



# **Combatting Cult Mind Control: The #1 Best-selling Guide to Protection, Rescue, and Recovery from Destructive Cults**

*Steven Hassan , Margaret Thaler Singer (Foreword by)*

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## **Combatting Cult Mind Control: The #1 Best-selling Guide to Protection, Rescue, and Recovery from Destructive Cults** Steven Hassan , Margaret Thaler Singer (Foreword by)

A former cult member, now a counselor helping those affected by destructive cults, Hassan exposes the troubling facts about cults' recruitment, their use of psychological manipulation, and their often subtle influence on government, the legal system, and society as a whole.

This updated paperback edition includes a new preface by the author and an expanded bibliography and resource list.

## **Combatting Cult Mind Control: The #1 Best-selling Guide to Protection, Rescue, and Recovery from Destructive Cults Details**

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## From Reader Review Combatting Cult Mind Control: The #1 Best-selling Guide to Protection, Rescue, and Recovery from Destructive Cults for online ebook

### James K. says

Steven Hassan's excellent and insightful review of his experience with a destructive cult; and the mind control techniques such cults use to recruit, retain and fleece members; should be required reading in high school. Most of us think we would never fall for a ridiculous story like Sun Myung Moon being the new Messiah or L. Ron Hubbard having discovered we are spirit beings robbed of our power to control Matter, Energy, Space and Time even better than a Jedi Master by the evil overlord Xenu of the Galactic Confederacy. What few realize is recruiters *never* approach raw meat with the absurd core beliefs they intend to introduce to them. In fact, most recruiters for a destructive cult have not made it to the upper echelons of the group where they have heard the core beliefs. First, they must be so brainwashed they will believe down is up and two plus two equals five if their leader tells them it's so. Cult recruiters start with some appealing story about helping the poor, or unlocking your own hidden potential, and they use subtle methods of trance induction and manipulation of the subconscious during an initial meeting or seminar to bring new recruits and their bulging bank accounts into the fold where the cult leader can extract their wealth for himself and profit from their long hours of work, often for nothing more in return than room and board.

Author and ex Moonie Hassan, now a professional psychological counselor, exposes the mind control tricks cults use to exert such manipulation of people that something as unthinkable as Jonestown, where hundreds of people willingly drank poison on the leaders command, could and will happen again. In his decade plus work as a cult exit counselor, he has learned about the methods used by hundreds of different destructive cults. What makes his book such essential reading is how much each of the cults share in common in their mind control techniques, and how learning their tricks can enable us to spot them if someone ever tries to use them on us, and to help loved ones avoid the years or even decades of wasted life cult membership can inflict on a member.

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### Raffaela says

The TomKat divorce, scientology and recent experiences prompted me to read this. Informative and Very interesting (and scary) to think how many people are manipulated into joining these groups. I wish more families/friends had the perseverance, strength and knowledge needed to rescue someone from these groups so that these cults would eventually die out.

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### Keith Akers says

This is an old book (published 1988) but I found it to be very informative and helpful on the subject of cults - "cults," that is, in the pejorative sense of the term. It's a great introduction to how people are induced to join a cult, and counseled out of cults which they've been in. There are a lot of stories in the book, which make it an interesting as well as an informative read. Cults tend to resemble each other in several important ways.

He gives a really great description of the Unification Church (Moonies) with which he had extensive experience. But he uses this as a springboard to consider general cult characteristics. Thus, it gives an

experiential overview of how cults work and what makes them "cults." You have meditation cults, fundamentalist Christian cults, political cults, and even psychotherapy cults.

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## **Madeleine Rose says**

Did an extended project qualification on cult mind control, this book was my bible! Cult life as a reality in 80s/90s America is an interesting topic that is worth your time to read about.

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## **Pierre S. Freeman says**

This Book Helped Free Me From 26 Years Of Cult Mind Control  
Combatting Cult Mind Control  
December 1st 1990  
-A Review of Pierre S. Freeman-

There is so much to tell about this book- how it changed my life, how it helped me develop an essentially workable strategy for deprogramming my mind of cult influences, how it set me on a course as a writer describing and explaining the influence of a specific cult on my life and fortune. I know, first hand- by direct experience- that this book is a game changer for anyone who has lost his life to cult operatives, feigning their authority and divine appointment through various fraudulent claims, all the while utilizing mind control to enhance the suggestibility of those they recruit and those who manage to stay within the group even for a short amount of time. One of the chief aspects of a cult, explained so well by Steven Hassan, is the thought-stopping mechanism in which a person suppresses his doubts whenever they surface. In my specific cult, there was a pervasive message that this was the only real spiritual group fully endorsed by the Cosmic (Cosmic Consciousness or God). This thought suppression caused me to become a bifurcated personality, wandering to extremes of elation in being part of this privileged elite and falling into deep depression, blackouts and spontaneous outbursts of anger and profanity. Hassan very rightly says, "Members are taught to suppress any negative feelings they have about the group and always show a continually smiling, "happy" face." I know, again- from direct experience- how psychologically dangerous such thought-stopping can be- and, during that time, I lived on the brink of a terrible emotional collapse. I thank God that I discovered Steven Hassan and a few other excellent exit counselors and their works that drove me back into living an exciting, powerful life both in the normal pursuit of my own professional career but also as a writer, warning the public about the dangerous religious cult I belonged to- but also about the psychological foundation of cults in general.

