

## Dr. Margaret T. Singer - 6 Conditions for Thought Reform

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These conditions create the atmosphere needed to put a thought reform system into place:

- **Keep the person unaware of what is going on and how she or he is being changed a step at a time.**

Potential new members are led, step by step, through a behavioral-change program without being aware of the final agenda or full content of the group. The goal may be to make them deployable agents for the leadership, to get them to buy more courses, or get them to make a deeper commitment, depending on the leader's aim and desires.

- **Control the person's social and/or physical environment; especially control the person's time.**

Through various methods, newer members are kept busy and led to think about the group and its content during as much of their waking time as possible.

- **Systematically create a sense of powerlessness in the person.**

This is accomplished by getting members away from the normal social support group for a period of time and into an environment where the majority of people are already group members.

The members serve as models of the attitudes and behaviors of the group and speak an in- group language.

Strip members of their main occupation (quit jobs, drop out of school) or source of income or have them turn over their income (or the majority of) to the group.

Once stripped of your usual support network, your confidence in your own perception erodes.

As your sense of powerlessness increases, your good judgment and understanding of the world are diminished. (ordinary view of reality is destabilized)

As group attacks your previous worldview, it causes you distress and inner confusion; yet you are not allowed to speak about this confusion or object to it -- leadership suppresses questions and counters resistance.

This process is speeded up if you are kept tired -- the cult will keep you constantly busy.

- **Manipulate a system of rewards, punishments and experiences in such a way as to inhibit behavior that reflects the person's former social identity.**

Manipulation of experiences can be accomplished through various methods of trance induction, including leaders using such techniques as paced speaking patterns, guided imagery, chanting, long prayer sessions or lectures, and lengthy meditation sessions.

Your old beliefs and patterns of behavior are defined as irrelevant or evil. Leadership wants these old patterns eliminated, so the member must suppress them

Members get positive feedback for conforming to the group's beliefs and behaviors and negative feedback for old beliefs and behavior.

- **Manipulate a system of rewards, punishments, and experiences in order to promote learning the group's ideology or belief system and group-approved behaviors.**

Good behavior, demonstrating an understanding and acceptance of the group's beliefs, and compliance are rewarded while questioning, expressing doubts or criticizing are met with disapproval, redress and possible rejection. If one expresses a question, he or she is made to feel that there is something inherently wrong with them to be questioning.

The only feedback members get is from the group, they become totally dependent upon the rewards given by those who control the environment.

Members must learn varying amounts of new information about the beliefs of the group and the behaviors expected by the group.

The more complicated and filled with contradictions the new system is and the more difficult it is to learn, the more effective the conversion process will be.

Esteem and affection from peers is very important to new recruits. Approval comes from having the new member's behaviors and thought patterns conform to the models (members). Members' relationship with peers is threatened whenever they fail to learn or display new behaviors. Over time, the easy solution to the insecurity generated by the difficulties of learning the new system is to inhibit any display of doubts -- new recruits simply acquiesce, affirm and act as if they do understand and accept the new ideology.

- **Put forth a closed system of logic and an authoritarian structure that permits no feedback and refuses to be modified except by leadership approval or executive order.**

The group has a top-down, pyramid structure. The leaders must have verbal ways of never losing.

Members are not allowed to question, criticize or complain -- if they do, the leaders allege that the member is defective -- not the organization or the beliefs.

The individual is always wrong -- the system, its leaders and its belief are always right.

Conversion or remolding of the individual member happens in a closed system. As members learn to modify their behavior in order to be accepted in this closed system, they change -- begin to speak the language -- which serves to further isolate them from their prior beliefs and behaviors.

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