



MANIPULATION

Love comes when manipulation stops, when you think more about the other person than about his or her reactions to you. When you dare to reveal yourself fully. When you dare to be vulnerable.

—Dr. Joyce Brothers

In the Preface of this book I briefly described the religious cult I grew up in and how it was my impetus to study persuasion. When I began to study, the first realization I had was that while there were many similarities between manipulation and persuasion, the more I studied, the more I realized that manipulation is actually one path to persuasion, but only a temporary persuasion, not a lasting agreement.

The *American Heritage Dictionary* definition of *manipulation*, “Shrewd or devious management, especially for one’s own advantage,” is most fitting when discussing the difference between persuasion and manipulation. In manipulation the only person who benefits long term is the manipulator. Now look at the definition of the word *persuade*: “To induce to undertake a course of action

or embrace a point of view by means of argument, reasoning, or entreaty." By persuading, there is the opportunity for two people to come together on an opinion that is mutually beneficial.

Manipulation is inwardly focused on the person who is manipulating. The manipulator is focused on achieving personal outcomes and goals with no concern for the outcome of or impact on the person being manipulated. Deception or covering up logical, factual evidence is also inherent in most manipulation, as demonstration or presentation of the facts would typically allow a rational person to come to a logical decision unfavorable to the manipulator.

Manipulation also strives to set up an artificial series of conditions or rules that govern the encounter so the manipulation can continue. There are typically penalties for challenging manipulators that can range from more deception to physical and emotional abuse to "shrewdly manage you for their own advantage." In discussing manipulation with noted psychologist Angela Dailey, she said, "Manipulation whether positive or negative is most clearly defined by the intent of the person who manipulates. If I tell a child who brings a bag of cookies from the cupboard just before bedtime and who intends to eat them all, that they can have one cookie or no cookies at all and they choose to have one cookie, I've created an illusion of choice but within the bounds of what I consider acceptable to me. I've manipulated the behavior, but for the good of the child who needs to get a full night of sleep."

In fact, discussion of manipulation with any psychology professional nearly always leads to the conclusion that the only real differentiator between manipulation and persuasion is intent. Robert Greene, author of *The 48 Laws of Power* (Penguin Putnam, 2001), was much clearer in his definition of manipulation. He said, "All attempts to influence are manipulation."

Nearly everyone has had an experience with being manipulated at one time or another. For many a common experience is that of buying a used car. While I certainly do not lump all used-car salespeople into the same category, it is an experience most of us have shared at one point in our life. So let's look at the setup that allows us to be manipulated.

Over Sunday brunch you and your spouse decide it is time to buy a new car. You want something newer than you have, but you don't want to spend the money for a brand-new model year car, so as you eat, you hear those magic words on the television from an overweight, mutton-chopped used-car salesman, "Come on down *Sunday, Sunday, Sunday*, to the Car Corral where prices are being slashed to the bone because we have inventory we must move. Our loss is your gain, but you must come down *today!*" You are a smart person; you look at your spouse, smile, and say, "Can't hurt to go down and look since they are having a sale; besides, there is no way that guy will get me to buy something I don't want." And so the first condition for manipulation (and persuasion) is met and that condition is: *the search for a solution*.

The search for a solution is very important to the manipulator and the persuader because searchers have lowered their defenses somewhat; they've indicated that they want something they don't have and they need specific knowledge, products, or services that you do have. The person being manipulated has an open mind to the possibility of what might be. By lowering their defenses and by opening themselves up to the idea that information exists they are not privy to, but need in order to achieve their goals, searchers willingly allow others to challenge their beliefs and to educate them in new possibilities. They've also set themselves up to be susceptible to the second condition: *time sensitivity*.

Time sensitivity is very important because we all have a very acute sense of time. Things must happen quickly, decisions must be made rapidly, and everyone knows that the early bird gets the worm. Manipulators and, again, persuaders know that reinforcing time sensitivity while increasing time pressure pushes people closer to impulsive decisions. It also sets the groundwork for the third condition for manipulation to work: *potential for loss*.

So, you walk onto the car lot thinking you are in charge, when in reality you are positioning yourself to be led. You meet your car salesman, and in the initial conversation with you, the car salesman demonstrates a very deep knowledge of cars. He is concerned that he understand what your real needs are so that he can demonstrate the most appropriate choices for you, since there is no way you can know everything there is to know about every car, but he can; after all, that is his job. The fourth condition is met: *encounter with a benevolent authority*.

