



CONTROLLED

RIPPING THE MASK

OFF MANIPULATION

CHRISTY JOHNSON



Dear Precious Sister,

I spent most of my life looking for love, affirmation and identity from relationships. Because I was so desperate, I mean vulnerable—I was easy prey for manipulative men. After all, every manipulator chooses an enabler as their dance partner.

After several toxic relationships and later an abusive marriage, I became so angry I hardly recognized myself. By the time God untangled me from the bitterness that held me in bondage, I found freedom I never knew.

I found Christ at the end of me.

I pray you do too!

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Have you ever missed a red flag in a new relationship? The emotional connection is fabulous and everything seems great? Given your heart away and then all of a sudden. BAM. Out of nowhere, you see issues surface that you never saw coming.

I have a theory for why we often miss the red flags. It's called RUSH.
Romance Undermines Suspicious Hunches.

The rush of a new romance can cloud our focus and make us ignore all reason. Emotional energy is blazing when out of nowhere we develop a romantic astigmatism that blurs all the warning signs.

The truth is that we all have blind spots when it comes to romance—things others see but we are oblivious to. You wouldn't change lanes while driving a vehicle without checking your rear view mirror and looking over your shoulder. Why? Because some things hide in the blind spot. It's the same with relationships.

Jessica hated that Tyler didn't return her texts and often asked to reschedule plans at the last minute. *He's busy*, she told herself. *Ambitious. Tied up with work.*

A more realistic translation is that the relationship was not a priority to Tyler. She was more into him than he was into her. That's what she found out later. Three months into the relationship when she was looking at Pinterest wedding boards, Tyler announced he had taken a job offer in another state. Gone like the wind.

We often don't notice red flags until much later, after our heart has made an emotional connection. By then, in order to reconcile our feelings with reality, we compromise, minimize and tell ourselves lies.

Lies like, "I'm being too judgmental, too picky and too cautious."

Here's where I'll say it again. Don't RUSH. Don't let Romance Undermine Suspicious Hunches. Take it slow, trust your gut and let the Holy Spirit lead.

Stop, Look and Listen

Some of the best dating advice I've ever heard came from a kindergarten teacher. Before crossing the street she told her students, "Stop, look and listen." Likewise, before you cross the road into a new relationship, stop, look and listen. Watch for the red flags. But what's even more important? **Watch for the yellow flags.**

Yellow flags always come first. Before a traffic light turns red, yellow warns drivers to slow down. But truth be known, what do most of us do when we see a yellow light? We stomp on the gas pedal and gun it! And that's where we get into trouble with relationships. We ignore the yellow flags and hurry past the place where we should exercise caution. Instead of slowing down we accelerate, full speed ahead with heart-pumping excitement, causing us to miss the more subtle warning signs.

When you're approaching a romantic intersection where two hearts may collide, proceed with caution. Character issues take time to show up because your new guy is trying to make a good impression. It's like when company is coming over and you only have a five-minute notice. You cram all your junk in the hall closet and hope the door stays shut. The stage between the first date and the do-

you-want-to-be-exclusive stage is like the hall closet. Everything is tucked in and well hidden.

On purpose.

How do you know when it's safe to proceed?

Stop: Wait until the relationship starts to get that comfortable feeling. It's not until your guy relaxes a bit and starts to put his guard down that his true nature will begin to surface. If you take it slow, you won't be caught off guard by the red flags because you've already been evaluating the yellow flags.

Look: Here are a few examples of yellow flags to observe.

- **Criticism:** Take notice if your guy is critical of others. Someday he may be critical of you. Occasional criticism is okay, but what you want to pay attention to is the depth of criticism. A critical attitude can indicate a deeper root of judgment and condemnation.
- **Impatience:** Take notice if your guy is impatient. Impatience can indicate a demanding nature.
- **Smothering:** Take notice if your guy wants to take things fast, occupy all your time, or gets upset when you want to see your friends or

family. At first, these traits may seem chivalrous, but these yellow flags could indicate a man who is possessive, jealous and controlling.

Listen: Not all yellow flags are reason to call it quits, but they do need to be considered without the bias that passion often brings.

