

Was I Raised in a Cult or High-Demand Religion?

A Self-Assessment





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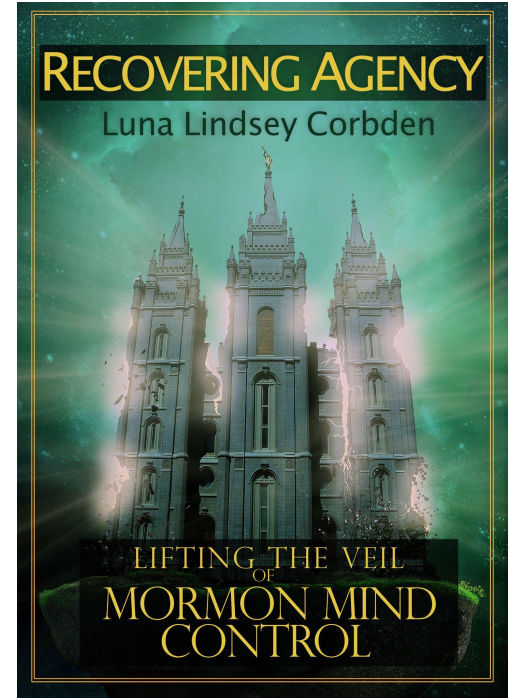


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A Few Prominent Authorities



- Robert J. Lifton
- Leon Festinger
- Janja Lalich
- Madeleine Landau Tobias
- Margaret Thaler Singer
- Michael Langone
- Steven Hassan
- Robert Cialdini
- International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA)





Mind Control Techniques: 31 Flavors of Coercion

- Love Bombing
- Destabilization
- Deception
- Sacred Science
- Mystical Manipulation
- Milieu Control
- Demand for Purity
- Dispensing of Existence
- Doctrine Over Self
- Loading the Language
- Totalist Reframing
- Thought-Terminating Clichés
- Social Pressure
- Belief Follows Behavior
- Public Commitment
- Creating Dependency
- Black & White Thinking
- Elitism
- Us-vs-Them Thinking
- Indirect Directives
- Identification & Example
- Emotion Over Intellect
- Induced Phobias
- Trance Induction & Dissociative States
- Time Control
- Double-Bind
- Blame Reversal
- Guilt & Shame
- Confession
- Euphoria Induction
- Proselytizing



5 Part Mormon Stories Podcast Series

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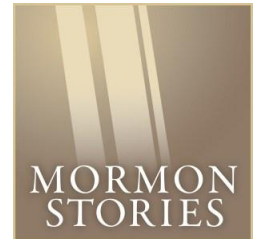
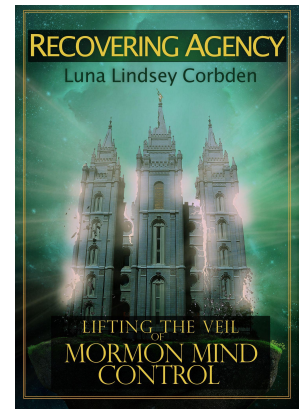
Why Understanding Cults is Valuable to Everyone...



- Helps former cult members understand and process what they experienced.
- Helps former cult members not get fooled again.
- Applies to much more than cults - Applies to unhealthy individual relationships, family systems, businesses, therapists/coaches/gurus, groups, educational institutions, governments, political organizations, etc.
- Helps high-demand religions, individuals, and other organizations become and/or remain healthy.

LITERALLY EVERYONE BENEFITS
FROM LEARNING ABOUT AND
UNDERSTANDING TOOLS OF
UNDUE INFLUENCE...

EXCEPT FOR ABUSIVE INDIVIDUALS
AND ORGANIZATIONS



THE ASSESSMENT:



- Find a sheet of paper or an e-doc that allows for 34 items to be listed (I added 3)
- I will list and describe 34 coercion tools now
- Assess each coercion tool within the framework of your experience, and assign one of the following three scores:

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

- Feel free to pause to answer.

1. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

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Deception

Lies, omissions, and “front” activities cover up flaws or unusual aspects of the group, doctrine, leadership, and history. Some deceptions will be revealed later when a member is “ready.”



2. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Sacred Science

(Closed system of Logic) – The ideology and leader have the one and only truth. Members should only seek answers in group teachings. Doctrinal logic is airtight. The leaders are above criticism and those who question or criticize are immoral.



3. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Mystical Manipulation

Forces exist which are more powerful than the self. The group strives to fulfill a higher purpose. Ends justify the means. Events and experiences are orchestrated, manipulated, or reframed to appear supernatural and prove the leader is chosen and the doctrines are true.



4. —

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

Love Bombing

Friendliness, flattery, praise, and affection are used to entice participation and attendance for potential recruits, and to retain members who may be showing less enthusiasm or are thinking of leaving.



5. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Demand for Purity

(Perpetual Inadequacy)— Lofty moral goals are set. At first the goals seem achievable, but the standards for achievement grow ever more impossible to meet, keeping the follower perpetually inadequate.



6. _____

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Dispensation of Existence

The individual's literal or figurative existence is threatened as a consequence for impurity, doubt, or leaving the group. Life, the eternal soul, self-esteem, a sense of "being good", and one's identity hangs in the balance.



7. —

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Milieu Control

Information and environment are tightly controlled. Gossip, questioning, and criticism is tightly regulated, as is access to outside information, especially that which might raise doubts or be critical of the group.



8. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

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Destabilizing the Self

Barriers are torn down that would otherwise prevent acceptance of new beliefs. Includes those who have already been destabilized by life situations and the indoctrination of children, who have not yet formed a sense of self.



9. _____

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Creating Dependency

A member comes to depend on the group for physical, emotional, social, spiritual, or other needs. The member has a high stake in continuing to stay loyal to the group.



10._____

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Black and White Thinking

Broad spectrums of thought and morality become reduced to two options: Good vs. Evil, Love vs. Hate, Weak vs. Strong. Humble vs. Proud.



11. ____

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Elitism

The members of the group are chosen people, exalted, righteous. Members are made to feel special when compared to outsiders.



12. ____

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1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Us-vs-Them Thinking

This is a form of black-and-white thinking wherein outsiders, ex-members, and those critical of the group are dehumanized and labeled as evil, apostate, vicious, hateful, prideful, blinded, deceived, etc. A persecution complex may exist whereby reasonable criticism is reframed as an attack.



13. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Doctrine Over Self

The individual is subordinate to the group, leader, and teachings. When personal desires, goals, and values conflict with group values, they become selfish or immoral.



14. _____

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Social Pressure

Social acceptance and rejection are used to reward and punish. A member becomes driven with a desire to conform.



15. _____

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Belief Follows Behavior

Action generates the associated beliefs. Groups may encourage members to follow group teachings in order to gain belief. Focus on proselytizing and missionary work is to promote belief in the member as well as the investigator.



16. _____

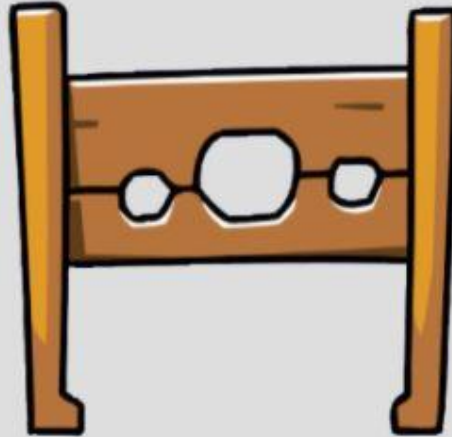
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Double-Bind

The member is “damned if you do, damned if you don’t.” She must betray the group or betray her own integrity.



17. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Blame Reversal

The leadership, group, and doctrine are above reproach, so any failed promises and bad situations are always the fault of the member.



18. ____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

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Emotion Over Intellect

Emotion is emphasized as the preferred decision-making tool. The value of using reason is downplayed. Doctrines are frequently taught in emotional contexts, such as through stories told in tearful or gentle tones.



