

Dr. Steven Hassan's

BITE MODEL

of Authoritarian Control™



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DR. STEVEN HASSAN'S BITE MODEL® OF AUTHORITARIAN CONTROL



BEHAVIOR



INFORMATION



THOUGHT



EMOTION

Many think of mind control as an ambiguous, mystical process that is difficult to define. Mind control refers to a specific set of methods and techniques, such as hypnosis or thought-stopping, that influence how a person thinks, feels, and acts.

Steven Hassan developed the BITE Model to describe cults' specific methods to recruit and maintain control over people. "BITE" stands for Behavior, Information, Thought, and Emotional control. The BITE model should be used within the Influence Continuum Model to help determine authoritarian control. Not every group or relationship uses every one of these. Some are universal such as deception (Information control), indoctrinating people to distrust critics and former members, or installing phobias to make people afraid of questioning or leaving



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BEHAVIOR CONTROL

1. Regulate individual's physical reality
2. Dictate where, how, and with whom the member lives and associates or isolates
3. When, how and with whom the member has sex
4. Control types of clothing and hairstyles
5. Regulate diet - food and drink, hunger and/or fasting
6. Manipulation and deprivation of sleep
7. Financial exploitation, manipulation or dependence
8. Restrict leisure, entertainment, vacation time
9. Major time spent with group indoctrination and rituals and/or self indoctrination including the Internet
10. Permission required for major decisions
11. Rewards and punishments used to modify behaviors, both positive and negative
12. Discourage individualism, encourage group-think
13. Impose rigid rules and regulations
14. Punish disobedience by beating, torture, burning, cutting, rape, or tattooing/branding
15. Threaten harm to family and friends
16. Force individual to rape or be raped
17. Encourage and engage in corporal punishment
18. Instill dependency and obedience
19. Kidnapping
20. Beating
21. Torture
22. Rape
23. Separation of Families
24. Imprisonment
25. Murder



INFORMATION CONTROL

- 1. Deception:**
 - a. Deliberately withhold information
 - b. Distort information to make it more acceptable
 - c. Systematically lie to the cult member
- 2. Minimize or discourage access to non-cult sources of information, including:**
 - a. Internet, TV, radio, books, articles, newspapers, magazines, media
 - b. Critical information
 - c. Former members
 - d. Keep members busy so they don't have time to think and investigate
 - e. Control through cell phone with texting, calls, internet tracking
- 3. Compartmentalize information into Outsider vs. Insider doctrines**
 - a. Ensure that information is not freely accessible
 - b. Control information at different levels and missions within group
 - c. Allow only leadership to decide who needs to know what and when
- 4. Encourage spying on other members**
 - a. Impose a buddy system to monitor and control member
 - b. Report deviant thoughts, feelings and actions to leadership
 - c. Ensure that individual behavior is monitored by group
- 5. Extensive use of cult-generated information and propaganda, including:**
 - a. Newsletters, magazines, journals, audiotapes, videotapes, YouTube, movies and other media
 - b. Misquoting statements or using them out of context from non-cult sources
- 6. Unethical use of confession**
 - a. Information about sins used to disrupt and/or dissolve identity boundaries
 - b. Withholding forgiveness or absolution
 - c. Manipulation of memory, possible false memories



THOUGHT CONTROL

- 1. Require members to internalize the group's doctrine as truth**
 - a. Adopting the group's 'map of reality' as reality
 - b. Instill black and white thinking
 - c. Decide between good vs. evil
 - d. Organize people into us vs. them (insiders vs. outsiders)
- 2. Change person's name and identity**
- 3. Use of loaded language and cliches which constrict knowledge, stop critical thoughts and reduce complexities into platitudinous buzz words**
- 4. Encourage only 'good and proper' thoughts**
- 5. Hypnotic techniques are used to alter mental states, undermine critical thinking and even to age regress the member**
- 6. Memories are manipulated and false memories are created**
- 7. Teaching thought-stopping techniques which shut down reality testing by stopping negative thoughts and allowing only positive thoughts, including:**
 - a. Denial, rationalization, justification, wishful thinking
 - b. Chanting
 - c. Meditating
 - d. Praying
 - e. Speaking in tongues
 - f. Singing or humming
- 8. Rejection of rational analysis, critical thinking, constructive criticism**
- 9. Forbid critical questions about leader, doctrine, or policy allowed**
- 10. Labeling alternative belief systems as illegitimate, evil, or not useful**
- 11. Instill new "map of reality"**



EMOTIONAL CONTROL

- 1. Manipulate and narrow the range of feelings – some emotions and/or needs are deemed as evil, wrong or selfish**
- 2. Teach emotion-stopping techniques to block feelings of homesickness, anger, doubt**
- 3. Make the person feel that problems are always their own fault, never the leader's or the group's fault**
- 4. Promote feelings of guilt or unworthiness, such as**
 - a. Identity guilt
 - b. You are not living up to your potential
 - c. Your family is deficient
 - d. Your past is suspect
 - e. Your affiliations are unwise
 - f. Your thoughts, feelings, actions are irrelevant or selfish
 - g. Social guilt
 - h. Historical guilt
- 5. Instill fear, such as fear of:**
 - a. Thinking independently
 - b. The outside world
 - c. Enemies
 - d. Losing one's salvation
 - e. Leaving or being shunned by the group
 - f. Other's disapproval
- 6. Extremes of emotional highs and lows – love bombing and praise one moment and then declaring you are horrible sinner**
- 7. Ritualistic and sometimes public confession of sins**
- 8. Phobia indoctrination: inculcating irrational fears about leaving the group or questioning the leader's authority**
 - a. No happiness or fulfillment possible outside of the group
 - b. Terrible consequences if you leave: hell, demon possession, incurable diseases, accidents, suicide, insanity, 10,000 reincarnations, etc.
 - c. Shunning of those who leave; fear of being rejected by friends and family
 - d. Never a legitimate reason to leave; those who leave are weak, undisciplined, unspiritual, worldly, brainwashed by family or counselor, or seduced by money, sex, or rock and roll
 - e. Threats of harm to ex-member and family

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UNLOCK MINDS. EMPOWER LIVES.

To learn more about undue influence, Dr. Steven Hassan has created a series of online life-changing courses. These transformative programs are valuable for individuals who have experienced brainwashing or undue influence and for their loved ones seeking to understand and support them, as well as professionals working with this vulnerable population.

Dr. Hassan's courses provide hope and healing for those who have encountered the harrowing effects of cognitive dissonance, identity confusion, emotional manipulation, isolation, or fear due to manipulative groups. But these courses offer much more – they equip people with essential information and tools to assist and guide them towards recovery and reclamation of their true selves.

These courses also are invaluable for professionals working in human studies fields by helping them gain insights into the intricate dynamics of undue influence and brainwashing. Using this information, these practitioners can better serve their clients, offering tailored support and evidence-based strategies to foster increased self-awareness, restored autonomy, reestablished relationships, emotional healing, and a rediscovered identity. We look forward to supporting you on your recovery and educational journey.



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