Manipulation

**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.

> “I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.”
> **(Psalm 34:4)**
The Five S’s of Aggressive Manipulation

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 treatment
   “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 sobber
   “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 Dependencies

People accept unfair treatment because of misplaced dependencies.

- **M**isplaced priorities
- **I**dentity 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)

Maneuvering from Manipulation

D ecide not to be dependent on the manipulator. (Luke 6:35)
E xpect exasperation from the manipulator. (Psalm 31:3–4)
P repare yourself for pain. (Hebrews 12:7)
E xamine the expectations of the manipulator. (Proverbs 22:3)
N otify the manipulator of the necessity for change. (Hebrews 12:1)
D on’t defend yourself. (Ecclesiastes 3:7)
E xpect experimentation with new strategies. (Proverbs 14:24)
N ullify your need to meet all the manipulator’s needs. (Psalm 37:4–5)
C ommit Galatians 1:10 to memory.
Y ield to pleasing the Lord. (Proverbs 29:25)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

1 Thessalonians 2:3–8

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

For more comprehensive help, refer to our Biblical Counseling Keys . . . Manipulation: Severing the Strings of Control.

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).