



# **In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People**

*George K. Simon Jr.*

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# In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People

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## **In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People** George K. Simon Jr.

Dr. George Simon knows how people push your buttons. Your children--especially teens--are expert at it, as is your mate. A co-worker may quietly undermine your efforts while professing to be helpful, or your boss may prey on your weaknesses. Manipulative people have two goals: to win and to look good doing it. Often those they abuse are only vaguely aware of what is happening to them. In this eye-opening book, you'll also discover...

- \* 4 reasons why victims have a hard time leaving abusive relationships
- \* Power tactics manipulators use to push their own agendas and justify their behavior
- \* Ways to redefine the rules of engagement between you and an abuser
- \* How to spot potential weaknesses in your character that can set you up for manipulation.
- \* 12 tools for personal empowerment to help you maintain greater strength in all relationships

## **In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People Details**

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# From Reader Review In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People for online ebook

## Manny says

One of my favourite episodes in John Sladek's *Roderick: The Education of a Young Machine* is the bit where the eponymous hero is kidnapped by a travelling carnival. They stick him in a booth, with his power supply connected to a coin-operated meter. If you put in a dollar, he comes alive for a minute and tells you what kind of person you are. Roderick only has one script, but it pleases everyone: he tells them that basically they're too nice, and that they shouldn't let everyone use them all the time.

Roderick, who's a sweet-tempered little robot, puts up with it bravely for a while. In the end, though, he politely asks the carnie boss if he can go back home to his family. But he's bringing in a lot of dollars, and the boss doesn't see why he shouldn't go on doing that. He snarls at Roderick that he's got no sense of gratitude, what the fuck's wrong with him? "Well," says Roderick in his endearing *Candide*-like way, "basically I'm too nice, I shouldn't let everyone else use me all the time..."

This book is an expanded version of Roderick's spiel, and I'm sure most people will like it for the same reason. I certainly did! And, although I'm making fun of it, it is quite a good book. People around you are, indeed, very often manipulative. They use underhand ways to make you do what they want: they lie to you, guilt-trip you, make you feel that you're to blame for things that are actually their fault, and so on. The author, a clinical psychologist, has a lot of experience of this kind of person. He gives you a detailed list of the most common tricks used by manipulators and some sensible advice about how to counter them. I'm sure I'll use some of his tips myself in the not too distant future.

In fact, there's only one thing I don't like about the book, and that's the unspoken assumption that the manipulators, the "covert-aggressive people" in his terminology, are always "them". Now what could be wrong with that? I'll give you a hint. Why is the Roderick sketch so funny?

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## Haengbok92 says

This was recommended to me by a friend who is going through a very messy divorce. I found the book to be quite interesting in helping one learn how to identify and deal with manipulative people. Especially in regards to viewing manipulation as a form of aggression as opposed to neurotic self protection. Truthfully, it seems that (with the exception of manipulative children) that the best solution to the people profiled is "run away!" but the author does a fine job of giving examples and offering solutions for those who choose (or have to) stay in contact with aggressive, chronic manipulators (which the author assigns the label "character disturbed"). Also excellent advice on setting boundaries and also on how to keep yourself from being manipulated. I also liked the book's comparison of self esteem vs. self respect--very useful.

While I found the book to be helpful, I also think it runs the risk of creating a dichotomy between character disturbed and neurotic that does not seem to allow for any ground for a healthy psyche. (the author does try to use degrees neurosis as a sort of healthy psyche, but this is vague) In this sense, the book seems to have a Freudian approach, even as it definitely espouses cognitive-behavioral approaches in dealing with manipulators. This is something to be aware of when reading.

Overall, I think the techniques and examples in the book, as well as the approaches to setting boundaries are excellent, especially for people who are in the grips of being manipulated and who need verification of their own worth as well as techniques for protecting themselves against these types of manipulations. While I'm not sure I agree with the author's overall viewpoints in the last chapter, the book is well worth reading. Lots of useful advice!

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## **Saurabh says**

### **What is I liked about the book:**

1. It confronts the "traditional" approach of understanding personality and neurosis and suggests that unchecked pervasiveness of the same can actually be maladaptive.
2. The model of manipulative behaviour is simple yet effective. I wonder if there are better ones available.
3. Attempts to show how covert-aggression is a distinctive feature of manipulation.
4. The stories and clinical accounts to illustrate the tactics.
5. Helps one identify those tactics, generate awareness of one's own vulnerabilities and how to minimize them.
6. Got me thinking about how manipulative behavior could be linked to other traits like narcissism, emotional dependence/independence, sense of entitlement etc.
7. I found the treatment to be fair and balanced.

