

DARK PSYCHOLOGY DECODED

THE NARCISSIST'S *PLAYBOOK*

7 control tactics, and how to shut each one down.

A FREE FIELD GUIDE FROM [ATENAJOS.BLOG](https://atenajos.blog)

BEFORE YOU START

Understanding the pattern is the *first crack* in it.

Control rarely looks like control. It looks like love, then confusion, then you apologising for things you did not do.

This guide is not about labelling everyone who disappoints you. Ordinary people cause ordinary harm without a single dark tactic in the mix. What you are about to read is a **pattern**: a set of moves used repeatedly, together, to keep one person off balance and another in charge.

Each tactic below comes in three parts: **what it looks like** from the inside, **how to shut it down**, and a one-line reminder you can keep in your pocket for the moment it happens. You will not out-argue a skilled manipulator. That is not the goal. The goal is to stop confusing being understood with being safe, and to take back the one thing they rely on you losing: your own read on reality.

A note before we begin. If you are in immediate danger, cutting off a volatile person can escalate things. Where safety is a concern, plan your steps with a professional or a domestic-abuse advisor first. This guide is education, not a substitute for support.

THE 7 TACTICS

1 Love Bombing

Overwhelming affection to fast-track trust and dependence

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Instant, dizzying intensity. Soulmate talk in week one. Constant contact, grand gestures, and pressure to commit fast. It feels like being chosen. It is really the reference point being set, so everything colder that follows gets measured against this high.

HOW TO SHUT IT DOWN

Slow the pace on purpose. Real intimacy is built, not injected. Watch what happens the first time you set a small boundary: warmth that survives a "no" is real; warmth that punishes a "no" was a leash.

"Consistency over intensity."

2 Isolation

Cutting you off until they are your only reference point

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Small digs at your friends and family. Guilt when you see other people. "Us against the world." Slowly, your time, your plans, and your version of events all run through one person.

HOW TO SHUT IT DOWN

Protect your outside relationships like oxygen. Keep one or two people who knew you before. Isolation only works in the dark, so the simple act of staying connected is a form of defence.

"Keep your mirrors."

3 Gaslighting

Making you doubt your own memory until you outsource reality

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

"That never happened." "You're too sensitive." Events you clearly remember get denied or rewritten, until you start pre-doubting yourself and asking them what is true.

HOW TO SHUT IT DOWN

Keep a private, factual record, dates and details, somewhere they cannot reach. Trust the body signal that something is off. You do not need them to agree that it happened for it to have happened.

"My memory is not up for debate."

4 Triangulation

Bringing in a third person to make you compete

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Constant comparisons. "My ex never did this." An admirer mentioned just often enough. People quietly played against each other so you feel you must earn a place you already had.

HOW TO SHUT IT DOWN

Refuse the competition, out loud if you can: "I notice you're comparing us." You cannot win a game designed to keep you anxious, so stop playing it. Your worth is not decided by a manufactured contest.

"I don't audition for my place."

5 Intermittent Reinforcement

Unpredictable hot and cold that hooks harder than steady warmth

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Adoring one day, distant the next, for no reason you can name. You start walking on eggshells and chasing the "good version" of them, sure you can get back to it if you just get it right.

HOW TO SHUT IT DOWN

Judge the pattern, not the peaks. Average the whole relationship, not its best afternoon. Unpredictable reward is the wiring of addiction, not love, and naming it that way loosens its grip.

"I measure the pattern, not the highlight."

6 DARVO

Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

You raise a hurt. They deny it, attack your character, then somehow become the wounded party. Minutes later you are the one apologising, unsure how you got there.

HOW TO SHUT IT DOWN

Do not defend, argue, or over-explain. Hold one point and repeat it calmly: "This isn't about that. I'm talking about X." You do not have to win the argument to be right about what happened.

"I don't have to win the argument to be right."

7 Hoovering

Pulling you back in right when you start to heal

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Just as the fog lifts: a sudden apology, "I've changed," a crisis that only you can fix, a nostalgia bomb, a message the moment you go quiet. The timing is not coincidence. It is designed to arrive exactly when your guard drops.

HOW TO SHUT IT DOWN

Expect it, and pre-decide your response before it comes, while your head is clear. The pull is a test of whether the old payoff still works. Every time you hold the line, you teach them it does not, and each loop after that gets weaker.

"The comeback is the tactic."

The thread running through all seven: none of it works once you can name it.

A tactic you can see is a tactic that has already lost most of its power. You do not have to confront anyone, win anything, or be certain. You only have to stop handing over your own reality, one small doubt at a time.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

You just did the *hardest part*.

Naming the pattern is the thing most people never get to. Everything after this is practice.

If this guide gave language to something you have lived, there is a lot more where it came from, written the same way: the psychology decoded, not dramatised.

Read the deep dives

New breakdowns every week on manipulation, narcissistic abuse, and how to protect yourself. atenajos.blog

Watch it decoded

Short, calm, no-drama videos that walk through these tactics one at a time. youtube.com/@SoterAjschylos

You are not weak for not seeing this sooner. These tactics work precisely because they exploit normal, healthy human wiring for trust and attachment. If any part of this described your situation and you are in danger, please reach out to a domestic-abuse helpline or a trusted professional. Understanding is the first step, not the whole journey.