

7 Signs of A Dangerous Religious Sect

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1. Calculated Control

- Of Behavior
- Of Emotions
- Of Thoughts
- Of Information

2. Leadership Is Dictatorship

- Absolute obedience is expected
- The organization is more important than the adherent
- Bizarre or extreme laws
- Frequent, sudden tests of loyalty
- The leader may claim to be divine, to be a prophet or an apostle or to speak directly for God

3. Total Universe

- The religion desires to be the total social universe of the adherent
- Frequent attendance at activities
- Inside is good and safe, outside is wicked and unsafe, only insiders are enlightened
- Only the beliefs of the religion are “true”
- Any spare time or money should be spent on the religion or on its activities.
- A sense that it is a “closed system”

4. Unthinking, Unwise, Unsafe

- No common-sense or wisdom
- Bizarre points of view on practical matters e.g. on paying taxes or on being immunized
- Exaltation of risky or unhealthy behavior
- Abuse
- Refusal of medical treatment
- Crazy financial schemes, scams, “sacrificial giving”

5. Ignorance Is Important

- Critical thinking is punished, no real debate is allowed
- Anti-intellectualism is promoted and approved
- Censorship, selection of pre-approved information, only a few things can be read, “all that you need is the Bible (holy book)”
- Lots of circular logic: “we are right because we say we are right..” where even obviously wrong behavior is justified
- Superstition, thought-stopping, zoning people out, drugs
- Passivity of mind (“just receive..do not think..”)
- Bizarre prophecies which do not come to pass

6. Severing of Relationships

- The adherent is asked to either convert their family members and friends or to entirely leave them
- “Unsaved” friends and family members are seen as being “in darkness” or even as morally polluting and dangerous.
- Breaking “soul ties” with the former life is seen as being of the highest importance
- The leader frequently takes on a parental role and may be called “Father/Mother” Abba, Baba or any similar name.
- The religion becomes “your true family”
- Normal social relationships are discouraged

7. Hatred of Outsiders, Critics and Dissenters

- Open and vocal expressions of anger towards outsiders, critics or dissenters
- The ability to deliver crushing emotional punishment to insiders who get out of line
- Outsiders are “sons of Belial”, of the Devil, in darkness, trying to destroy them etc.
- In a few extreme cases there is deep anger at the government and talk of actual armed rebellion

What To Do

- Get out or make a sensible plan to get out as soon as possible. Do not tell other cult members or the leadership as they may try to stop you. Do not argue with them or try to change them, it will not work, just go.
- Give yourself permission to leave. Realize that you are in a trap!
- Contact law enforcement if child abuse or other criminal activity has occurred. This may be a big help to others as well.
- Let time pass: it will feel very strange for a while as you adjust to life outside the cult. Let your emotions surface.
- Re-establish relationships with your family, friends and co-workers and develop a support base of normal people
- If possible get professional counseling from a trustworthy, faith-friendly person who you can talk everything out with.

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