotionally Manipulated.” Within minutes, it was liked and shared over 1,000 times and has reached well over 1 million people in less than a week.

Gee, I guess manipulation is a big issue in the body of Christ. Of course, that’s not all that surprising. I imagine we have all run into emotional manipulators in our Christian walks and have been tempted to manipulate situations in our own right. You can find manipulation in homes, in schools, in workplaces—and in churches. Before we move on to the six ways to deal with emotional manipulators, let’s look at the sure signs in the original post:

(1) People give you ultimatums; (2) People use tears against you; (3) People give you the silent treatment; (4) People play the victim; (5) People make you walk on eggshells; (6) People guilt you; (7) People skew the facts; (8) People twist your words; and (9) People suck the life out of you. If you want more explanation on each of these points, watch the video at the bottom of this article.

What Is Manipulation?

Ultimately, manipulation—which Merriam-Webster defines as “to manage or utilize skillfully; to control or play upon by artful, unfair or insidious means especially to one’s own advantage; to change by artful or unfair means as to serve one’s purpose— is a form of witchcraft. Witchcraft is a work of the flesh listed in Galatians 6.

Listen to Jennifer’s podcast on this topic: [How to Deal With Emotional Manipulators](#).

Rick Joyner has one of the best definitions of witchcraft I've heard: "Witchcraft is counterfeit spiritual authority. It is using a spirit other than the Holy Spirit to dominate, manipulate or control others. Any authority or influence that we gain by our own manipulation or self-promotion will be a stumbling block to us and will hinder our ability to receive true authority from God."

I've fallen victim to manipulation more than once. When you believe the best, it's difficult to believe Christian brothers and sisters would tap into a controlling spirit in attempts to put you under their thumbs, handle you or otherwise direct your actions. But it happens—and it happens too often. We need to learn, then, not only to discern when people are manipulating us but how to stop the manipulator from succeeding in his nefarious maneuvers—and how to make sure we're not tapping into this work of the flesh ourselves.

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In addition to the nine sure signs in my graphic, you will eventually discern manipulators because resentment will strike your heart. You may feel like you're extending yourself far beyond your natural boundaries to help them—but they aren't there when you need them. What the manipulator wants at any given time always seems more important than what you need. At some point, your friends may start to point out the manipulation.

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So how do you respond? What do you do when you've realized that you've been under the thumb of an emotional manipulator? How do you break free?

1. Repent. Ask God to forgive you for coming under a false authority. Yes, we are called to walk in love (Eph. 5:2) and prefer one another (), but that doesn't mean we have to allow

someone to make us emotional slaves. There's a difference. For freedom Christ set us free (Gal. 5:1).

2. Forgive yourself. Once you see the manipulation, you'll probably be angry with yourself or feel dumb for falling into the emotional manipulator's trap. Forgive yourself (1 John 1:9). It can happen to anyone. You've got a kind, loving heart, and you believed the best. Just learn a lesson and stop the abuse.

3. Learn to offer a diplomatic "no." Emotional manipulators may get angry when you stop catering to their every need and stand up for yourself, but stick to your guns. You don't have to be mean-spirited when you decline to submit. Just politely but firmly tell them no. Like the Bible says, let your yes be yes and your no be no (Matt. 5:37).

4. Ask push-back questions like: "Does this seem reasonable to you?"; "Are you really expecting me to do this for you?"; and "Do I get to have an opinion here?" Many times, manipulators will back down. Other times, they will argue their case. Like Paul told Timothy, don't argue back (2 Tim. 2:23-24).

5. Deploy a time buffer. When the manipulator asks you to do something for them that's unreasonable, use these four words: "I'll think about it." This is less dramatic than saying no and can help you avoid the manipulator's wrath. A soft answer, as Solomon said, turns away wrath (Prov. 15:1).

6. Confront the manipulator. Just like a bully on the playground, emotional manipulators sometimes need to be confronted. This may sound scary to you, but remember God did not give you a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). If you hope to save the relationship, the manipulator needs to be made aware of his tactics and given a space to repent. Jesus even gave Jezebel a space to repent (Rev. 2:21).

If the manipulator will not repent, it may be time to cut

ties. Often, emotional manipulators create soul ties with their victims by finding their weaknesses and ministering to their needs before they start making demands. It can be difficult to cut loose. Other times, as in marriages, you can't always cut loose. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to bless the manipulator with a revelation of His love and truth, and ask Him if you should stick it out or break ties with your manipulating friend. {eoa}