### **What I think lacked in the book:**

1. Some of the definitions were a bit muddy.

### **Verdict:**

The author is a clinical psychologist. He draws upon his experiences in practice to explain why some people are manipulative, how covert-aggression translates into manipulation, how people misread the signals, what can be done (cannot be done) to deal with such behaviour. Some of the observations are extremely insightful and useful. The mildly curious should read the book. It should be kept in mind that this was first published in 1996, therefore, one can hope to find information elsewhere that is grounded in recent research.

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## **Lucy says**

Very eye-opening book. Simon discusses the most common ways people set out to manipulate others, but more importantly demonstrates the ways in which we set ourselves up or allow ourselves to be manipulated. Three things that really resonated with me: 1. He cautions against using old psychiatric models from the Victorian age. People who manipulate others or do unconscionable things seemingly without remorse are not necessarily "compensating" for their deep-rooted fears and insecurities--they may be "character disordered," or as I like to think of them, real honest-to-God assholes. 2. He distinguishes between "passive aggression" and "covert aggression," the latter being where someone is trying to hurt or deceive you but uses your tendency to think the best of people to cover up their intentions until it's too late for you. 3. He offers actual, real-life actions for dealing with manipulative people and not letting them get the jump on you.

He loses me at the end where he starts to blame our "permissive" society and suggests that stronger religious affiliations, among other things, would be a likely fix to behaviors on the manipulative spectrum.

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## Aliya says

Blind spots are the human limitations of the intelligent mind. Too often we think we are too smart, too accomplished and too reasonable to put up with any nonsense from anyone. Well, we eat humble pie when we find ourselves to be in situations where people use us, abuse us and generally make us feel bitter and resentful.

This book puts in perspective situations where we may be subject to manipulation, without us realizing the full extent of our loss. It also gives us tips to deal with such situations.

As with most self help books, this book highlights manipulation strategies quite well, however, it falls a tad short in offering practical solutions. Less than 10% of the book is applied to strategies/solutions and 90% discusses the situation. I think if the author had shown what to do through a play and replay of dialogue (with suggested changes), it would have been exceedingly helpful.

At the end of the day, this is a good book to read and I recommend it for people to gain a clear perspective of their situation and how to remedy it.

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## Jeff says

This is not well-written, thorough, or clear enough for me to give it more than 3 stars, but the ideas in it are worth at least 4 (if not 5) stars. In my opinion, the most important idea that Dr. Simon presents is: in general, manipulators, abusers, bullies, and otherwise overly-aggressive people act this way--NOT because of some underlying fear, insecurity, or past abuse--but because this type of unacceptable behavior allows them to get what they want

I ordered this book via interlibrary loan months ago because i was sick of just putting up with an abusive client. I hoped that it would at least shed some light on the way The Dread Client thinks and why he misbehaves. Well, the main key to dealing with him turns out to be based on something my coworkers and i kept saying to each other when somebody would offer a suggestion: he's not going to change; we've been trying to (re)train him for years and he hasn't changed a bit. So, as Dr. Simon points out in the concluding chapter, we must (re)train ourselves, we must change the way we behave: that's all that we can control (patently obvious, right? but it helps when somebody outside your situation tells you).

## UNDERSTANDING MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE

As the subtitle says, the book is about manipulative people. Simon's term for them is covert aggressives: "They're the kind of people who fight hard for everything they want but they do their best to conceal their aggressive nature." They are different from *assertive* people in that they seek to attain their goals illicitly (see methods below) and without revealing what their true goals are. Victims of this type of aggression *feel* that they've been victimized but they can't point to obvious signs of abuse or violation to make it known to others...so they usually end up giving the smooth-talking perpetrator the benefit of the doubt and the spin cycle continues.

Major personality attributes of covert aggressives: a) *always* want to win; b) ambitiously seek to be on top of every situation and in control of every interaction; c) do everything possible to maintain plausible deniability; d) quickly identify & take advantage of the weaknesses of those who stand in their way; e) have undeveloped consciences that allow them to pursue their goals by any means (right or wrong); and f) "view people as pawns in the game (contest) of life."

The 4 main steps to dealing with them: know/understand what they are like; know/understand their most common manipulative techniques; know & own your own defensive weaknesses; and figure out what you can do differently & better in advance of being confronted by their wiles.