While all four conditions are ideal for manipulation or persuasion, it is the intent of the person who is doing the manipulating or persuading that will determine what happens to you and ultimately to them and the business. There is one more condition that must be met and it is critical to success. We'll discuss that condition shortly.

In your bad experience with buying a used car, all four conditions aligned and you were not even consciously aware how susceptible you were to what would come next. As you shopped, you were likely told about a number of different options, but only one that was right for you. You were assured that no matter what your concern, there was a reasonable explanation as to why it was truly not a concern. Reassurances were given and backed up with technical-sounding information and demonstrations that were plausible; so you decided to buy.

This isn't the first time around the car-buying block, so when the time comes you hit them with your offer. The salesman sweats and says there is no way he can sell the car to you for what you offered, so he goes to see what he can do and talks it over with his manager. He comes back with another offer, this one lower than the sticker price but still above yours. He also lets you know at this point that one of the other salesmen has a customer who has already made an offer higher than yours, but has not signed the contract yet. You feel a little nervous and wonder if this is a sales trick. If it is, you will pay too much; if it isn't, you will lose the car, which is rapidly becoming the perfect car. This process repeats several times until finally the salesman comes back with a number higher than you want to pay, but he has some additional things he will "throw in" for you, some new tires and a CD player. It is the best he can do but you have to act now. If you walk off the lot, either the other buyer gets your car or you lose all the incentives to buy now. You are smart, though, so you decide to wait. You want to think it over for a couple of hours, so you get them to commit to the price and options if you call back by close of business, which they do unless the other buyer comes back in; then there is just nothing they can do.

Now it is late afternoon, the sun is about to sink behind the clouds for the day, and you decide you do want the car. The final condition for manipulation is met—you've *fully committed*. By committing mentally and emotionally, you have set yourself up for great loss, but you must have the car. The smart persuader and shrewd manipulator already got you to make some small commitments along the way and those are the ideas that push you over the edge. Sure there are a few nagging doubts, but it is a good deal and you bargained hard.

You call back and tell them you want the car and much to your dismay it is gone; the other salesman got his customer who was already willing to pay more to buy *your* car. You are dejected, you feel down; that was *your* car, you wanted it; if only you hadn't waited; now you have to start the process again knowing you may have let the very best deal slip through your fingers. You ask about other cars and the salesman is very willing to help if you want to come back in tomorrow. So you do.

When you arrive at the lot the next morning you are met by the salesman, who has incredible news: Financing fell through for the people who were going to buy *your* car and you can get it if you buy it now before they have time to qualify with another higher-risk lender. You are hooked and you buy the car *as is* immediately; you don't want to lose this car again; that was just too close.

You drive the car off the lot, and the next morning you wonder if you made a good decision; but it *is* a good-looking car, even the neighbor said so. A few days later you begin to notice a lot of little things you couldn't have noticed in a 10-minute test drive. As you begin to make mental notes of what is happening, you start trying to get in touch with the salesman. Your calls go unreturned. You drive it down to the lot and are summarily told that all sales are final but that they will be happy to have their service person look it over. They look it over and you find out that you will have to spend several hundred dollars to get the car fixed. Now you don't have a choice. If you want the car to work right you have to fix it; if you don't you face even bigger, more expensive problems later. And so begins your wonderful new car purchase. You feel cheated, suckered, and wonder how you got sucked in.

The good news is that it is not just you who is susceptible to the manipulator; we all are. The easy story, charismatic manner, and the setup are all but irresistible to most people. But that doesn't make you feel any better, does it? In fact, most people who are manipulated report feeling angry, hopeless, and not in control. The manipulator, on the other hand, had all needs met.