During this observation time, focus on keeping a guard on your heart. Trust your intuition and pray. Don't invest your emotions in a relationship until you've had a chance to see your guy's real character and you've received a green light from God.



Manipulation is like quick sand. At first it seems warm and cozy, but it's a slow drown.

If you slow down when it comes to matters of the heart, you'll be able to see the warning signs before your heart has a chance to deceive you. That way you'll still be able to call it quits before your emotions convince you otherwise.

Above all else, guard your heart, for out of it flow the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).

Guarding your heart is essential because manipulation is like quick sand. At first it seems warm and cozy, but it's a slow drown—a subtle deceiver.

Manipulators hardly ever come on strong. If they did, women would recognize them and run. Instead, manipulators come on so slow that many women

don't catch the clues. By the time they notice, it's too late—the manipulator has wrapped his claws around their heart and they are unable to escape. Forced into survival mode, the victim must develop coping skills. They justify his behavior, they minimize the pain and make excuses for him in order to deal with drama and confusion that has now become a new normal.

Are you in a manipulative relationship? Does your partner:

- make you feel insecure or make you second guess yourself?
- blame you for every conflict?
- tell you that you overreact or exaggerate issues?
- purposely embarrass you in front of others?
- belittle or discount your opinions, dreams or goals?
- accuse you of things you've never done?
- interrogate and quiz you about your whereabouts?
- have anger management issues?
- apologize profusely when he's wrong only to return to the same behavior later?
- use guilt tactics to coerce you or make you feel guilty?
- verbally abuse you?
- threaten you?
- physically abuse you?
- make empty promises?
- use God's word against you?

- track your whereabouts?
- demand that you give account of where you've been or what you've spent?
- insult you and make you believe you deserve to be treated poorly?
- deny or lie about things he's said or done?

Occasional conflict is part of every relationship, but if you checked three or more of these common behavior traits of manipulators, you deserve better. No matter what he's tried to convince you of, it's not your fault. God created relationships for comfort and companionship, not conflict.

If you are single, it is essential that you discover how manipulators groom their victims and what makes you vulnerable to toxic relationships. If you are in a marriage relationship, please seek professional help or advice. With godly wisdom and counsel and partners that both want to change, chances are great that your marriage can heal and prosper. Manipulators can't dance if their partner is no longer willing to get on the dance floor. You can learn different ways to respond so that the manipulator's tactics to control are no longer effective. If you are in physical danger, however, please find a place of safety. Don't keep hoping he will change.

How manipulators groom their victims

First comes the study, next comes the seduction and then the bait and switch.

First comes the study

If a fisherman wants to catch a fish, he must first find out what kind of bait will attract the fish he wants to catch. Like a fisherman baiting a hook, a manipulator studies his victim.

“I couldn’t believe we had so much in common,” explains Shelby. “Caleb liked everything I liked. It was unreal. I met him out one day while jogging on my favorite trail. He liked the same music I liked, the same movies, restaurants and even my favorite soap. How weird is that? I thought we were the perfect match.

After only one week he told me he loved me and starting pushing the idea that we move in together. A couple of days later I ran into an old friend of his while on my lunch hour. He warned me about Caleb and said, ‘You know he probably stalked you on social media for months before he asked you out. That’s kind of his thing.’ I was stunned. That’s when it all made sense. Caleb wasn’t in love. He was baiting me.”

Next comes the seduction

This happens very fast. Romance is a game to manipulators. They come on strong in the beginning to capture their bait. Men win women over with charm, gushing compliments and indulgent gifts. These are only bait to trap their victim and gain control. They use whatever it takes. Compliments, affection and attention.

Flowers, gifts, trips, shopping sprees. Diamonds, dinner, dancing. They consume all your time in the beginning of the relationship. In between dates text messages, emails or phone calls will leave you with little energy for anything else.

If he seems too good to be true, slow down!

Manipulators prey on the vulnerable, the lonely, the broken hearted. Women who have gone through a recent break up, divorce or death. Then they come on strong, full speed ahead. They pull out all the charm.

Beware. Charm is deceitful.

Manipulators pay close attention to their victims in order to make them feel special so they can establish instant intimacy. 2 Timothy 3:6 says this: *They are*

the kind who work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires. (NLT)



Manipulators pay close attention to their victims in order to make them feel special so they can establish instant intimacy.