The main tactics of the covert aggressive are: denial ("I didn't mean *that!*"), selective inattention ("I have no idea what you're talking about"), rationalization ("Oh, well, that's because ..."), diversion (straight Q: "Are you planning on firing me?"; diversionary A: "I think your sales are as good as ever"), lying (usually in such a way that you cannot prove they're lying), covert intimidation ("Boy, it sure is hard to find a new job these days"), guilt-tripping ("My desire to abuse alcohol sure quiets down when you're around, honey"), shaming ("I think any parent who truly cares about their child would..."), playing the victim role ("Everybody hates me!"), vilifying the victim (often in conjunction w/playing the victim, "That's because you hate me and you're always saying bad things about me!"), playing the servant role ("I'm doing these things because they're what God/country/company would want me to do"), seduction ("You're doing a great job"; unsaid, though, is that i'm still going to replace you with my friend), blaming others ("You're not supporting me enough; *that's* why i'm drinking again"), and minimization ("It's not *that* bad").

## DEALING WITH MANIPULATIVE PEOPLE

Let go of the misconception that the covert aggressive manipulator is basically the same as you. Become a better & more secure judge of character. Know yourself as thoroughly as possible, especially by identifying traits that are exploitable such as naivete, over-conscientiousness, low self-confidence, over-intellectualization, and emotional dependency. Avoid trying to fix, change, or train the manipulator--focus on fixing, changing, & training yourself instead. Don't accept their excuses. "Confront inappropriate behavior directly and label it for what it is." Judge their actions rather than trying to glean their hidden intentions. Create and *own* your personal agenda and then stick to it.

Set personal limits! "First, you must decide what kinds of behavior you'll tolerate from another before taking some counter-action or deciding to disengage. Second, you must decide what kind of action you're both willing and able to take in order to take better care of yourself."

The standard fair-fighting rules apply (or you can look at Dr. Phil's rules). Use "I" statements; be clear about exactly what you want; avoid generalities; specify what you like, dislike, expect, want. Do not allow the manipulator to evade direct questions; demand a direct answer. If you must, resort to the TV courtroom drama cliché of asking yes/no questions and then insisting on one-word answers that consist of only "yes" or "no." Avoid getting caught up in The Past or in speculation about the future.

When confronting a specific covert-aggressive misdeed, avoid sarcasm, hostility, put-downs, shaming, and provocation. Focus on the actual deed and demand that the perpetrator clearly explain what s/he will do to correct that behavior. Similarly, don't threaten the covert-aggressive. Threats are often "If ... then" statements. Instead, "Have the courage to stand up for what you want openly and directly." As in, "I am going to do X" -- not IF something else happens or BECAUSE something else happens, but simply because it is your plan.

One of the most important things to remember is that covert-aggressives value winning above all else, so attempt to devise & propose win-win scenarios. These agreements must be reasonable, "appropriate, reliable, verifiable and enforceable." Expect them to try to weasel out of their end of the bargain and be prepared to enforce consequences.

And finally, act quickly and decisively before the covert-aggressive really gets rolling. If they're 3/4 of the way to their goal, it'll be harder to derail them than if they're just getting started. As soon as you notice manipulative behavior, name it as such and plan your clear, open, and honest actions to ensure your reasonable and fair goals are not subverted by the wolf in sheep's clothing.

Nobody but possibly my 5 GoodReads friends will ever read this review, but i thank you for doing so. I hope it wasn't too preachy. I am going to reread the Dealing Effectively with Manipulative People section at least one more time before sending it back to the library because i'm actually somewhat hopeful that this book could help me and my coworkers deal with The Dread Client.

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## **Tatiana says**

I read this book because of other reviews on Goodreads that I saw, which highlighted some tactics that manipulative people use against others. They struck a chord of familiarity for me, as I've known various people in my life who have used these methods repeatedly to avoid responsibility for their aggression. I found the book most useful in clearing away the fog of confusion that such characters use to hide their true colors and avoid taking responsibility.

The biggest insight the book contains is the idea that not everybody has a conscience. That's something that the rest of us find really hard to understand and accept. Not everyone is motivated by desire to do what's fair and right. Not everyone feels rewarded by being part of a social structure in which everyone is loved and appreciated, and works for the good of the team. Some people don't get good brain chemistry from loving and being loved. They just don't feel it. So instead, since their brains don't reward them the usual way, they tend to focus more on trying to win, to control, and to be in power in every situation. That's what makes them feel good, so that's what they pursue.

