

19 Tactics To Avoid Change

1. BUILDING HIMSELF UP BY PUTTING OTHERS DOWN

I take the offensive by trying to put others down, thus avoiding a put down myself. I may use sarcasm, attempt to make others look ignorant, or accuse others of having the same or worse faults than mine. I get a sense of triumph out of embarrassing or belittling others.

2. FEEDING OTHERS WHAT HE THINKS THEY WANT TO HEAR

I constantly size up others, especially authority figures, so I can feed them what I **think** they want to hear. This is an exercise of power and control to gain personal advantage. I am use a variety of deceptive tactics to achieve this goal. I may try to convince others of my sincerity by appearing open, and agreeable. All the while, I am figuring out their orientation so as to better be able to feed it back to them. I put up a facade (act) of cooperation, and commitment even if I am simultaneously and secretly acting out left and right.

3. FEEDING OTHERS WHAT HE THINKS THEY OUGHT TO KNOW

I decide how advantageous it is to volunteer information. If someone asks me what I have been doing during a specific time period, I reply “nothing much”. If pushed, I may respond, “It’s personal”, “drop it”, “I’d rather not go into it”, or “I can’t talk about it now”. I believe that I am the best judge of what others ought to know about me. When something is concealed then later revealed, and I am asked why I had not reported it, I explain, “I didn’t think it was important at the time”, or “I forgot”. What I consider “important” is anything that puts me in a favorable light. I omit anything to the contrary.

4. LYING

I am reluctant and wary in any transaction in which I am held accountable. I believe the truth will work against my best interest when trying to avoid a penalty, receive a privilege, or gain anything. I may use denial (“I don’t remember”), offer excuses, or blame others in an attempt to avoid responsibility.

“Lies of omission” is a form of lying in which I tell part of a truth. I know that telling a part of the truth may be the best lie of all. For Example: I return from work and report how tired I am. I complain of fatigue, and say I had a lot of sleep to catch up on. What I did not disclose was that part of the fatigue resulted from the previous day’s unhealthy behaviors. When this information comes to light, I insist I had been truthful in saying how tired I was. For this honesty, I want credit.

Sometimes I will open up and reveal something, then later deny it, claiming it was just a lie. I prefer this to facing the consequences of whatever I revealed. By saying I was lying, I convey the impression that I am now telling the truth, which of course, I am not.

“Distortion” is a form of lying in which I twist the facts to my advantage. I distort my report of what occurred by shifting the emphasis, exaggerating, and omitting part of what happened.

5. VAGUENESS:

While everyone uses phrases such as “you might say”, “in a way”, “I guess”, “to a degree” when they are unsure of something, I use these phrases to skirt issues in an effort to conceal wrongdoing. When talking, if the other party is willing to be vague with me, we get further and further from the facts, which is my objective. Even as a child, I am was adept at avoiding giving a direct answer. I may use superficial (fake) presentations loaded with generalizations and empty phrases.

6. ATTEMPTING TO CONFUSE

I attempt to confuse others, believing this gives me the upper hand. I offer inconsistent versions and shades. I qualify, distort, and shift emphasis with each telling of an event. If questioned about a discrepancy, I may say, “you must have misunderstood”, or “you must have been confused” to shift the burden to the other party. I may also accuse the other party of being the one who distorted or misinterpreted. My sharing may appear open and honest, until someone challenges me, at which point I will claim that they misunderstood what was shared. My hope is to make them doubt what they saw and heard from me. I will continue shifting and even resort to anger if the other party is not willing to back down.

Sometimes I may take a point seriously, but when challenged later, say I was only joking. Then I accuse the other party of “lacking a sense of humor”. I may also attempt to confuse by talking too rapidly or too slowly, aimlessly deviating from the point. I may mumble, slur words, or use a dialect I know others have difficulty understanding.

7. MINIMIZATION

When called to account for a violation, rather than denying it totally, I minimize it. This may not be part of the lying pattern-because I tend to see an offense as less serious than others do: I minimize it even to myself. However, when confronted, the attempt to minimize is clearly to save my own skin. I may say I “borrowed” something I actually stole. I try to conceal the harm I am doing by deliberate understatement. Another tactic is to make light of some of my unhealthy ideas and say that, because I did not act on them, they were unimportant.

8. DIVERSION

I am a master of diversion. A favorite form is to bring up irrelevant material and interest others in any subject than my own unhealthy acts. This is particularly useful to me in settings where verbal participation is encouraged or discussion about almost anything is seen as a sign of cooperation.

If pressured to “stick to the point”, I use more subtle forms of diversion. I dwell on one point and spend too much time on it, or label something as a “problem” so I can describe it at length, distracting others from more important issues. Another diversion is to recount my qualities and good deeds. In some programs the facilitator tries to increase one’s “self-esteem” by emphasizing the good in him. When this is done, I use capitalize on it by diverting from the unhealthy patterns that are so destructive in my life. Bringing up racism is another way of diverting. Clearly, there has been racial bigotry and discrimination by various races, but racism is irrelevant to the issue at hand. I know this is a sensitive issue and that is why I raise it. I may take the offensive with charges of racism when I have failed to gain agreement on some point.

9. ASSENT

This is saying yes without really meaning it. I may use this to cut short a discussion or “gain points”. By assenting, I can mislead others into believing progress has been made, but I do not apply or practice the concepts in my daily living. Agreeing to a point and being guided by are not the same thing. The only way to tell genuine from tactical agreement is to observe me over time. If the assent is a deliberate tactic to gain points, this will be evident when observing the behaviors over time.

