

The First Cries of Manipulation . . .

Attempts to control our own world begin with the first breath of life. A baby's natural cry, the cry for attention, represents the first efforts at getting our needs met. Over the years, children can learn to use manipulative tears to get their way within their little circle of life. As we grow into adults, we develop highly refined personal skills for meeting our needs by taking matters into our own hands and manipulating people and events around us. These methods of control are so deeply ingrained that we lack personal insight into our own deceptive behavior. Most of us are more aware of the manipulation of others than of our own "string-pulling." But maturity demands that we lay bare before God our need to control and that we begin the process of trusting the One who is in ultimate control.

*"Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God."
(Psalm 20:7)*

Q: "How do I know whether I am being manipulated?"

Evaluate: Am I doing this because I fear someone else's disapproval or because it is the right thing for me to do?

*"Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?
Or am I trying to please man?
If I were still trying to please man,
I would not be a servant of Christ."
(Galatians 1:10)*

Q: "I know I'm being manipulated, so why do I stay in the relationship?"

Each person has God-given needs for love, for significance, and for security. A desperate fear of rejection often paralyzes a person who is trying to make healthy decisions.¹

*"I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears."
(Psalm 34:4)*

The Five S's of Aggressive Manipulation²

1. The “should” syndrome
Manipulation by using words such as *should*, *ought*, or *supposed to*
Example: “If you don’t meet my expectations, you are guilty of neglect.”
2. The scream
Manipulation with pressure, intimidation, or breaking communication
Example: “If you don’t do what I want, I’ll make you wish you had.”
3. The sarcastic sword
Manipulation with humor, jabs, or put-downs
Example: “If you aren’t what I want you to be, I can use laughter at your expense.”
4. The sexy seduction
Manipulation with sex or sensuality
Example: “If you don’t buy what I’m selling, you are not ‘macho.’”
5. The showering sentiments
Manipulation with praise, money, gifts, or affection
Example: “If you don’t respond to my generosity, you are ungrateful.”

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. . . . Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.’”
(Jeremiah 17:5, 7)

The Seven S's of Passive-Aggressive Manipulation

1. The silent treatment³
“If you don’t play my way, you don’t get my approval, my communication or me.”
2. The grand slam
“If you don’t meet my expectations, you don’t deserve any dialogue with me.”
3. The sneer
“If you don’t do what I want you to do, you don’t deserve my respect.”
4. The sigh
“If you don’t meet my expectations, you will know how perturbed I am with you.”
5. The suppressed support
“If you don’t meet my standards, I won’t give you a bit of attention.”
6. The stall
“If you don’t let me control my life, I’ll get control in other ways.”
7. The sniveling sobber⁴
“If you don’t meet my emotional needs, I’ll fall apart.”
“The LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.”
(Isaiah 58:11)

Misplaced Dependencies⁵

People accept unfair treatment because of misplaced dependencies.

- M**isplaced priorities
- I**dentify misplaced in the manipulator
- S**cared of disapproval
- P**erformance-based acceptance
- L**oss of independence
- A**nger
- C**ontrolled by the manipulator’s personality or power
- E**xcuses the manipulator
- D**efensiveness about the relationship

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Am I now seeking the approval of man,
or of God? Or am I trying to please man?
If I were still trying to please man,
I would not be a servant of Christ.”
(Galatians 1:10)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

1 Thessalonians 2:3–8

Maneuvering from Manipulation⁶

Decide not to be dependent on the manipulator.
(Luke 6:35)

Expect exasperation from the manipulator.
(Psalm 31:3–4)

Prepare yourself for pain. (Hebrews 12:7)

Examine the expectations of the manipulator.
(Proverbs 22:3)

Notify the manipulator of the necessity for change.
(Hebrews 12:1)

Don't defend yourself. (Ecclesiastes 3:7)

Expect experimentation with new strategies.
(Proverbs 14:24)

Nullify your need to meet all the manipulator's
needs. (Psalm 37:4–5)

Commit Galatians 1:10 to memory.

Yield to pleasing the Lord. (Proverbs 29:25)

Related Topics . . .

- Codependency:
Moving from Bondage to Balance
- Habits:
Success in Self-Control
- Perfectionism:
The Push to Perform
- Rejection:
Healing a Wounded Heart
- Victimization:
Victory Over the Victim Mentality

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

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Manipulation:
Severing the Strings of Control.

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1. See Everett L. Shostrom and Dan Montgomery, *The Manipulators* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 45.
2. For this section, see Tim Kimmel, *Powerful Personalities* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family, 1993), 29–67; See Lori Thorkelson Rentzel, *Emotional Dependency* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 14–15; Jan Silvious, *Please Don't Say You Need Me: Biblical Answers for Codependency* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 56; Barbara Sullivan, *The Control Grip* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1991), 63, 68–69.
3. See Kimmel, *Powerful Personalities*, 53–54.
4. See Sullivan, *Control Grip*, 67–68; Paul S. Schmidt, *Coping With Difficult People*, Christian Care Books, ed. Wayne E. Oates, vol. 6 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 101.
5. For this section, see Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No, To Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 199–201; Kimmel, *Powerful Personalities*, 202, 203; Silvious, *Please Don't Say*, 22–34.
6. For this section, see Cloud and Townsend, *Boundaries*, 241–43, 245; Rentzel, *Emotional Dependency*, 22, 25; Schmidt, *Coping with Difficult People*, 103; Shostrom and Montgomery, *Manipulators*, 61.