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## **Colt says**

### **Undue influence is real**

This book was really eye opening. I was raised Jehovah's Witness and this book has helped me to see that I was raised in a cult and how they influenced me. Steven Hassan is a great teacher and the book was an easy and uplifting read. I encourage "everyone" to read this book. This book gives perspective to cults which is something no one is talking about. This book has vital information that anyone can benefit from.

## Sara Lou says

I've purchased this book as a 'self help' in recognising how mind control has been used emotionally, mentally and spiritually in my life. Although a lot of the 'examples' are given from the authors experience with 'The Moonies' this isn't a book merely for those who have been in such recognisable and extreme 'cult' movements.

What I have found, especially in the sections explaining mind control and the manipulative ways it is harnessed, is that I've been able to recognise and identify ways I have been influenced by them. In recognising, checklisting and facing up to the fact these techniques have been used to control and manipulate, I can then start to move on and heal in positive ways.

Sometimes we need more than just time and a mental attitude of moving forward from the 'movement' you have come out of. Because the fact remains that abuse has taken place, that that abuse has affected you in many ways and on many 'levels'. Different people move on in different ways and mine has come to learning through people who have been through similar circumstances, people who have took time and effort to pass on their 'wisdom' with an open outlook. It also helps to recognise that this goes even in this day and age when it is possible people think they are immune to such ideas.

A great help for those who have been in a 'cult' or abusive 'church' and also for the families outside of it with concerns for their loved ones

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## Robin says

Very interesting and thought provoking book on cults. Most of the focus was on religious cults but the author covered political cults, educational cults, and commercial cults as well. Topics of mind control, behavior modification, the influence of conformity, phobia indoctrination and obedience to authority are addressed in this thoughtful, well-written book.

Favorite quotes from the book: "I told him that any group that told its members not to think, but rather to obey their leaders blindly, was dangerous. I told him that any organization that told members not to talk to former members or read critical information was exercising information control--an essential component of mind control." p.161

(This so articulates what I was taught in Mormonism: "When the prophet speaks, the thinking has been done." is a mantra repeated time and time again in the Mormon church and among the members. I still find it difficult to understand how I could have believed this way for decades of my life. This book has been helpful in explaining WHY.)

"Every person in a cult has been programmed to stop all "negative" thoughts about the leader, the doctrine, or the organization, and has also been indoctrinated to believe that his group is superior to all other groups and different from all other groups." p. 165

"It was also important for him to see that there are other groups who are led by people claiming to be spiritually superior. When I eventually told him that there were some three thousand cult groups, and that if one of them was in fact led by the one legitimate great leader then the odds that he would have found the

right one on the first pick were three thousand to one. Not very good odds." p. 167

"I wanted to challenge his indoctrination that people who leave the group do so for the wrong reasons-- because they are weak or undisciplined or want to indulge in materialism. I wanted him to know that I left the group out of strength and integrity." p.167

"I left the group because I came to see objectively what I had been doing. I had devoted myself to a fantasy." p.167

"Once I was able to realize that even though I WANTED to believe it was true, MY BELIEF DIDN'T MAKE IT TRUE, I saw that even if I remained in the group for another fifty years, the fantasy I was sacrificing myself for would never come true." p.167

"By being given some clear definitions of mind control, I was able to see clearly how I had been victimized and how I had learned to victimize others. I personally had to come to terms with my own values, beliefs, and ideals. Once I did that, even though I had invested so much of myself in the group, become a leader, and developed close bonds with many members, I had to walk away. I could never go back to becoming a 'true believer' again."

(The hardest and yet the most freeing time of my life was to realize the truth that the Mormon church was a fraud produced by a con man and to walk away from being a 6th generation Mormon.)

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## Alex Kenjeev says

We are all vulnerable to indoctrination, either directly or indirectly. Directly: almost anyone can be indoctrinated under the right circumstances, even if most of us are lucky enough to only face such circumstances rarely, if at all.

Indirectly: the threat posed to civilization by destructive mind control is much broader, and can be properly called existential. Consider the middle-class professional who suddenly becomes "radicalized", a once mild-mannered neighbor is now a thug, ready at any moment, if tapped by his superiors, to blow himself up for Allah. Or for unborn babies. Or for socialism. Or whatever. We ignore these victims -- and yes, they are victims, whether or not they also become perpetrators -- at our peril.

