



Cherrequine Bible Doctrine Ministries
dikaosune.com

Warning Signs for Unhealthy & Dangerous Spiritual Practices

Reprinted with permission from www.JRCBDM.com

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:

- intended result,
- frequency and intensity of application and,
- 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:

Mark 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

1. Healthy spiritualities created a balanced spirituality composed of emotional and mental balance, practical idealism, and science and philosophy.
2. Healthy spiritualities assist the individual to harmonize their life into larger and more universal values reflecting the Universal Spirit.
3. Healthy spiritualities cultivate awareness, loving regard for all life, compassion, empathy, and wise, situation precise applications of the basic human virtues.
4. Healthy spiritualities encourage their members to reality test their inspirations or insights against reason and other means or individuals.
5. Healthy spiritualities are open to sincere outside review.
6. Healthy spiritualities are designed and conducted in ways that respect the common good, with due regard for public safety, health, and order.
7. Healthy spirituality creates a social activism that manifests in responsible ways that reflect a loving regard for all life.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Healthy Spiritualities maintain appropriate customs of confidentiality.
11. 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.
12. Healthy spiritual practices grow through attraction rather than active promotion.
13. Healthy Spiritualities are conducted in the spirit of service and accommodate participants without regard to their ability to pay or make donations.

Warning Signs of a destructive cult

The following early warning signs can help you reasonably determine whether or not a group is likely to be a destructive cult, and if you should be concerned about a friend, coworker, or loved one being involved with it. The main reason that the following destructive cult tactics are so damaging to both the individual and society is because they debilitate rationality and reduce empathy. Rationality and empathy are indispensable in making good personal and social decisions. Ask yourself if the following criteria apply to the group you are concerned about.

1. A destructive cult tends to be totalitarian in its control of its members' behavior. Cults are likely to dictate in great detail not only what members believe, but also what members wear and eat, when and where members work, sleep, and bathe, and how members think, speak, and conduct familial, marital, or sexual relationships.
2. A destructive cult tends to have an ethical double standard. Members are urged to be obedient to the cult, to carefully follow cult rules. They are also encouraged to be revealing and open in the group, confessing all to the leaders. On the other hand, outside the group they are encouraged to act unethically, manipulating outsiders or nonmembers, and either deceiving them or simply revealing very little about themselves or the group.
3. A destructive cult has only two basic purposes: recruiting new members and fund-raising. Altruistic movements, established religions, and other honorable groups also recruit and raise funds. However, these actions are incidental to an honorable group's main purpose of improving the lives of its members and of humankind in general. Destructive cults may claim to make social contributions, but in actuality such claims are superficial and only serve as gestures or fronts for recruiting and fund-raising. A cult's real goal is to increase the prestige and often the wealth of the leader.
4. A destructive cult appears to be innovative and exclusive. The leader claims to be breaking with tradition, offering something novel, and instituting the only viable system for change that will solve life's problems or the world's ills. But these claims are empty and only used to recruit members who are then surreptitiously subjected to mind control to inhibit their ability to examine the actual validity of the claims of the leader and the cult.
5. A destructive cult is authoritarian in its power structure. The leader is regarded as the supreme authority. He or she may delegate certain power to a few subordinates for the purpose of seeing that members adhere to the leader's wishes. There is no appeal outside his or her system to a greater system of justice. In a destructive cult, the leader claims to have the only and final ruling on all matters.
6. A destructive cult's leader is a self-appointed messianic person claiming to have a special mission in life.
7. A destructive cult's leader centers the veneration of members upon himself or herself. Priests, rabbis, ministers, democratic leaders, and other leaders of genuinely altruistic movements focus the veneration of adherents on God or a set

of ethical principles. Cult leaders, in contrast, keep the focus of love, devotion, and allegiance on themselves.

8. A destructive cult's leader tends to be determined, domineering, and charismatic. Such a leader effectively persuades followers to abandon or alter their families, friends, and careers to follow the cult. The leader then takes control over followers' possessions, money, time, and lives.
9. If you know someone who belongs to a group that demonstrates a significant number of these warning signs and you would like more information on how to deal with destructive cults or mind control.