

Are YOU under mind control?

Mind control is sometimes very subtle in the way it is used and it can be hard to recognise it. Try answering these 20 questions by circling Y for yes or N for no. (Taken from a list of 52 questions in the book *Mind Control* by Guy Steward.)

1. Is your doctrine legislated rather than guided? Y/N
(You should be free to search things out for yourself.)
2. Are your moral choices legislated rather than guided? Y/N
3. Are you unsure of the background of your leader(s)? Y/N
4. Do you solely rely on information given to you by your group? Y/N
5. Is there pressure to avoid all other information about your group? Y/N
6. Is there pressure on you to agree with all that the group says? Y/N
7. Are your leaders generally inaccessible to ordinary members? Y/N
8. Are leaders or other members hostile to your questions? Y/N
9. Are you fearful of your leaders? Y/N
10. Is your group secretive about its doctrines or its actions? (For example, is there any doctrine you have been instructed not to share with outsiders?) Y/N
11. Are members ever “disciplined” by threats, bribes, or other unpleasant pressures to conform? Y/N
12. Were you required to cut all ties with the past (including friends and relatives) when you joined? Y/N
13. Do others within the group make decisions for you? Y/N
14. Are you dependent on your leader’s or on other’s approval for what you do? Y/N

15. Are you afraid of leaving? Y/N
16. Do people constantly leave amidst controversy, strife and bitterness? Y/N
17. Do you condemn those outside your group as being “ungodly” or “satanic”? Y/N
18. Do you use “God wants me here” as an excuse to avoid facing the issue of leaving? Y/N
19. If your group uses the Bible, does it only use it with reference to (or explanation from) another person’s teachings? Y/N
20. If self-employed, would your business seriously struggle if you left? Y/N

Count up your number of “yes” answers. If 4-5 you may be under mind control. If over 10 your group likely has serious problems.

How to protect yourself, your church and your community from mind control

- 1. Be informed.** Know what mind control is and what to do about it.
- 2. Be aware.** Be on the alert for warning signals of the abuse of time, abuse of intimacy, misuse of finances, etc.
- 3. Be prepared.** Have plans for informing and warning others, both in your church and community (eg, a leaflet drop).
- 4. Be discerning.** Find out what a group really believes before joining. Don’t let others take advantage of you in a time of transition or crisis - eg, a change in location such as a student moving to a university in a different city, a financial crisis such as losing a job, a change in relationships like a death in the family, etc.

This pamphlet was prepared by The New Zealand Cult List (copyright © 2004–2006) and can be freely downloaded from our web site (www.cults.co.nz). This pamphlet may be updated periodically. This version revised 24 September 2006.

Cult Mind Control

Mind control is one of the most common characteristics of a cult. Most cults use mind control.

Mind control is manipulating people’s thoughts and actions through deceptive techniques. It allows a cult to make its members think and do as the cult leaders desire. The mind control wrecks people’s lives so they eventually cannot think for themselves.

Mind control is not forced on people. They have a choice of whether to resist the control or submit to it. It is often much easier in the short term to submit to the control.

A cult often has one charismatic leader who all the members (and sub-leadership) look up to. This makes mind control much easier for the cult. A pyramid-like control structure means that authority all ends up with one individual at the top of the pyramid.

Mind control is not the same as brainwashing.

Brainwashing usually involves torture to force victims to change their beliefs and/or actions. The effects of brainwashing are normally short-lived when the torture (or threat thereof) is removed. The word “brainwashing” was invented in 1951 by an American journalist to describe an effect that happened to American soldiers during the Korean War who were captured and tortured to change their beliefs (such as embracing communism).

This pamphlet is based on the book *Mind Control* by Guy Steward. It is available from Jubilee Resources (www.jubilee.co.nz). Our thanks go to Guy Steward for his assistance in preparing this pamphlet.

A cult uses mind control techniques to manipulate and control members.