This book will thoroughly convince you that the dark practices of mind control are not random but strikingly homogenous, having been coldly developed and refined by their practitioners - who themselves come in clerical, civilian and military flavours, among others.

This book lays claim to the beginnings of what may one day become a fully developed science of deprogramming (although the author doesn't like to use that specific word) for the victims of mind control. Mind control is itself a difficult term for what goes on in destructive groups, because it seems to strip away agency from those who get involved in practices that should, in many (but by no means all) cases be rightly condemned and punished. Still, there's evidence that this is at least in some ways a valid lens that explains how people of any level of prior education and intelligence can suddenly become closed off, glassy-eyed and ready to throw away everything for reasons that seem elusive to even their closest friends and family. Most importantly, it seems to actually work, and its author claims that he has succeeded in rescuing hundreds of victims from every kind of emotional prison, including religious cults, human trafficking rings, and political guerrilla squads. Let's hope for humanity's sake that these methods get further refined, accepted and taught broadly to health professionals and laypeople everywhere.

## **Mach-won says**

This is an amazing book for those who wish to help fight the predatory destructive cults by attacking the heart and their wallets.

The goal in this book is my using a non-coercive method of interventions and help the cult member think and grow and breaking the spell of mind control.

What I found particularly great about this book was the methods of "mini-interventions." Ways to help cult members help themselves you may come across in your day-to-day life. Speaking to them and getting them to look through different perspectives is the real key to empowering cult members to re-evaluate their commitment to the group.

I wish I could give another star, Fantastic. Everyone should read this book whether you are in a cult, not in a cult, or don't know if their in a cult. If you understand mind control and how it's applied, you can better protect yourself from destructive groups.

I can't wait to get a hold of a copy of his newer book Releasing the Bonds.

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## **Jennifer says**

I loved this book. I was introduced to a group by a friend years back and was an active member, even though a lot of it creeped me out. I decided to leave on my own, but by using this book, I was able to discover that the group I belonged to was actually a cult. It wasn't as horrendous as many cults but it had all the warning signs, including the use of mind control techniques. This book is a great read for anyone. It helps you to realize that most cults use deception to get you to join. They tell you they want to share a new way of thinking or new meditation techniques (and many others). They are warm and welcoming, and no one, even the people actively in the group, thinks they are in a cult. Because of this, it is easy for anyone to get sucked in. The author also gives extensive advice for helping a friend or family member you believe has gotten into a cult lifestyle. I recommend it even if just to keep the public more aware of what is truly going on in the world.

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## **Medium says**

this book helped change my perspective and learn my way out of my upbringing.

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## **Crystal says**

*Disclaimer: This review was originally posted on the website Ex-JW Sisters*

As I mentioned to the Editor of this blog, as a book reviewer I would love to contribute some articles about books written by or for Jehovah's Witnesses. There are a number of books available, I hope to help give a

quick general overview of these books so that you can decide which you'd like to read.

I chose this book as the first to review because it marked the beginning of my journey out of "the truth". As such, it is a personal favorite of mine. It is the first book I read when I finally realized that "the truth" was in fact... not truth at all. Usually I don't get particularly personal when writing a book review for my blog, but it's impossible to divorce my feelings and impressions of this book from my own "waking up" story. So I will try to keep it short and to the point but you know how it is. I mean... we are all sisters here right?

As it is for many, my waking up process was stretched out over a series of years. I liken it to a crack in the windshield of a car, it starts tiny. I gained more cracks over the years for a multiple of reasons, some doctrinal some personal. I could feel the religion slipping away from me little by little, but it was as though my brain refused to acknowledge the reality. One afternoon, July 28, 2016 to be precise, I drove home from work listening to a podcast interview with a Mormon who had left his church. I heard a voice in my head saying, "that's what you're doing, you're leaving." I was stunned at this thought. It was too much to think about and it made me feel afraid. I turned the podcast off, and searched online for a recording of the Watchtower but found I couldn't concentrate. It was boring and unbearable. I reached a local pizza place and walked in half in a daze, ordered dinner to-go for my family and sat down at a table to wait. I searched my phone, desperate for an article, a talk, something from Watchtower to restore my equanimity.

Google. \*tap\*

Watchtower... just pick something. \*tap\*

JW Facts? \*tap\*

United Nations... oh my god... United Nations.

The windshield of my faith shattered in an instant. I collected my pizza, made my way home and explained to my mother that it was all over.

As you all know, that moment is not the end of the story but the beginning. Now is the hard part. Now is when we pick up the pieces and try to understand what has happened to us. I asked, how could this happen to me? I'm a bright woman, I'm not stupid. How did I allow an organization to deceive and control me to this extent for so long? Why did I not see it? I needed to understand, first, why I had let Watchtower exert control over me to begin with, and second, how to extricate myself from the disaster of my faith now that I'd pulled it all down.