Don't be naive. Manipulators push for instant intimacy.

“From the first date David seemed head over heels,” said Laurey. “He wanted to see me or text me every waking minute. At first I was flattered and our romance proceeded full speed ahead. My friends told me to slow down but David told me if my friends didn’t understand our love, I didn’t need them. He slowly started taking up so much of my time I didn’t have time for them anyway. Before I could blink I had a ring on my finger. That’s when everything seemed to go downhill.”

Then comes the bait and switch

Once a manipulator has gained control, the real guy starts to stand up. Control comes when the victim is emotionally involved. Manipulators know that emotions make a woman vulnerable and easier to control.

Then the tables turn. Suddenly Mr. Perfect makes a dramatic change. At first he was dotting, charming, attentive, romantic, and then all of a sudden—once he has you under his spell, the tables turn.

Manipulators target woman that:

- say yes too much
- are over polite or worried about what others think
- are anxious for a relationship
- don’t have good boundaries

- have a low self-esteem
- are gullible or naïve
- trust people too soon without evaluating character
- are afraid to say no
- think conflict is bad
- fear rejection
- think that standing up for their convictions is wrong
- are lonely or broken hearted
- are isolated

Manipulators target women that are emotionally vulnerable. Manipulators are skilled at watching body language and are attentive listeners. They are studiers. They look for clues that indicate a woman is lonely, anxious or hungry for attention. Prime victims often include women who vocalize their dissatisfaction about their relationship status. Beware who you talk to about your relationship woes. You may be giving ammunition to a manipulator. Manipulators often seem like sympathetic listeners, but behind the mask, they are plotting their next move.

How Can Women Protect Themselves Against Manipulators?

In the 70's I watched a popular TV show called, To Tell the Truth. The show featured three contestants who all claimed to be the same person. Two were

imposters and one was the real person. The object of the game was for a panel of celebrities to try to guess who the actual person was that all three claimed to be. The panelists are each given a period of time to question the challengers by asking various questions and evaluating their responses.

At the end of the evaluation period, each panelist states who they think the real person is and the host asks, “Will the real _____ please stand up?”

The game was fun to watch because viewers could also test their own ability to discern who was telling the truth.

What if you played this game in a new relationship? What if you sat back from an emotionally detached vantage point to simply observe a man and his character? What if you evaluated his intentions and agenda before you started that emotional connection?



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same.

Women can learn a lot from this show. There are many caring and authentic men who really *are* the man they portray to be. But there are other men who are pretenders and imposters. If you don't get anything else from this book, I want you to understand this: **At first the real deals and the imposters all look and act the same.**

I hear frequent stories of women who say things like, “So and so wasn’t like that when we first started dating.” Here’s the deal. He really was. They just didn’t notice at first.

“Chad was so attentive in the beginning of our relationship,” said Mackenzie. “I’m not sure what happened, but all of a sudden he started putting me down all the time and trying to control my every move.”

What really happened is this: Chad didn’t change. He was pretending at first. He was trying to woo Mackenzie and once he did, the real guy stood up.

Here’s what I would say to women like Mackenzie: Your guy didn’t change. You just didn’t see the warning signs. You didn’t do your due diligence and failed to recognize the red flags. Your job is to figure out who is telling the truth and who is acting. Your job is to make the real man stand up.

3 Foolproof Ways to Make the Real Guy Stand Up

Don’t skip the evaluation process

Women often think it’s wrong to “judge” another person’s behavior. It’s somehow not the Christian thing to do. Let me just say this. It is a must. You are not judging their eternal destiny. You are evaluating their character to ensure that

they are trustworthy. Banks do credit checks to make sure candidates are credit worthy. Employers often require a drug test. They will also check references to make sure you are a good fit for their organization. If you apply for insurance, your insurer will check your insurance history. Even if you do volunteer work, the organization will do a background check—for a volunteer position.

Credit worthiness. Employment Suitability. Protection against lack of collateral for insurance. Banks do it. Employers do it. Insurance companies do it. They all check you out! So where did women get the idea that to evaluate character is being judgmental? It's not judgmental. It's prudent!

