



**Cherrequine Bible Doctrine Ministries**  
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## **Warning Signs and "Reality Tests" for Unhealthy or Dangerous Spiritual Practices**

There are many spiritual practices including pastoral counseling, prayer, meditation, mind-body disciplines, service, ritual, community liturgy, holy-day and seasonal observances, and rites of passage etc. that are intended or likely induce exceptional states of consciousness such as the direct experience of the divine, of cosmic unity, or of boundless awareness, personal spiritual transformation

These spiritual practices can be benign or dangerous depending upon how they are created. The following list of warning signs and "reality tests" for unhealthy or dangerous spiritual practices is designed to be an evaluation aid in reviewing a spiritual practice.

One or more signs being applicable to a spiritual practice does not automatically condemn that practice as unhealthy or dangerous. But, the more warning signs that are present or the more frequently or intensely they are used tends to signal that this spiritual practice may be one that is unhealthy or dangerous. In using this list one must carefully and fairly review how the following additional factors also apply to that point:

1. intended result,
2. frequency and intensity of application and,
3. actual result of the spiritual practice that was associated with a particular warning sign.

### **Warning signs and "reality tests" for unhealthy or dangerous spiritual practices:**

Make off all items that apply to the spiritual practices being evaluated.

- Intense indoctrination,
- Restricting or strongly impairing ability to leave group,
- Appeals to fear of not being enlightened or saved,
- Uses humiliation or guilt to control behavior,
- Appeals to vanity or egotism in becoming one of the elect, elite or chosen,
- Promises having power over others,
- Restricts access to outside ideas and people,
- Demands stereotyped behavior and conformity,
- Encourages hyper-emotionalism and manipulation of feelings such as inducing alternating emotional highs and lows,
- Plays on feelings of inadequacy or low self esteem,

- Encourages deception or violation of personal ethics,
- Encourages over-dependency and relinquishment of personal responsibility,
- Restricts independent action and privacy,
- Uses intimidation or threats in recruiting or retaining members,
- Demands all members money,
- Paranoid about outsiders,
- Stockpiles arms for protection,
- Verbal abuse,
- Sensory deprivation,
- Alternating intensely pleasurable emotional highs (i.e love bombing by groups or individuals) with intensely negative emotional lows (i.e. public confessions humiliation etc.)
- Hypnosis,
- Prolonged mind numbing meditation, chanting etc.
- Low protein diets or fasting causing low protein or oxygen deprivation trance induction,
- Altering brain rhythms to induce trance,
- Creating disassociative psychological states in members through trance induction hyper-emotionalism etc., and then mislabeling those induced disassociative psychological states as spiritual manifestations or signs that the member has had a legitimate spiritual experience and not being disclosed as merely an induced disassociative psychological state with all the emotional and psychological phenomena that normally are part of such disassociated states,
- Consciousness altering drugs,
- Subjection to intensely cathartic or charismatic experiences voodoo, witchcraft, channeling, mediumship where one transfers control to someone or something else,
- Excessive ritual indoctrination
- A disproportionate focus on getting money and new recruits rather than on spiritual matters and spiritual growth
- Uses one or more of the many ways of inducing trance states
- High turn over rates of new recruits
- Has a disproportionate emphasis on public or recorded private confessions
- Has a disproportionate emphasis on building personal power and status
- Induces fanaticism or zealotry
- Induces irrationality
- Reduces compassion and empathy, members become hardened and unloving unforgiving,
- Induces intolerance towards people whose beliefs are different than their own.
- Induces members to sever normal relationships and/or loyalties or obligations,
- Induces members to only associate, do business, marry date etc with other members
- Induces members to purchase spiritual states or spiritual forgiveness,
- Demands obedience to authority vs. individual conscience,
- Is disproportionately concerned with security and secrecy,
- Induces members to contribute beyond their means or the dictates of wisdom

- Induces members to donate so much of their time that their normal other loyalties and obligations are harmed,
- Induces members to donate so much of their time or resources that their health is harmed,
- Induces members to engage in other activities which harms their emotional, mental or physical health,
- Using fear and other pressures to effect free willed spiritual choices vs. respecting the un pressured reflective exercise of free willed spiritual choices,
- The spiritual practices creates a group that forms a destructive cult.
- The spiritual practice uses tactics of unethical influence or persuasion. (The spiritual practice uses tactics of unethical mind control or brainwashing).

