

THE NARCISSIST PLAYBOOK

Written by Michael Allen, Author of Unmasking Rachel



10 Tactics Used to Control, Confuse, and Keep You Hooked

- A clear breakdown of patterns commonly experienced in unstable relationship dynamics.
- This deck highlights key behaviors and how they impact you over time.
- Use it to gain clarity, recognize the pattern, and avoid getting pulled back into confusion.

Love Bombing

Love bombing is an intense surge of attention and validation early in a connection. It accelerates emotional closeness before trust has time to develop naturally.

The experience feels genuine because the intensity is real, even if it is not sustainable. This creates a high baseline that later behavior is compared against.

When the intensity drops, people often chase the initial version they experienced.

Key Indicators:

- Rapid emotional connection
- Constant communication
- Over-the-top compliments
- Early future talk
- Creates attachment quickly

Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a pattern of denying or distorting events and perceptions. Over time, it leads you to question your memory and interpretation of reality.

Small contradictions accumulate into persistent self-doubt. Confidence erodes as you rely more on their version of events.

The result is confusion and reduced trust in your own judgment.

Key Indicators:

- Denies what happened
- Rewrites conversations
- Minimizes your reactions
- Creates self-doubt
- Shifts trust away from self

Silent Treatment

The silent treatment is the withholding of communication during conflict. It introduces uncertainty and anxiety instead of resolution.

The absence of response often prompts chasing behavior. This pattern reinforces an imbalance in control.

Over time, it conditions acceptance of reduced communication standards.

Key Indicators:

- Withholds response
- Creates anxiety
- Forces pursuit
- Avoids resolution
- Reinforces imbalance

Future Faking

Future faking involves promises about a shared future that are not consistently followed through. It builds investment based on potential rather than present behavior.

Plans may be discussed frequently but rarely materialize.

This keeps attention focused on what could be rather than what is.

The gap between words and actions widens over time.

Key Indicators:

- Promises of commitment
- Talk of plans/trips
- Little follow-through
- Focus on potential
- Sustains attachment

Intermittent Reinforcement

Intermittent reinforcement is a cycle of unpredictable positive and negative experiences. Inconsistency can strengthen attachment more than steady behavior.

Positive moments feel more valuable after periods of withdrawal.

This creates a loop where people chase the next high point.

The pattern is difficult to disengage from because it is unpredictable.

Key Indicators:

- High highs, low lows
- Unpredictable rewards
- Increases attachment
- Encourages chasing
- Hard to break cycle

Blame Shifting

Blame shifting redirects responsibility for issues away from the person causing them.

Conversations are reframed so that your reaction becomes the problem.

This creates confusion about what actually needs to be addressed.

Repeated exposure can lead to guilt and over-explaining.

Accountability becomes difficult to establish within the dynamic.

Key Indicators:

- Deflects responsibility
- Focus on your reaction
- Creates guilt
- Confuses issues
- Avoids accountability

Projection

Projection occurs when someone attributes their own behaviors or intentions to you. Accusations may mirror what they themselves are doing.

This shifts focus away from their actions and onto your defense. It increases conflict and reduces clarity.

The pattern can make it harder to identify the original issue.

Key Indicators:

- Accuses you first
- Mirrors their behavior
- Creates defensiveness
- Distracts from facts
- Escalates conflict

Emotional Withholding

Emotional withholding is the inconsistent offering of affection and validation. Connection may be reduced without clear explanation.

This can create a heightened need for reassurance. The imbalance makes the relationship feel unstable.

Over time, it can lead to dependency on intermittent approval.

Key Indicators:

- Inconsistent affection
- Reduced communication
- Creates need for validation
- Unclear expectations
- Maintains imbalance

Smear Campaigns

Smear campaigns involve sharing negative or distorted information about you to others. This can occur before or after a relationship ends.

It shapes perceptions in advance and limits your ability to respond. The narrative often simplifies complex situations into one-sided accounts.

The result is reputational impact and social isolation.

Key Indicators:

- Distorts your image
- Preemptive storytelling
- Limits your voice
- Creates isolation
- Protects their image

Control Through Confusion

Control through confusion relies on mixed signals and inconsistent behavior. Clarity is delayed or avoided, keeping attention on figuring things out.

This increases cognitive load and emotional investment. Decision-making becomes more difficult in uncertain conditions.

Stepping back often restores perspective and clarity.

Key Indicators:

- Mixed signals
- Delayed clarity
- Overthinking
- Emotional investment
- Difficult decisions

Key Takeaway

Patterns matter more than labels when evaluating a relationship dynamic.
If interactions consistently create confusion or instability, pay attention to that signal.

Clarity often comes from stepping back rather than seeking more explanation.

Boundaries help restore balance and reduce exposure to unhealthy patterns.
Sustained consistency is a better indicator of health than intensity.

- Notice patterns
- Value consistency
- Set boundaries
- Step back when unclear
- Choose stability