Proverbs 14:15 in The Message Bible says this: *The gullible believe anything they're told; the prudent sift and weigh every word.*

You are trying to discern whether or not a man is a suitable investment for the most valuable asset you own—your love. Is this man mature? Age does not make a man mature. Character does.

Is he capable now of a healthy relationship? Not in the future—with a bit of persuasion and work. But now! Is he mature *now*? Don't fall for his potential. Potential is like peanut butter. It's nutty and sticks to the roof of your mouth.

Don't get emotionally involved too soon

The second foolproof way to make the real guy stand up is to make sure you don't get emotionally involved too soon. Emotions cloud judgment and discernment, making it hard to evaluate character. As soon as emotions get in the way, you will not be able to tell if he is the real deal or if there are a couple of imposters lurking behind his face.

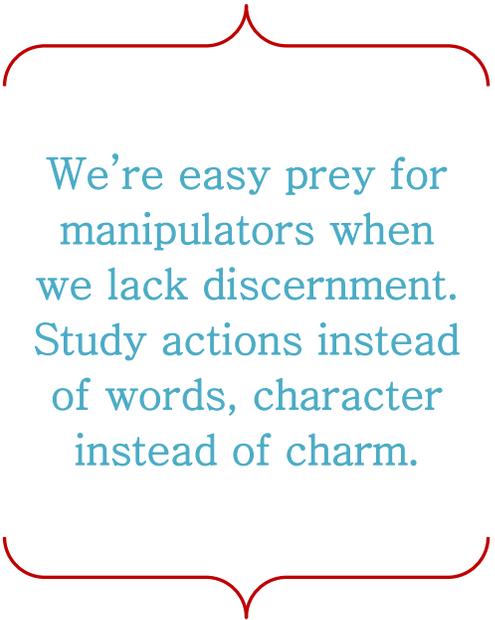
When you enter a new relationship, there's no real way to know if the guy you are seeing is really who he says he is. You could be dealing with Mr. Real Deal. Or you could be dealing with Luke Warm, Tim Tation, or Faux Paul. You won't know who your guy really is until you've had the opportunity to do an evaluation.

Question him. Listen to his answers from an unbiased standpoint. Check out his behavior. Observe his responses. Most importantly, do all of these things from an analytical standpoint. You can't do this if you are thinking thoughts like, "He is exactly what I've been looking for. There's no one more charming. He opens my door. He wants kids or loves kids. At this point, you can not get emotionally carried away. Emotions will taint your ability to observe. Your emotions will deceive you and make you ignore or minimize important details.

Question, listen and observe. Would you trust this man with a multi-million dollar investment? Would he take the money and run or would he guard it with his life and make sure it grew in value?

Your heart is worth multi-millions. If you get emotionally involved before you've been convinced by his actions and behavior that his character is genuine, you will not make a proper evaluation.

Evaluating behavior is vital. His words don't count. His flattering statements matter little. **The only thing that counts is what you can observe over the course of time by his actions.** Look at what he does. Are his actions consistent with what he says or does his behavior contradict what comes out of his mouth?



We're easy prey for manipulators when we lack discernment. Study actions instead of words, character instead of charm.

Don't listen to what he says. Words are easy. The tongue can be a false flatterer. Words can be empty promises. Even behavior can lie. That's why behavior and character must be tested.

Conflict exposes real character. Behavior after conflict is what counts. Don't get emotionally involved until you've seen him react to conflict. Don't get emotionally involved until you see how he responds when you have a different

opinion. Your job is to figure out who the real guy is. And the only way to do that is to see how he responds when he is not in charge.

Until you see him consistently respond under adverse circumstances, you have no idea if your guy's character is authentic or manipulative.

Wait long enough to see his real character

the third foolproof way to make the real guy stand up is to make sure you wait long enough to see his real character. As a Christian it's important that you share similar values regarding your faith.

True character is revealed in the midst of conflict.

BUT character and integrity are also must haves! Just because a guy is a Christian doesn't mean he has character. Character is like furniture. Some furniture is solid wood and some only looks like wood. Some furniture is laminated with photographic images of wood layered on top of man-made materials, while other furniture is veneer, a thin surface layer of finely grained wood glued to a base of inferior material.