The heart of the book is chapter 9, in which 18 common tactics are listed. There is a good bit of overlap between tactics, but they are worth memorizing, I think. It's important to recognize these people when we encounter them in our lives, to prevent the damage they can do if unchecked. I numbered the tactics for ease of reference. They are as follows.

1. Minimization -- e.g. "I barely touched her. She doesn't even have a bruise. She's just being a crybaby."
2. Lying -- Covert-aggressive people have no compunctions about lying, and indeed will say anything at all that gets them out of facing the consequences of their behavior.
3. Denial -- Simply saying the aggression didn't happen, doesn't happen, the victim is just crazy, the child has false memories, or whatever.
4. Selective Inattention -- Refusing to pay attention to anything said about the person's aggression, to any attempt to address the problem. Being too busy to listen right now. Stonewalling.

5. Rationalization -- e.g. "She hit me once so she's only getting what she deserves. Beating kids teaches them how to protect themselves from bullies they'll meet in life. I'm teaching her fighting skills." Things that sound just plausible enough to turn aside the wrath of any accuser.

6. Diversion -- e.g. "What about what you did yesterday?" Any change of subject, especially to put the other person on the defensive, that has the effect of confusing the issue at hand and letting the aggressor off the hook.

7. Evasion (deliberate vagueness) -- e.g. "I'm not sure. We did a lot of things," when asked a direct question. Any answer that isn't a straight answer, particularly one meant to deceive by implying something that isn't true.

8. Covert Intimidation (veiled threats) -- e.g. "jokes" about firing you (a boss), physically harming you (an abusive family member), euthanizing pets, abandoning children, self-harm, etc. Can sometimes be implied through posture or facial expressions. Often subtle.

9. Guilt-tripping -- Aggressive people are aware that others are more conscientious than they are, so they play on this to keep them insecure and on the defensive. If they suggest, even imply, that the person who's trying to address their aggression may be an imperfect spouse, parent, boss, or worker, their feelings of responsibility and conscientiousness kick in and keep them from pressing the original issue. The aggressor has no such concerns or compunctions about their own behaviors, but they've learned to use the fact that others do worry about such things to sidestep their own issues when confronted.

10. Shaming -- Use of subtle sarcasm and put-downs to increase self-doubt and decrease self-esteem of the people being manipulated. Sometimes this can be conveyed in glances or sighs, without even using words.

11. Playing the victim role -- sometimes aggressive people can recast defense against their aggression as aggression by others toward themselves. They then pretend to be the victim of the aggression instead of the perpetrator, e.g. "You hate me. Why are you always picking on me?"

12. Vilifying the victim -- In an attempt to gain the upper hand, the aggressor may simply resort to insults, e.g. "you're a terrible spouse (parent), you suck, you're boring, ugly, stupid, you have Asperger's, you don't understand people" etc.

13. Playing the Servant Role -- apparently some aggressors can gain control by pretending to be the servant. (One of the few of these tactics I haven't personally experienced.)

14. Seduction -- apparently some aggressors gain trust and cover their aggressive intent by praising or flattering the victim. (Another tactic I haven't seen in use.)

15. Projecting the blame -- this is finding someone else who is at fault for whatever the problem may be. It could be birth parents, friends, coworkers, ex-spouses, or the one who's bringing the issue forward. Anyone else will do to get the discussion off track and leave the manipulative person's own choices out of the question.

16. Feigning Innocence -- Sometimes all it takes to not be held accountable for aggressive behavior is simply to look innocent and pretend it never happened. Since such people have no compunctions about lying or deceiving, they're quite likely to fool others in this way.



17. Feigning Ignorance or Confusion -- the same basic tactic as in 16 above.

18. Brandishing Anger -- people who manipulate can sometimes deflect accountability by flaring up in anger whenever they're confronted. This keeps other people timid and off-kilter and prevents the true problem from being addressed.

19. Threatening self-harm -- this last one is one I added, something depressed or suicidal people can use to manipulate those who love them. It's used often enough that I think it deserves its own number. Since the suicidal person cares less about their own well-being than others do, they can use direct or implied threats of suicide or self-harm to prevent anyone from upsetting them by calling them out on their aggressive behavior. In a sense, they hold themselves hostage, "Do what I want or I'll injure your loved one (myself)."

