

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 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 desire to hear. I may use a variety of deceptive tactics. This is an exercise of power and control to gain personal advantage. I may try to convince others of my sincerity by appearing open, and agreeable. All the while, I am figuring out their desires 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 violating 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” are telling part of a truth when I know that it will lead other sin to believing something that is not true. 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”, and others 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 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 also may accuse the other party of being the one who distorted or misinterpreted. My goal is to muddy the water enough so I will not have to change. 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 possibly resort to anger if the other party is not willing to back down.

Sometimes I may take a point seriously, but when challenged later, says 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 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 spends 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 staff tries to increase one’s “Self-esteem” by emphasizing the good in him. If this is done, it contributes to unhealthy building up my opinion of myself, which gives me further license to continue my old patterns. 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 and “gain points”. By assenting, I can mislead others into believing progress has been made, but I does 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, time will tell and this will be evident.

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...

11. SELECTIVE ATTENTION AND PERCEPTION

I ignores 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.

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 goes 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 the environments encouraging this change a priority. At this point, I may arrive late, leave early, or not show up at all, usually offering phony excuses. I skip a session if something more exciting comes along. 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 the 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

On hearing of responsible behavior 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 not to 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, in my mind, offering an excuse to avoid change.

17. DELIBERATE POSTPONEMENT

When I have little intention of doing what is required, I will deliberately puts 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 says I am ready to leave and stand on my own feet. I want to be a success without sustained effort. I will claim I has “changed” because I have corrected a behavior on time, in one situation, after a lifetime of repeatedly violating. 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 irresponsibility and disrespect for the rights of others, as well as attempting to gain power and control.

“We have come to place belief and emphasis on behaviors rather than words.”

- Dr. Weiss

“I can’t hear what you say because what you do speaks louder than what you say.”

- Former Spouse of an addict

Adapted from “Criminal Personalities” - by Samenow and Yochelson