How do you tell if a potential love interest is the real deal or merely veneer? It's especially difficult because we all have natural instinct for self-preservation,

especially in dating situations. That's when we are most likely to dress to impress and act our best.

Here's how you can tell if a man has character? True character is revealed in the midst of conflict. So...be patient—watch and wait. It's only when someone is under pressure that we see what they are really made of. What's on the inside comes out when we are squeezed by issues, challenges and adversity.

Don't be vulnerable. Don't believe everything your guy says at first. Instead, pay close attention to his actions. Actions are a more reliable measure of integrity and character. Women run into problems when they either get in a hurry or become emotionally involved before they have a chance to evaluate the character of a potential love interest.

A great question to ask yourself is this: Do his actions align with his words? How have I seen this evidenced?

Ripping Off the Mask

It takes time to evaluate someone's behavior. It's easier to believe words than to wait to measure a man's behavior and actions against what comes out of his mouth. That isn't judging. That's looking for evidence of fruit. Wisdom says to put a guard on your heart until you have determined that who you are giving your heart

to will not take advantage of it, abuse it or mistreat it. You, my precious sister, are worthy of love—worthy of your heart’s desire.

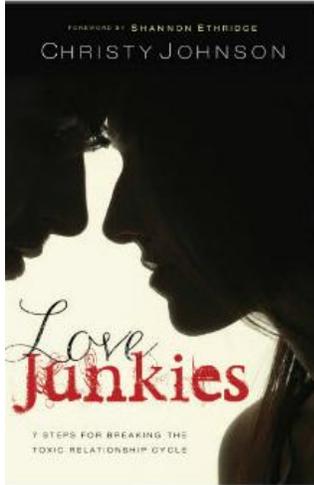
Want more relationship wisdom?

I hope you’ve enjoyed my ebook, *Controlled, Ripping the Mask off Manipulation*. But if you still want more, I want to introduce you to more!

If you’ve read this far, chances are great that you are serious about doing whatever it takes to improve your soul health so you can enjoy healthy relationships. In fact, I wrote *Love Junkies* for women just like you.

In *Love Junkies, 7 Steps for Breaking the Toxic Relationship Cycle* you’ll learn how to change your habits, heal your soul and most importantly, break the toxic love cycle!

Experts say that we gravitate towards relationships within a ten-point spread of our own IQ. Likewise, in the realm of soul-health, we also attract those with whom we are most emotionally compatible. That can be a good thing...or a bad thing—it depends on how much baggage we carry around!



Do romantic relationships leave you miserable and confused?

Whether you are married, single, or single-again, relationships don't have to be complicated.

Ditch the drama and find the love you've always wanted!

**change your habits
heal your soul &
break the toxic love rut**

Experts say that we gravitate towards relationships within a ten-point spread of our own IQ. Likewise, in the realm of soul-health, we also attract those with whom we are most emotionally compatible. That can be a good thing...or a bad thing—it depends on how much baggage we carry around!

You can eliminate toxic behaviors that jeopardize your soul health and keep you stuck in unhealthy relationships. You are the reason I wrote *Love Junkies!*

Love Junkies, 7 Steps for Breaking the Toxic Relationships Cycle is available on [Amazon](#) in paperback or Kindle or on [my store page](#).

Some women want more than a book. They want face to face interaction with relationship coach. If that's you, I have good news.

If you need one-on-one coaching, I'd love to help!

I Am a Virtual Mentor and Soul Health Life Coach



I help determined women—women just like you—find the freedom they need to prosper in life, love and relationships. This requires that your soul finds liberty in four key areas. Which do you need help with?

1

Setting Boundaries

Discover how guarding your heart can dramatically improve your self confidence and create a climate for healthier and more satisfying relationships.

2

Forgiving and Forgetting

Is it time to do a soul cleanse? Discover how to trash every hurt and offense so you can enjoy maximum soul prosperity.

3

Managing Expectations

Learn how to release the expectations you have for yourself and others so you can live everyday with optimal joy.

4

Finding Your Identity

Discover how to nail your calling and create the life you've always wanted.

Check out my [coaching packages](#) here.

Let's stay connected!

Read more on my blog at <http://www.christyjohnson.org/blog/>