That's the complete list of tactics mentioned in the book, plus the last that I added. There are also 14 ways to stop letting oneself be manipulated in these ways. I'm going to give the letters for ease of reference.

a. Accept no excuses.

b. Judge actions, not intentions.

c. Set personal limits -- if you have thoughtfully decided up front what you will and won't tolerate, this helps you make the correct call in the heat of the moment.

d. Make direct requests -- people can more easily comply with straightforward requests and requirements.

e. Accept only direct responses -- don't accept vague non-answers.

f. Stay focused and in the here and now -- it's more effective to address aggression as it happens, rather than talking about things that happened much earlier.

g. Keep the weight of responsibility on the aggressor -- don't let him or her shift the blame, lay guilt trips, or otherwise wiggle out of the issue.

h. Avoid sarcasm, hostility, putdowns -- it's far more effective to calmly and factually address problems rather than lashing out or letting annoyance or anger show.

i. Avoid making threats that you won't carry through -- only make if-then statements that you're sure you will follow through on.

j. Take action quickly -- the sooner you address a problem the more easily it can be corrected.

k. Speak for yourself -- don't bring up other people's issues. Make "I" statements.

l. Make reasonable agreements -- be willing to bargain and find win-win solutions whenever possible. Some things should never be bargained away, i.e. physical safety of all concerned or equal partnership in marriage, for instance.

m. Be prepared for consequences -- if the aggressor has choices he or she can exercise, be prepared for the

worst they can do. Accept the possibility that the aggressor may try to cause you harm in indirect ways, and do what you can to protect yourself.

n. Be honest with yourself – I think this means be sure you aren't using one or more of these manipulative tactics yourself. Be willing to change anything that needs to change about your own self, too.

This book has been life-changing for me. The dynamic in our home is so much more positive now, and we're able to make real progress. I recommend it for everyone who has coworkers, family, spouse, or children.

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## notgettingenough says

Fuck. Manny's reading this book *In Sheep's Clothing Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People* and I'm thinking he's going to start applying it to goodreads, isn't he? He's going to start looking at reviews and writing comments like, sorry, but that's a review that's trying to get a vote through covert-aggression and I'm not falling for it. Vote withheld.

So he says he's especially interested in this concept covert-aggression, he thinks it's useful and I've spent all night sitting up in bed here in hospital going through my reviews and wondering. Shit. Is that review where I said I was going to kill myself if people didn't vote for it, is *that* covert aggression? It doesn't seem covert to me, I thought it was just desperate, but. And that review where –

Before I went too far I thought I'd better look up what it means and I found this extract from the book itself, which I've quoted in part, for the detail go to <http://www.rickcross.com/reference/bra...>

### The Process of Victimization

For a long time, I wondered why manipulation victims have a hard time seeing what really goes on in manipulative interactions. At first, I was tempted to fault them. But I've learned that they get hoodwinked for some very good reasons:

1. A manipulator's aggression is not obvious. Our gut may tell us that they're fighting for something, struggling to overcome us, gain power, or have their way, and we find ourselves unconsciously on the defensive. But because we can't point to clear, objective evidence they're aggressing against us, we can't readily validate our feelings.
2. The tactics manipulators use can make it seem like they're hurting, caring, defending, ..., almost anything but fighting. These tactics are hard to recognize as merely clever ploys. They always make just enough sense to make a person doubt their gut hunch that they're being taken advantage of or abused. Besides, the tactics not only make it hard for you to consciously and objectively tell that a manipulator is fighting, but they also simultaneously keep you or consciously on the defensive. These features make them highly effective psychological weapons to which anyone can be vulnerable. It's hard to think clearly when someone has you emotionally on the run.

3. All of us have weaknesses and insecurities that a clever manipulator might exploit. Sometimes, we're aware of these weaknesses and how someone might use them to take advantage of us. For example, I hear parents say things like: "Yeah, I know I have a big guilt button." – But at the time their manipulative child is busily pushing that button, they can easily forget what's really going on. Besides, sometimes we're unaware of our biggest vulnerabilities. Manipulators often know us better than we know ourselves. They know what buttons to push, when and how hard. Our lack of self-knowledge sets us up to be exploited.

4. What our gut tells us a manipulator is like, challenges everything we've been taught to believe about human nature. We've been inundated with a psychology that has us seeing everybody, at least to some degree, as afraid, insecure or "hung-up." So, while our gut tells us we're dealing with a ruthless conniver, our head tells us they must be really frightened or wounded "underneath." What's more, most of us generally hate to think of ourselves as callous and insensitive people. We hesitate to make harsh or seemingly negative judgments about others. We want to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume they don't really harbor the malevolent intentions we suspect. We're more apt to doubt and blame ourselves for daring to believe what our gut tells us about our manipulator's character.

