

## Eight Ways to Spot Emotional Manipulation

Emotional Manipulation is Also "Covert Aggression." Here is a list adapted from an article by [Fiona McColl](#)

1. **There is no use in trying to be honest with an emotional manipulator.** You make a statement and it will be turned around. Example: I am really angry that you forgot my birthday. Response - "It makes me feel sad that you would think I would forget your birthday, I should have told you of the great personal stress I am facing at the moment - but you see I didn't want to trouble you. You are right I should have put all this pain (don't be surprised to see real tears at this point) aside and focused on your birthday. Sorry." Even as you are hearing the words you get the creeped out sensation that they really do NOT mean they are sorry at all - but since they've said the words you're pretty much left with nothing more to say. Either that or you suddenly find yourself babysitting *their* angst!! Under all circumstances if you feel this angle is being played - don't capitulate! Do not care take - do not accept an apology that feels like bullshit. If it feels like bullshit - it probably is. Rule number one - if dealing with an emotional blackmailer TRUST your gut. TRUST your senses. Once an emotional manipulator finds a successful maneuver - it's added to their hit list and you'll be fed a steady diet of this shit.
2. **An emotional manipulator is the picture of a willing helper.** If you ask them to do something they will almost always agree - that is IF they didn't volunteer to do it first. Then when you say, "ok thanks" - they make a bunch of heavy sighs, or other non verbal signs that let you know they don't **really** want to do whatever said thing happens to be. When you tell them it doesn't seem like they want to do whatever - they will turn it around and try to make it seem like OF COURSE they wanted to and how unreasonable you are. This is a form of crazy making - which is something emotional manipulators are very good at. Rule number two - If an emotional manipulator said YES - make them accountable for it. Do NOT buy into the sighs and subtleties - if they don't want to do it - make them tell you it up front - or just put on the walk-man headphones and run a bath and leave them to their theater.
3. **Crazy making - saying one thing and later assuring you they did not say it.** If you find yourself in a relationship where you figure you should start keeping a log of what's been said because you are beginning to question your own sanity --You are experiencing emotional manipulation. An emotional manipulator is an expert in turning things around, rationalizing, justifying and explaining things away. They can lie so smoothly that you can sit looking at black and they'll call it white - and argue so persuasively that you begin to doubt your very senses. Over a period of time this is so insidious and eroding it can literally alter your sense of reality. WARNING: Emotional Manipulation is VERY Dangerous! It is very disconcerting for an emotional manipulator if you begin carrying a pad of paper and a pen and making notations during conversations. Feel free to let them know you just are feeling so "forgetful" these days that you want to record their words for posterity's sake. The damndest thing about this is that having to do such a thing is a clear example for why you should be seriously thinking about removing yourself from range in the first place. If you're toting a notebook to safeguard yourself - that ol' bullshit meter should be flashing steady by now!
4. **Guilt. Emotional manipulators are excellent guilt mongers.** They can make you feel guilty for speaking up or not speaking up, for being emotional or not being emotional enough, for giving and caring, or for not giving and caring

- enough. Any thing is fair game and open to guilt with an emotional manipulator. Emotional manipulators seldom express their needs or desires openly - they get what they want through emotional manipulation. Guilt is not the only form of this but it is a potent one. Most of us are pretty conditioned to do whatever is necessary to reduce our feelings of guilt. Another powerful emotion that is used is sympathy. An emotional manipulator is a great victim. They inspire a profound sense of needing to support, care for and nurture. Emotional Manipulators seldom fight their own fights or do their own dirty work. The crazy thing is that when you do it for them (which they will never ask directly for), they may just turn around and say they certainly didn't want or expect you to do anything! Try to make a point of not fighting other people's battles, or doing their dirty work for them. A great line is "I have every confidence in your ability to work this out on your own" - check out the response and note the bullshit meter once again.
5. **Emotional manipulators fight dirty.** They don't deal with things directly. They will talk around behind your back and eventually put others in the position of telling you what they would not say themselves. They are passive aggressive, meaning they find subtle ways of letting you know they are not happy little campers. They'll tell you what they think you want to hear and then do a bunch of jerk off shit to undermine it. Example: "Of course I want you to go back to school honey and you *know* I'll support you." Then exam night you are sitting at the table and poker buddies show up, the kids are crying the t.v. blasting and the dog needs walking - all the while "Sweetie" is sitting on their ass looking at you blankly. Dare you call them on such behavior you are likely to hear, "well you can't expect life to just stop because you have an exam can you honey?" Cry, scream or choke 'em - only the last will have any long-term benefits and it'll probably wind your butt in jail.
  6. **If you have a headache an emotional manipulator will have a brain tumor!** No matter what your situation is the emotional manipulator has probably been there or is there now - but only ten times worse. It's hard after a period of time to feel emotionally connected to an emotional manipulator because they have a way of de-railing conversations and putting the spotlight back on themselves. If you call them on this behavior they will likely become *deeply* wounded or very petulant and call you selfish - or claim that it is *you* who are *always* in the spotlight. The thing is that even tho you know this is not the case you are left with the impossible task of proving it. Don't bother - TRUST your gut and walk away!
  7. **Emotional manipulators somehow have the ability to impact the emotional climate of those around them.** When an emotional manipulator is sad or angry the very room thrums with it - it brings a deep instinctual response to find someway to equalize the emotional climate and the quickest route is by making the emotional manipulator feel better - fixing whatever is broken for them. Stick with this type of loser for too long and you will be so enmeshed and co-dependent you will forget you even have needs - let alone that you have just as much right to have your needs met.
  8. **Emotional manipulators have no sense of accountability.** They take no responsibility for themselves or their behavior - it is always about what everyone else has "done **to** them". One of the easiest ways to spot an emotional manipulator is that they often attempt to establish intimacy through the early sharing of deeply personal information that is generally of the "hook-you-in-and-make-you-sorry-for-me" variety. Initially you may perceive this type of person as very sensitive, emotionally open and maybe a little vulnerable. Believe me when I

say that an emotional manipulator is about as vulnerable as a rabid pit bull, and there will always be a problem or a crisis to overcome.