

Manipulation Tactics Glossary

Quick Reference Definitions

Overview

This glossary provides clear definitions of manipulation tactics clients may report or demonstrate. Use for client education and pattern recognition.

Gaslighting

Making someone question their own reality, memory, or perception. "That never happened." "You're too sensitive." "You're crazy."

DARVO

Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender. When confronted, the person denies, attacks the accuser, and claims to be the real victim.

Love Bombing

Overwhelming someone with affection, attention, and promises early in relationship to create attachment before revealing problematic behavior.

Triangulation

Bringing a third party into a two-person conflict to gang up on one person or to avoid direct communication.

Flying Monkeys

People recruited by a manipulator to do their bidding, often unknowingly. Named after the Wizard of Oz.

Hoovering

Attempts to suck a person back into a relationship after they've left or set boundaries. Named after the vacuum brand.

Gray Rock

A defense technique where the target becomes as boring and unresponsive as a gray rock to avoid triggering the manipulator.

Word Salad

Circular, confusing, or contradictory communication designed to disorient and exhaust the listener.

Moving the Goalposts

Constantly changing the criteria for approval so the target can never succeed.

Silent Treatment

Punitive withdrawal of communication to control or punish. Different from healthy space-taking.

Projection

Accusing others of the behaviors or feelings the person themselves exhibits.

Future Faking

Making promises about the future with no intention of following through.

Splitting

Black-and-white thinking where people are either all good or all bad, often shifting rapidly.