Almost everyone is familiar with the term defense mechanism. Defense mechanisms are the "automatic" (i.e. unconscious) mental behaviors all of us employ to protect or defend ourselves from the "threat" of some emotional pain.....

While, from a certain perspective we might say someone engaging in these behaviors is defending their ego from any sense of shame or guilt, it's important to realize that at the time the aggressor is exhibiting these behaviors, he is not primarily defending (i.e. attempting to prevent some internally painful event from occurring), but rather fighting to maintain position, gain power and to remove any obstacles (both internal and external) in the way of getting what he wants. Seeing the aggressor as on the defensive in any sense is a set-up for victimization. Recognizing that they're primarily on the offensive, mentally prepares a person for the decisive action they need to take in order to avoid being run over. Therefore, I think it's best to conceptualize many of the mental behaviors (no matter how "automatic" or "unconscious" they may appear) we often think of as defense mechanisms, as offensive power tactics, because aggressive personalities employ them primarily to manipulate, control and achieve dominance over others. Rather than trying to prevent something emotionally painful or dreadful from happening, anyone using these tactics is primarily trying to ensure that something they want to happen does indeed happen....

Denial – This is when the aggressor refuses to admit that they've done something harmful or hurtful when they clearly have. It's a way they lie (to themselves as well as to others) about their aggressive intentions. This "Who... Me?" tactic is a way of "playing innocent," and invites the victim to feel unjustified in confronting the aggressor about the inappropriateness of a behavior. It's also the way the aggressor gives him/herself permission to keep right on doing what they want to do....

Rationalization – A rationalization is the excuse an aggressor tries to offer for engaging in an inappropriate or harmful behavior. It can be an effective tactic, especially when the explanation or justification the aggressor offers makes just enough sense that any reasonably conscientious person is likely to fall for it. It's a powerful tactic because it not only serves to remove any internal resistance the aggressor might have about doing what he wants to do (quieting any

qualms of conscience he might have) but also to keep others off his back. If the aggressor can convince you he's justified in whatever he's doing, then he's freer to pursue his goals without interference....

**Lying** – It's often hard to tell when a person is lying at the time he's doing it. Fortunately, there are times when the truth will out because circumstances don't bear out somebody's story. But there are also times when you don't know you've been deceived until it's too late. One way to minimize the chances that someone will put one over on you is to remember that because aggressive personalities of all types will generally stop at nothing to get what they want, you can expect them to lie and cheat. Another thing to remember is that manipulators – covert-aggressive personalities that they are – are prone to lie in subtle, covert ways. Courts are well aware of the many ways that people lie, as they require that court oaths charge that testifiers tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Manipulators often lie by withholding a significant amount of the truth from you or by distorting the truth. They are adept at being vague when you ask them direct questions. This is an especially slick way of lying' omission. Keep this in mind when dealing with a suspected wolf in sheep's clothing. Always seek and obtain specific, confirmable information.

**Covert Intimidation** – Aggressors frequently threaten their victims to keep them anxious, apprehensive and in a one-down position. Covert-aggressives intimidate their victims by making veiled (subtle, indirect or implied) threats. Guilt-tripping and shaming are two of the covert-aggressive's favourite weapons. Both are special intimidation tactics.

**Guilt-tripping** – One thing that aggressive personalities know well is that other types of persons have very different consciences than they do. Manipulators are often skilled at using what they know to be the greater conscientiousness of their victims as a means of keeping them in a self-doubting, anxious, and submissive position. The more conscientious the potential victim, the more effective guilt is as a weapon. Aggressive personalities of all types use guilt-tripping so frequently and effectively as a manipulative tactic, that I believe it illustrates how fundamentally different in character they are compared to other (especially neurotic) personalities. All a manipulator has to do is suggest to the conscientious person that they don't care enough, are too selfish, etc., and that person immediately starts to feel bad. On the contrary, a conscientious person might try until they're blue in the face to get a manipulator (or any other aggressive personality) to feel badly about a hurtful behavior, acknowledge responsibility, or admit wrongdoing, to absolutely no avail.

**Shaming** – This is the technique of using subtle sarcasm and put-downs as a means of increasing fear and self-doubt in others. Covert-aggressives use this tactic to make others feel inadequate or unworthy, and therefore, defer to them. It's an effective way to foster a continued sense of personal inadequacy in the weaker party, thereby allowing an aggressor to maintain a position of dominance.