### **Some of the Qualities of Healthy Spiritual Practices**

- Healthy spiritualities created a balanced spirituality composed of emotional and mental balance, practical idealism, and science and philosophy.
- Healthy spiritualities assist the individual to harmonize their life into larger and more universal values reflecting the Universal Spirit.
- Healthy spiritualities cultivate awareness, loving regard for all life, compassion, empathy, and wise, situation precise applications of the basic human virtues.
- Healthy spiritualities encourage their members to reality test their inspirations or insights against reason and other means or individuals.
- Healthy spiritualities are open to sincere outside review.
- Healthy spiritualities are designed and conducted in ways that respect the common good, with due regard for public safety, health, and order.
- Healthy spirituality creates a social activism that manifests in responsible ways that reflect a loving regard for all life.
- Healthy Spiritualities respect and preserve the autonomy and dignity of each person. Participation is voluntary and based on prior disclosure and consent given to each participant while in an ordinary state of consciousness.
- Healthy Spiritualities protect each participant's health and safety during spiritual practices. Any physical or psychological risks are fully disclosed. There may be periods of vulnerability on a healthy spiritual path where participants may be especially open to suggestion, manipulation, and exploitation, but in a healthy spiritual practices they do not financially, sexually or in any other way manipulate or take advantage of any such periods of vulnerability.
- Healthy Spiritualities maintain appropriate customs of confidentiality.
- In Healthy Spiritualities the leaders and teachers are chosen for long standing moral character and whose actions have consistently reflected their spiritual statements and positions.
- Healthy spiritual practices grow through attraction rather than active promotion.
- Healthy Spiritualities are conducted in the spirit of service and accommodate participants without regard to their ability to pay or make donations.

### **Continuum of Influence and Persuasion**

	<b>Education</b>	<b>Advertising</b>	<b>Propaganda</b>	<b>Indoctrination</b>	<b>Thought Reform</b>
<b>Focus of body of knowledge</b>	Many bodies of knowledge, based on scientific findings in various fields.	Body of knowledge concerns product, competitors; how to sell and influence via legal persuasion.	Body of knowledge centers on political persuasion of masses of people.	Body of knowledge is explicitly designed to inculcate organizational values.	Body of knowledge centers on changing people without their knowledge.
<b>Direction &amp; degree of exchange</b>	Two way pupil-teacher exchange encouraged.	Exchange can occur but communication generally one-sided.	Some exchange occurs but communication generally one-sided.	Limited exchange occurs, communication is one-sided.	No exchange occurs, communication is one-sided.
<b>Ability to change</b>	Change occurs as science advances; as students and other scholars offer criticisms; as students & citizens evaluate programs.	Change made by those who pay for it, based upon the success of ad programs by consumers law, & in response to consumer complaints.	Change based on changing tides in world politics and on political need to promote the group, nation, or international organization.	Change made through formal channels, via written suggestions to higher-ups.	Change occurs rarely; organization remains fairly rigid; change occurs primarily to improve thought-reform effectiveness.
<b>Structure of persuasion</b>	Uses teacher-pupil structure; logical thinking encouraged.	Uses an instructional mode to persuade consumer/buyer.	Takes authoritarian stance to persuade masses.	Takes authoritarian & hierarchical stance.	Takes authoritarian & hierarchical stance; No full awareness on part of learner.
<b>Type of relationship</b>	Instruction is time-limited: consensual.	Consumer/buyer can accept or ignore communication.	Learner support & engrossment expected.	Instruction is contractual: consensual	Group attempts to retain people forever.
<b>Deceptiveness</b>	Is not deceptive.	Can be deceptive,	Can be deceptive,	Is not deceptive.	Is deceptive.

		selecting only positive views.	often exaggerated.		
<b>Breadth of learning</b>	Focuses on learning to learn & learning about reality; broad goal is rounded knowledge for development of the individual.	Has a narrow goal of swaying opinion to promote and sell an idea, object, or program; another goal is to enhance seller & possibly buyer.	Targets large political masses to make them believe a specific view or circumstance is good.	Stresses narrow learning for a specific goal; to become something or to train for performance of duties.	Individualized target; hidden agenda (you will be changed one step at a time to become deployable to serve leaders).
<b>Tolerance</b>	Respects differences.	Puts down competition.	Wants to lessen opposition.	Aware of differences.	No respect for differences.
<b>Methods</b>	Instructional techniques.	Mild to heavy persuasion.	Overt persuasion sometimes unethical.	Disciplinary techniques.	Improper and unethical techniques.

### INFLUENCE CONTINUUM

Method Of Influence	Mode of Influence: Compliance-Gaining	
Mode of Influence: Choice-respecting (emphasis on message)a	(emphasis on response)	
Educative/Therapeutic:	Persuasive/Manipulative Rational Argument	Controlling/Destructive Isolation from social supports
Reflection Clarification Discussion Information Giving Directed Questioning Creative Expression Advisory/Therapeutic Commenting on Problem or alternatives Suggesting Ideas	compliance oriented Emotional appeals Compliance tactics: consistency, reciprocity, social proof, authority, liking, scarcity Hypnosis (some forms)	Selective reward/punishment Denigration of self & of critical thinking Dissociative states to suppress doubt and critical thinking Alternation of harshness/threats and leniency/love Control-oriented guilt

Recommending solutions Rational argument (message oriented) Hypnosis (some forms)		induction Active promotion of dependency Debilitation Physical restraint/punishment Pressured public confessions
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### Coercive Mind Control Tactics

Today Mind control or brainwashing in academia is commonly referred to as coercive persuasion, coercive psychological systems or coercive influence. The short description below comes from Dr. Margaret Singer professor emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley the acknowledged leading authority in the world on mind control and cults.