19. ____

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Indirect Directives

Certain restrictions or demands on behavior are implied rather than express. The logical elements for a given conclusion are supplied, leaving the member to draw the conclusion herself. Leadership remains innocent of issuing any unseemly teachings.



20. _____

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Identification and Example

Those who behave correctly or incorrectly are used as examples. Suggested behavior can be inferred from these stories without direct commandment. Stories are told, which may be reframed or blatantly untrue, to demonstrate consequences. The human mind relates strongly to stories, and it also inspires social pressure.



21. ____

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Totalist Reframing

Situations, thoughts, or feelings are reinterpreted in a way that suits the goals of the organization. This is used to continually prove the ideology correct, to squelch doubts, and to silence outsiders.



22. ____

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Loading the Language

Existing words are loaded with new meaning.

New words are added. Other words are banned or dropped from usage. This affects ability to think, as well as ability to communicate comfortably with those outside the group.



23. _____

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Thought Terminating Cliches

Short phrases, pat answers, metaphors, and emotional reactions are pre-established to frame doubts. Doubt and questions are automatically shut down.



24. _____

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Public Commitment

Commitments are expressed aloud. Public statements reinforce belief and dedication to the group.



25. _____

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Time Control

The member has little time or energy to question beliefs, associate with outsiders, or examine life too closely. Time spent on group-related activities is strongly encouraged or enforced, and usually fills every spare moment.



26. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

Dissociative States

Trance Induction & Dissociative States—Critical thinking skills are reduced through regular encouragement of receptive mental states. Altered states can be mild and seem normal, and include concentration, fatigue, boredom, and hunger.



27. ____

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1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

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Euphoria Induction



The euphoria of group participation and fulfilling the member's ideals motivates good behavior and reduces doubts while proving the validity of the group.



28. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

Induced Phobias

Fears are instilled which are either imaginary, based on real or exaggerated consequences, or on artificial effects created from group pressures.



29. ____

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1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

Guilt & Shame



A cycle of guilt and shame comes from repressed doubts, social pressure, and failure to meet impossible standards.



30. _____

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1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

Confession

The individual surrenders to leaders through confession, which reduces privacy and boundaries. Successful purification can grant temporary relief from guilt, which increases trust and dedication. Members are motivated to obey to avoid confession.



31. ____

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Proselytizing

Members are encouraged to propagate teachings to outsiders. This not only maintains or increases the size of the group, but also soothes cognitive dissonance, consumes time, and provides opportunities for public commitment.



32. ____

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2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

Institutionalized Bigotry



Marginalized minority group are devalued and/or demonized, and are structurally precluded from full participation and/or leadership - with “God’s” explicit approval.



33. _____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

1 = This tool was occasionally part of my experience.

2 = This tool was frequently part of my experience.

Heavy Financial Pressures, No Accountability

Requirement of excessive financial contributions, significant punishments for not contributing, and no financial transparency or accountability.



34. ____

0 = This tool was not a part of my experience.

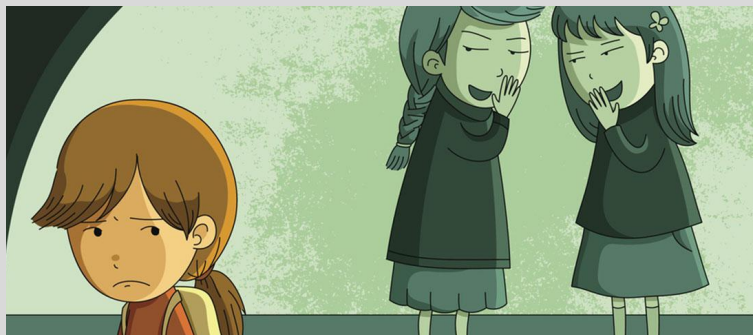
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No Honorable Exit



In the minds of leaders and members, there are no honorable or valid reasons to leave the organization. Those who leave are denigrated and/or demonized



TO SCORE:



- Add up scores for all 34 Items
- Divide by 68
- Convert to percentage

F = 80-100

D = 60-79

C = 40-59

B = 20-39

A = 0-19

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THE END