**Playing the Victim Role** – This tactic involves portraying oneself as an innocent victim of circumstances or someone else's behavior in order to gain sympathy, evoke compassion and thereby get something from another. One thing that covert-aggressive personalities count on is the fact that less calloused and less hostile personalities usually can't stand to see anyone suffering. Therefore, the tactic is simple. Convince your victim you're suffering in some way, and they'll try to relieve your distress....

Vilifying the Victim – This tactic is frequently used in conjunction with the tactic of playing the victim role. The aggressor uses this tactic to make it appear he is only responding (i.e. defending himself against) aggression on the part of the victim. It enables the aggressor to better put the victim on the defensive....

Playing the Servant Role – Covert-aggressives use this tactic to cloak their self-serving agendas in the guise of service to a more noble cause. It's a common tactic but difficult to recognize. By pretending to be working hard on someone else's behalf, covert-aggressives conceal their own ambition, desire for power, and quest for a position of dominance over others....

Projecting the blame (blaming others) – Aggressive personalities are always looking for a way to shift the blame for their aggressive behavior. Covert-aggressives are not only skilled at finding scapegoats, they're expert at doing so in subtle, hard to detect ways.

Minimization – This tactic is a unique kind of denial coupled with rationalization. When using this maneuver, the aggressor is attempting to assert that his abusive behavior isn't really as harmful or irresponsible as someone else may be claiming. It's the aggressor's attempt to make a molehill out of a mountain.

I've presented the principal tactics that covert-aggressives use to manipulate and control others. They are not always easy to recognize. Although all aggressive personalities tend to use these tactics, covert-aggressives generally use them slickly, subtly and adeptly. Anyone dealing with a covertly aggressive person will need to heighten gut-level sensitivity to the use of these tactics if they're to avoid being taken in by them.

So, this is what I want to say right now before the whole Manny psycho-analysing goodreads friends starts. I'm not covertly aggressive. Anybody who thinks I am is just not able to see that it is their problem that I'm like this, not mine. Telling you I'm writing this in hospital is not a covert aggressive attempt to make you feel like you have to vote for my review, even though it's probably the fault of whoever is reading this that I'm here. If this review isn't any good it's not my fault, you should blame the author of the book, George Simon and Manny, not necessarily in that order. Frankly I already feel like I'm a victim of Manny's use of psycho-analysis on goodreads, even though it hasn't happened yet. I would also point out that I vote for lots of your reviews, Manny, and isn't that worth anything?

And, Manny, if I may end by blowing you a kiss and hoping it lands in the right place, I am just so NOT doing this:

Seduction – Covert-aggressive personalities are adept at charming, praising, flattering or overtly supporting others in order to get them to lower their defenses.

I just love blowing you kisses, even if it isn't going to get me a vote. x

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## **Allie says**

Excellent. Succinct. Highly recommend.

I listened to this, trying to figure out how to deal with a specific person in my life, but I gained much more insight than anticipated. Well done!

(I'd like to thank my local traffic for being so horrendous that I finished this in two days.)

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## **Faye says**

An interesting book. The biggest takeaway, for me, is that the belief that most people think the same way, and want to do the right thing, is fundamentally flawed. I grew up being told to see the good in everyone, which has occasionally cost me. Some people really don't feel guilt or shame in the same way, and to see this confirmed in black and white has made me realise how naive I have been (and how badly I was taught!) A worthwhile read. I also particularly liked the concept of building self-respect in children by praising their efforts, rather than inflating their self-esteem (and neglecting their self-respect), by praising qualities they have no specific control over (looks, intelligence, etc). The advice in the last chapter on how to manage your own behaviour is a succinct and useful summary of how to be more direct and assertive and I think it runs beyond just dealing with manipulative people and is actually a good approach to healthier relationships with everyone.

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## **Amy Raby says**

Worth reading if you deal with a manipulative person in your family, workplace, or social circle. And who doesn't? These people are everywhere. The author talks about a continuum that has the neurotic personality at one end (conscientious, prone to guilt and shame) and the character-disordered personality at the other (weak conscience, seeks to win/dominate at all costs). If you've read about sociopaths, you already know about the extreme character-disordered personality who has no conscience at all. But this book talks also about people who are not that extreme, who do possess a conscience and can experience guilt and shame, but much less so than people who fall toward the neurotic end of the scale.

Neurotic personalities are the backbone of society, and character-disordered individuals often seek to take advantage of them and get something for nothing. This book is about a particular type of advantage seeking, "covert aggression" -- people who manipulate others, usually by preying on their sense of conscience, to get what they want.