Definition and description of mind control:

Coercion is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as:

1. **To force to act or think in a certain manner**
2. **To dominate, restrain, or control by force**
3. **To bring about by force.**

Coercive psychological systems are behavioral change programs, which use psychological force in a coercive way to cause the learning and adoption of an ideology or designated set of beliefs, ideas, attitudes, or behaviors. The essential strategy used by the operators of these programs is to systematically select, sequence and coordinate many different types of coercive influence, anxiety and stress-producing tactics over continuous periods of time.

In such a program the subject is forced to adapt in a series of tiny "invisible" steps. Each tiny step is designed to be sufficiently small so the subjects will not notice the changes in themselves or identify the coercive nature of the processes being used. The subjects of these tactics do not become aware of the hidden organizational purpose of the coercive psychological program until much later, if ever. These tactics are usually applied in a group setting by well intentioned but deceived "friends and allies" of the victim. This keeps the victim from putting up the ego defenses we normally maintain in known adversarial situations.

The coercive psychological influence of these programs aim to overcome the individual's critical thinking abilities and free will - apart from any appeal to informed judgment. Victims gradually lose their ability to make independent decisions and exercise informed consent. Their critical thinking, defenses, cognitive processes, values, ideas, attitudes, conduct and ability to reason are undermined by a technological process rather than by meaningful free choice, rationality, or the inherent merit or value of the ideas or propositions being presented.

### **How Do They Work?**

The tactics used to create undue psychological and social influence, often by means involving anxiety and stress, fall into seven main categories.

#### TACTIC 1

**Increase suggestibility** and "soften up" the individual through specific hypnotic or other suggestibility-increasing techniques such as: Extended audio, visual, verbal, or tactile fixation drills, Excessive exact repetition of routine activities, Sleep restriction and/or Nutritional restriction.

#### TACTIC 2

**Establish control over the person's social environment, time and sources of social support** by a system of often-excessive rewards and punishments. Social isolation is promoted. Contact with family and friends is abridged, as is contact with persons who do not share group-approved attitudes. Economic and other dependence on the group is fostered.

#### TACTIC 3

**Prohibit disconfirming information** and non supporting opinions in group communication. Rules exist about permissible topics to discuss with outsiders. Communication is highly controlled. An "in-group" language is usually constructed.

#### TACTIC 4

**Make the person re-evaluate the most central aspects of his or her experience of self** and prior conduct in negative ways. Efforts are designed to destabilize and undermine the subject's basic consciousness, reality awareness, world view, emotional control and defense mechanisms. The subject is guided to reinterpret his or her life's history and adopt a new version of causality.

#### TACTIC 5

**Create a sense of powerlessness** by subjecting the person to intense and frequent actions and situations which undermine the person's confidence in himself and his judgment.

## TACTIC 6

**Create strong aversive emotional arousals** in the subject by use of nonphysical punishments such as intense humiliation, loss of privilege, social isolation, social status changes, intense guilt, anxiety, manipulation and other techniques.

## TACTIC 7

**Intimidate the person** with the force of group-sanctioned secular psychological threats. For example, it may be suggested or implied that failure to adopt the approved attitude, belief or consequent behavior will lead to severe punishment or dire consequences such as physical or mental illness, the reappearance of a prior physical illness, drug dependence, economic collapse, social failure, divorce, disintegration, failure to find a mate, etc.

These tactics of psychological force are applied to such a severe degree that the individual's capacity to make informed or free choices becomes inhibited. The victims become unable to make the normal, wise or balanced decisions which they most likely or normally would have made, had they not been unknowingly manipulated by these coordinated technical processes. The cumulative effect of these processes can be an even more effective form of undue influence than pain, torture, drugs or the use of physical force and physical and legal threats.

### **How does Coercive Psychological Persuasion Differ from Other Kinds of Influence?**

Coercive psychological systems are distinguished from benign social learning or peaceful persuasion by the specific conditions under which they are conducted. These conditions include the type and number of coercive psychological tactics used, the severity of environmental and interpersonal manipulation, and the amount of psychological force employed to suppress particular unwanted behaviors and to train desired behaviors.

Coercive force is traditionally visualized in physical terms. In this form it is easily definable, clear-cut and unambiguous. Coercive psychological force unfortunately has not been so easy to see and define. The law has been ahead of the physical sciences in that it has allowed that coercion need not involve physical force. It has recognized that an individual can be threatened and coerced psychologically by what he or she perceives to be dangerous, not necessarily by that which is dangerous.

Law has recognized that even the threatened action need not be physical. Threats of economic loss, social ostracism and ridicule, among other things, are all recognized by law, in varying contexts, as coercive psychological forces.

### **Why are Coercive Psychological Systems Harmful?**



Coercive psychological systems violate our most fundamental concepts of basic human rights. They violate rights of individuals that are guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and affirmed by many declarations of principle worldwide.

By confusing, intimidating and silencing their victims, those who profit from these systems evade exposure and prosecution for actions recognized as harmful and which are illegal in most countries such as: fraud, false imprisonment, undue influence, involuntary servitude, intentional infliction of emotional distress, outrageous conduct and other tortuous acts.