10. SILENCE

The obvious purpose of silence is to gain secrecy. I may attempt to control a meeting by refusing to talk. They don't want others intruding into their psyche. Silence is often a form of my anger when others attempt to reach me. Other than pure silence, I may use “I don't know”, “no comment”, “I forgot”, “Nothing happened”, sighing, shrugging, etc... I will use my refusal to open up with others as a means of ignoring all outside input. When I interact with others outside of the group, I will use the groups “lack of knowledge” about me as an excuse to discredit everything they share. However, the reason the group has so little knowledge is because I refuse to be honest about my current state.

When challenged in this arena, I may shift the blame to the other party, telling them “you aren't safe”, or “I didn't feel comfortable”, ignoring the fact that I am in this environment to deal with my destructive behaviors, and the other members and facilitators are there to help in that.

11. SELECTIVE ATTENTION AND PERCEPTION

I ignore everything unrelated to my objective. With a closed mind, I hear only what agrees to my thinking. The overriding tendency is to assume others think as I do. I project my thinking onto others.

12. TOTAL INATTENTION

If I am uninterested in what is being said, I allow my physical presence and a few nods of the head to indicate I am receptive while I turn my attention to more exciting (usually unhealthy) ideas. If caught off guard by a question I may attempt to shift the burden to the other person - “You didn't make that clear”.

13. TARDINESS AND MISSING GROUPS/APPOINTMENTS

When I begin to participate in a program for change, I often go through a “honeymoon” period. As the newness wears off, competing desires arise and/or I realize that changes require work and longterm effort, I stop making change or growth a priority. At this point, I may arrive late, leave early, or not show up at all, usually offering phony excuses. I will skip a session if anything more exciting comes along. I will often use “legitimate” excuses to skip meetings and avoid accountability, such as family events and the such. I do this because I think that others will be unable to challenge me in this. However, I do not point out my role in scheduling the family event, my ability to reschedule, the low priority of the event. Such behavior indicates I want to continue my dysfunctional lifestyle and do not want any input in my life that might dissuade me from it.

14. CONFESSION

Confession is often interpreted as indicting an intention to be responsible. Nothing could be further from the truth. I think that reporting my violations makes them acceptable. This is clearly seen when I am appalled if someone expects me to face the consequences of a “confessed” violation. I may claim that I should be immune from all penalties for the harm I have caused because I was “honest”. However, the confession often is only a small part of the truth. I may “confess” small infractions to help conceal major infractions.

15. MISUNDERSTANDING

When I say, “he understands me”, I mean, “he agrees with me”. When confronted by my failure to perform responsibly, I often claims that there was a “misunderstanding” between myself and the other party. Even when we have clearly set a time, date, and place for a meeting, if I fail to show up, I may claim there was a “misunderstanding”.

16. GENERALIZING A POINT TO ABSURDITY

When others ask me to engage in responsible behaviors that are not to my liking, I exaggerate the request to such proportions so that it is impossible to achieve, and use this as an excuse to not attempt it, and thus not change.

Example: Someone may point out that because I lack an education and job skills, I may have to take a job at which I start at the bottom. I then accuse the person of “asking me to be a flunky the rest of my life”.

I respond to the strict requirements for becoming responsible by claiming such changes are impossible and all who partake in them are “puritans”, “robots”, etc... This reflects my unhealthy view of what responsibility entails. However, it is also a calculated tactic to generalize a program’s philosophy to absurdity, thereby discrediting it and offering an excuse to avoid change.

17. DELIBERATE POSTPONEMENT

When I have little intention of doing what is required, I will deliberately put things off indefinitely, which means an ultimate refusal. “I’m not ready yet”, “I can’t do it overnight”, “I have to do things one at a time”, “I need to figure out some things first.” and others are used to “buy time” when I am actually refusing. I then blame the other person for expecting too much instead of confronting my own lack of effort. Behind this is my doubt that I truly desire a different kind of life.

18. CLAIMING THAT HE HAS CHANGED ENOUGH TO LEAVE THE PROGRAM

When I am bored, restless, and/or seeking excitement, I say I am ready to leave and stand on my own feet. I want to be a success without sustained effort. I will claim I have “changed” because I have corrected a behavior one time, in one situation, after a lifetime of repeated unhealthy behavior. I will use this “success” as an excuse to act on behaviors that are questionable. When challenged, I will explain my changes within the healthy environment as a justification. I do not consider the fact that I spent a lifetime of acting out unhealthy.

19. PUTTING OTHERS ON THE DEFENSIVE - THE TACTICS OF ATTACK

Although I am participating in an environment to learn, I assume the role of teacher and recruit others to my point of view. I may become combative and be hypercritical, sarcastic, abusive, etc.. Anger is the habitual way in which I attempt to achieve control. There is nothing to be gained from engaging in discussion with an angry, abusive person, so I use this as a way to avoid input. In programs in which participants are encouraged to “vent” and “open up with their feelings”, I will use this as an opportunity to abusively attack others and verbally assault, claiming that this is a form of “dealing with my anger problem”. In fact it is simply encouraging my anger problem and allowing me to continue my irresponsibility and disrespect for the rights of others, as well as my attempts to gain power and control.

Adapted from “Criminal Personalities” - by Samenow and Yochelson