One clear theme of the book is that we need to stop making excuses for people who manipulate others. It's common to hear statements like, "He acts this way because he has low self-esteem" or "She lashes out because she feels threatened." But manipulative behavior is not defensive; it's offensive and aggressive. The manipulator is fighting for something he or she wants, often dominance or a one-up position over others. And it's not unconscious. The manipulator knows exactly what he or she is doing.

The book presents a number of case studies, and also a section about the various techniques manipulators use, such as diversion, evasion, lying, guilt tripping, shaming, and playing the victim. It's useful to have a name to assign to various manipulative behaviors so that you can identify these techniques when someone tries to employ them against you.

This short book desperately needed a good edit. There are numerous errors, including misused words. And I would have liked more detail and examples in the section about techniques manipulators use. Good content overall, though.

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### **Kenny says**

A fine introduction for first-time seekers of knowledge on the subject. But like so many books of this self-help type, the bulk of material is dedicated to case studies. While it is necessary to get some background on why wolves are wolves and how they employ psychic trickery to manipulate, it seems to me that by the time a person is reading books on the subject they have been afflicted enough such that being introduced to more nut-bags becomes a miserable, disheartening experience. What victims need is SPECIFIC responses to SPECIFIC situations in order to minimize the damage a wolf may have on one's life and psyche. This book does give some good basic guidelines of how to recognize and draw boundaries with aggressors but unfortunately does little to instruct on how to prevent and diffuse covert aggressors specifically. There is even some warm fuzzy summation of a case giving the reader a sense of resolve that is not only unrealistic, fantasy, wishful thinking, but contradictory to the author's own previous statements about aggressors not changing. Covert aggressors are those that operate in the shadows, but this case says that the victim was able to draw the fighting out into the open. This may be possible in the case of a child-parent relationship, but does not help me with my boss.

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### **Margaret says**

This book was a Godsend. I've been baited, steered, and manipulated by a covert aggressive family member on and off for most of my life. I always knew something was wrong with the way he went about scheming to get his way rather than earning it, but I never had a way to describe what was going on until now. The tips for protecting yourself from the machinations of a manipulator are wonderful. This aspect of my life is going to be far less distressing in the future! My only problem with 'In Sheep's Clothing' was the epilogue. Simon is great psychologist and he offers practical solutions for handling aggressive personalities, but the epilogue is more of a weird political screed. When Simon sticks to his own field, 'In Sheep's Clothing' is a great resource for anyone who's ever been a target of a covert-aggressive. Highly recommended!

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### **Larry Ortman says**

I found this book after looking online and trying to understand a person I was recently involved with. I got chills reading the tactics of these "covert-aggressive" individuals, as many of them were used on me. These people are very cunning at making you feel like it is "all you", "you're crazy to think that" and to completely ignore your screaming intuition. The book gave me insight not only in the tactics, but the psychology of these people who's primary motive is to win at all costs. Most of them are damaged individuals with traumatic childhoods, or addictive personalities that have learned to only think of themselves. Their lack of a

conscience and inability to feel their emotions enable them to manipulate ours, while making us feel that they are on the defensive.

The case studies in the book are helpful to see the tactics used in "real life" situations. Chances are if you've found this book and are reading it you've had experiences of your own. While there are strategies for dealing with these tactics and learning to shut down the manipulator, most times the best thing to do is cut and run. These people have used and mastered these tactics their whole life to get their way and deflect all blame and accountability for their actions. If for some reason you must stay, then being aware of the tactics and how they are used to push your buttons will enable you to see the manipulations for what they are and not fall prey.

The most important thing is "trust your gut". If you're dealing with someone you know is lying and they're trying to make you feel like you're the crazy one. If guilt or phony anger is used against you to make you back down from seeking the truth. If threats of leaving or withholding love are used to keep you submissive. If confronting an individual about something they did ends with you apologizing and not knowing how you got there, then you need to read this book. With understanding comes the power to decide if this individual is worth having in your life. Personally I found the book very empowering, and it enabled me to leave the relationship once and for all. No bitterness, I can only feel compassion for a person that feels they must win at all costs, and pity for the next person that falls in their trap.

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## **Anne says**

If there is a manipulative person in your life, you don't need to read things about how they got that way and feel all sorry for them. That's for later. If you are dealing with a manipulative person, you need to read this book. NOW. It's about how to deal with manipulative people and reclaim your life.

Having said that, I hope you don't need to read this book.

Re-reading parts again.

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