Manipulation works in the short term only because there is a lack of experience, information, or critical thought on the part of the person being manipulated. The moment you begin to critically think about the sequence of events or the occasion where you were manipulated, you begin to see all of the warning signs that were present during the interaction. So why didn't you pick up on them then? The answer is quite simple. When we are searching for solutions, any solution that seems to work tends to be the correct one. We find ways to justify or "force fit" the solution to the problem (or desire) that we have. Manipulators know that if they show you the solution, the way, the answer to your problem, you will immediately begin to rationalize any objections you have; you will find a way to make it fit. And, the shrewd manipulator will continue to layer on proof, emotion, and increase the pressure to take action now until you do. "The 80/20 rule applies very strongly in this situation," says psychologist Angela Dailey. "It is very easy to negate the 20 percent of doubt when it is overwhelmed by a more significant sense of desire or evidence, even when the doubt hangs around in the back of your mind. You find ways to justify or rationalize away the doubt so you can move back into your comfort zone."

Fortunately, nearly all manipulation is ultimately discovered and the manipulator is exposed. Many people, though not all, share their experiences with those around them. In extreme

cases, the media pick up the story and thousands if not millions learn of the person and process and can therefore avoid it.

Manipulation does not work in the long run because there can be no ongoing trust or relationship with the manipulator. Deceptions are ultimately exposed and incongruence is observed and reconciled. Many times legal action of one form or another results. So the manipulators must find another target where word-of-mouth reputation won't catch up or be exposed at such a high level that they lose all credibility. Unfortunately, many people go on to be manipulated again because the perceived value of what they may receive is higher than the pain of being manipulated. Ultimately the pattern continues, not because they don't recognize the manipulator, but because the risk/potential reward ratio is high enough to outweigh critical thinking on the issue.

I am going to demonstrate the manipulation process for you so that you can see all of the elements. Please understand that I do not condone manipulation in any form, but do believe it is important for you to know how manipulation works so you do not become a victim and so that you do not unwittingly and unethically manipulate anyone.

How to Manipulate

1. Carefully observe your audience; look for people who are genuinely searching, who are looking for answers, salvation, and yet who are artificially confident or unsure.
2. Test their knowledge and their commitment. Find out how interested they really are in you and your subject. Ask a lot of questions, get them to tip their hand about how much knowledge they really have on the subject, then offer some

information that is not wrong, but questionable or contestable. See if they challenge you in return. Present your information in a way that is sure and confident; present yourself as an expert.

3. Use broad, sweeping generalities and common-knowledge statements that encompass the common knowledge around the subject. Get them to agree with you.
4. Build your relationship, create trust, befriend them, and deepen your rapport.
5. Get them to verbalize their desire and commitment. Put them into a future situation where they have benefited from following your advice.
6. Begin to make them aware of what a great opportunity you are presenting them, but subtly. Build up the emotional desire for the idea you are presenting but let them understand that this is an opportunity that won't last forever. If possible, take the opportunity away from them, once, but through a very reasonable set of circumstances; give them one last opportunity to get what you are promoting but make it contingent on making a decision right now.
7. Reinforce your relationship again as they leave.
8. If they start confronting you, place the blame for the problem elsewhere. Blame the boss; tell them about your very sick grandmother and how you are really out of sorts today because of all the problems she is having that you have to take care of. Ask if they have ever experienced anything similar and ask for their advice or assistance; pull them in closer.
9. Continue the process until they are fully committed or until they stop coming back. If they commit, let them into the insiders' circle, the exclusive group for the ordained ones; give

them access to information or activities that no one else has access to. Help them in little ways when you can so their reliance on you increases and then offer them more opportunities to do what you want them to do.



Chapter Review

- ☛ Intent is the only clearly definable element that separates manipulation from persuasion.
- ☛ Manipulation is *inwardly* focused on the outcome for the person doing the manipulation. Persuasion is *externally* focused on developing a win-win outcome where everyone's needs are met.
- ☛ The four most important elements that must exist to manipulate or be manipulated are: seeking a solution, time sensitivity, potential for loss, and benevolent authority.
- ☛ Manipulation is effective only in the short term because nearly always the manipulator and the manipulative techniques will be revealed by an outside observer or through critical thinking.
- ☛ Manipulation is nearly always inappropriate in any situation, particularly in business and sales situations. If you want to earn a significant income and have a long career, you'll always avoid manipulation.
- ☛ Remember that short-term manipulation will never lead to long-term success when it comes to influencing

people. The world is too small. Manipulators are always discovered.



Success Questions

- ☛ What is my intention when I set out to persuade?
- ☛ What examples of having been manipulated in my personal life exist for my critical review?
- ☛ Are there any other differences between (or justifications for) persuading and manipulating?

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