Thankfully I found this book pretty quickly. It helped me to regain a measure of understanding. I imagined that reading about Mr. Hassan's personal experiences with cult indoctrination was inoculating me against further manipulation. I was frightened by the prospect of returning to a state of indoctrination. How can I keep from going back? How do I keep other groups from taking advantage of me? I know that my inclination will probably be to allow others to reinsert a measure of control into my life so how do I prevent that? This book helped me to understand that all the questions I was asking and the sense of insecurity I felt was a natural part of being subjected to undue influence for so many years.

I'm sure I'm not telling you anything new when it comes to the B.I.T.E. model. This model is used to explain the ways in which a cult asserts its power over you. I touched on these points in a review for another book, but I think they really belong here with this book, where I found them to begin with:

**Behavior** – The lives of JW's are highly controlled. Their dress and grooming, what jobs they perform, their entertainment, the amount of time they spend studying Witness publications and witnessing to outsiders is all highly controlled. And then there is their prohibition of holidays and their stand on blood transfusions. \_\_\_\_\_

**Information** – JW's are not allowed to listen to any information about the Jehovah's Witnesses unless it comes directly from Watchtower. This includes anything on the internet or from the news media. JW's are not allowed to speak with people who have left the organization. You cannot even acknowledge that persons existence. Needless to say, lack of un-biased information is dangerous.

**Thoughts** – All thoughts are to be regulated. Doubts about the religion are not tolerated. You can be brought before a Judicial Committee and expelled from the congregation for holding a different opinion from the Governing Body. If you voice that opinion then watch out!

**Emotional** – Guilt and fear figure mightily in this religion. No matter what you do in service of this religion, it is never, ever enough. JW's are encouraged to spy and tattle on each other to the elders in the congregation for even minor offenses. JW's are not allowed to speak with anyone who is expelled (disfellowshipped or disassociated), even if it is an immediate family member.

This synopsis is admittedly superficial, there is much more information to be found in Mr. Hassan's book. If you are newly awake to your time within the Watchtower organization this is an excellent book to read. It is the first that I recommend to anyone who is leaving the Jehovah's Witness religion.

If you are finding it difficult to understand why the cracks in the windshield can make you feel so free and so lost all at once, allow the examples in the book to assure you, these feelings are temporary and you can regain the control you once relinquished to The Cult. With understanding you can start to live the life you were meant to live.

*"Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding." Khalil Gibran*

Song for this book: Level up by Vienna Teng

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## **Brett says**

I have had this book for awhile and just finished it. With thousands of cults in America, this is a great resource. The only thing lacking in this book, is that Hassen does not address SGA (Second generation Adult) members of cults, but he corrects that in his later books and there are other good books now on that as well. I think many people do not realize the need to study and be aware of mind control but understanding its mechanisms and how humans can become slaves to an ideology and organization is worth the time to become aware. This book does a great job of that, as Hassans describes own experience entering, participating and finally being deprogrammed (forcefully) from the Moonies. He does not advocate that approach but is able to help people think for themselves which is the biggest part of cult rescue. SGA's have it much harder as they have no pre-cult identity and so the challenge of rescue and recovery is huge. Hassan does a great job of showing how very intelligent people never believe they are in or could be victims of a cult and that cults reject dummies, they want to recruit intelligent and well rounded people for their cause, breaking the stereo-types of who cult members are. This is a great read and his many examples are entertaining.

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## **Jay says**

This is an excellent book on how cult indoctrination works and details the common yet effective methods

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they use: "deceptive recruiting", "love-bombing", "loaded language" - "isolation" - "dogmatism", etc. For those that think, it can't happen to me, Hassan points out the Unification Church preferred to target "capable people", i.e. smart, energetic, idealistic... and they often succeeded.

Although not mentioned except in the expanded bibliography of the later edition, the methods used eerily identical to those practiced by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

A couple things to note: 1.) NO cult self-identifies as a cult; they all poo-poo the idea and see it as an affirming example of outside persecution. 2.) No cult uses all the control techniques presented. So it's not like you can say "Well, we don't shave our heads like the Krishnas so we can't be a cult".

There are a short series of short questions in the book that will either send cult recruiters fleeing or make them very uncomfortable, be they Witnesses, Krishnas, etc. The book is worth it just for the questions. (i.e. Can you name 3 things you don't like about your organization or its leaders?) Since most cults indoctrinate their members with the idea they ( the organization and its leaders) are the ultimate good, the "Truth", in Witness terminology, they are unable/unwilling to criticize their organization for fear of being punished or feeling guilt for opposing God's (Jehovah's) one true church.

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