

## Ten Things Romantic Manipulators Say

If you grew up with abuse and neglect, it's very likely you have been vulnerable to romantic manipulation. Someone shows up in your life, they pressure you to get all into them, then start pushing you away, and then they pressure you to put up with THAT. You may have found yourself giving more, trying to change yourself, living with a constant level of fear and shame grinding you down – because that's what it's like when manipulators are holding you at arm's length, taking what they want, feeling no accountability, and somehow getting cooperation from you.

You can learn to recognize manipulation for what it is. When you call it out, it takes all the magic out of it, and you see it for what it is – a big downward spiral that you're not going to fall down into anymore. Here are 10 things to listen for when you date someone, to detect if they are romantically manipulating you.

1. "You're too jealous!"

How many times have you been accused of this, when someone you were in love with was sleeping with or flirting with other people? Jealousy is the natural emotion that rises up when you have a sexual and romantic bond with someone, and they disappoint your heart's desire to just be their one and only. It's OK to want and expect monogamy. When you find yourself feeling jealous, it doesn't mean the jealousy is crazy. It means the speed of getting into the relationship caused you to bond with that person *before* the relationship could support that kind of bond. If monogamy is what you want, be clear, go slow, and don't settle for less.

2. "Your problem is that you have expectations!"

Romantic manipulators want you to believe that knowing what you want in a relationship and feeling hurt when it doesn't turn out that way is uncool or "needy." This has to do with the toxic idea that standards and ideals around relationships get in the way of fun (*their* fun). Don't abandon your ideals.

3. "I'm sure I told you I was seeing other people." Romantic manipulators have this amazing talent for insisting they made something clear that wasn't actually clear. To be fair, we sometimes have a talent for NOT hearing what we didn't want to hear. If you don't feel you can be honest, or they are not open to your terms, it's not a good fit and you can save yourself a lot of pain by moving on.

4. "I never suggested those plans."

Your red flag detector knows when they actually DID invite you to do something, and they are now backing out of it by lying. Not good.

5. "Just be in the moment."

Romantic manipulators love these New Age tropes (see also “You’re not in your body”) that are, in fact, squishy criticisms that you can’t defend yourself against. (You are always, in fact, in your body and unless you are a time traveler, always in the moment... just saying). These comments are designed to get you to drop your boundaries (like going slowly or asking them about their intentions) because that is inconvenient for them. Be true to yourself, even when it means they lose interest.

6. “Hey, you’re overthinking this.”

This is their attempt to shame you for... yes, *thinking*. Using your powers of reason to notice red flags, or to get information about their intentions is a good thing. Don’t be shamed into overriding your good judgment.

7. “Humans aren’t really meant to be monogamous.”

When you find yourself dating someone who fancies themselves a (very progressive) historical anthropologist, and who pressures you to abandon your own values because they are “too American,” “a construct,” “a legacy of patriarchy” “a female control strategy,” “capitalist,” “puritanical” etc., they are really just trying to make you the bad guy for wanting monogamy.

8. “It is what it is.”

This statement should get an award for sounding profound, but meaning literally nothing. If you have an important question like “Did you sleep with someone else last night?” And you get this -- “*Hey, you’re too much in your head, get in the moment, cause it’s all good and anyway it is what it is*” – don’t go into denial and be placated, because it probably means *Yes, they did*.

9. They try to re-explain your feelings to you:

“Oh, you’re asking if I’m open to marriage but what you’re REALLY feeling is that your dad abandoned you when you were small, and you’re just putting this huge EXPECTATION on me blah blah blah and why can’t you just be cool here?” Here’s the thing. You know how to spot manipulation and drop them like a hot potato. THAT is cool.

10. They tell you that what is hurting you is *actually* healing you.

Even if hurting were healing (which it never is) other people don’t heal you – especially not people you’re kind-of dating who are never really honest with you and now because of trauma bonding make you feel powerless to leave. This person is not a “mirror” or a “teacher,” and you’re not here to learn “a lesson” from “the universe.” Someone is trying to manipulate you and it’s not going to work! YOU are in charge of your life.

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