Mind control is a suite of practices a group uses to control its members. Only a few cults will strongly exhibit all the following, but all sociological cults will exhibit most of them. Also note that it's not uncommon to see one or more of these occasionally shown by a good Christian church. No church is perfect, but in such a case it is the exception rather than the rule and if particularly strong it is a problem that should be addressed - with love and respect. Often the mind control mechanisms are used together to form even stronger controls over members.

Deception. Cults do not tell potential members what they actually believe, and only reveal their true doctrine to members gradually, as the member is able to accept it. Cults and cult members will lie to hide their true beliefs. Remember: If something is true it can stand being questioned, if it is not true it needs to be questioned. Deception has no place in the Christian church.

Exclusivism. Cults teach that only they have the truth and the correct path to salvation. (Note: Christianity really is the only way to God [John 14:6] but no good Christian church claims that all other Christian churches are "of the devil" or "fallen".) Leaving the cult is equated with leaving God, and members really believe that leaving the cult means they can never be saved.

Fear, Guilt and Intimidation. Leadership is feared, and disagreeing with the leadership (or even just questioning it) is akin to disagreeing with God. Breaking sessions are used to destroy resistance, where members have their motives and character attacked until they fall into line again. Some cults keep "sin lists" which are used in these sessions.

Information Control. Members are not allowed to read or watch any material not published by the cult. This includes newspapers, TV, radio, and even the Bible outside of the cult's own Bible studies.

Loaded Language. The cult uses its own language and terms, with common words having quite different meanings to the members. (For example, the Holy Spirit to a Jehovah's Witness is a force like electricity.) Attempts by non-members to reason with cult members is reinterpreted since cult members are taught to expect opposition, such as their group being called a cult, or claims that it is harmful, etc. (Closely related to thought stopping - see below).

Love Bombing. New members are almost smothered in love, acceptance, etc. The new member has instant friends. This normally lasts a few months, and then love and acceptance is turned on and off to control.

Personality Replacement. Close friends or family (where they are allowed access to the member) notice the member's personality changes from what they were like before joining the group. The cult does this by first breaking down a new member's resistance to the cult's real doctrine (not the public doctrine they were told when they joined). This may be through love bombing or by intimidatory breaking sessions (see Fear, Guilt and Intimidation). The member is then indoctrinated with the cult's new doctrine. Many cults use several "Bible" studies a week to do this, resulting in cult members appearing to know their Bible better than many Christians - unfortunately with the cult's theology underlying their knowledge. It can take years to eliminate all this false doctrine. While this indoctrination is happening the member is adopting the accepted cult personality, which may be markedly different to the personality they had beforehand.

Relationship Control. Reduces the time spent on relationships with people outside the cult or those who would tend to draw the member away from the cult. Members are often moved into cult-based flats or even employed in cult-owned businesses (which may have separate lunch rooms for members and non-members). Members are told who they are to date and marry. This means that after being in a cult for a few years, members have no friends or family outside the cult - it can make leaving a very bleak prospect.

Reporting Structure. Any indiscretions, however minor, are reported back to the cult leadership, with members being encouraged to report "struggling brothers." This can result in "Voice of God" sermons, where the leader preaches a sermon directly aimed at what a particular member is currently struggling with - and has talked about in confidence with someone else. When the member hears it they think that God is speaking directly through the preacher to them.

Shunning (a part of relationship control). Members are banned from talking to or associating with former members. In other words, former members are "shunned" (completely ignored) by present members, even to the point where members will cross the street to avoid former members.

Thought Stopping. Members are trained (normally over years) to have thoughts stopped or reasoning processes interrupted when they hear a certain phrase or even a word. For example, when a cult member is talking with a non-member about what Jesus did on the cross, they make progress until the latter mentions that the member's group is a cult. The member thinks "Aha! We were warned about this!" and immediately starts to reinterpret everything he/she hears according to the cult teachings (see loaded language above). Reasoning processes are instantly affected and strong resistance to rational thought is triggered in the member. For some, thought stopping might involve chanting to block out "sinful" thoughts.

Time Control. Keeps the member so busy with cult activities they have no time to think deeply about their involvement or pursue activities that might lead them away from the cult. The member might have cult meetings or Bible studies several nights a week.