

Singer's Six Conditions

Excerpted from *Cults in Our Midst*, Margaret Thaler Singer, p. 64-69.

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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.
6. **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. (Singer, 1995)

Except where noted, entire contents Copyright 1998-2012 reFOCUS, Inc. Telephone: (386) 439-7541. All rights reserved. Opinions of individual authors on this site are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of reFOCUS.