

UNHEALTHY CONTROL

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Why are some people so rooted in control that they feel they have to make other people's lives so miserable? Sally and I are in New Zealand visiting relatives and running a couple of parenting seminars. Our last seminar has been on blended families and helping parents develop skills to make the transition smoother. It's always a pretty precarious position to be in when two families try to amalgamate, but it can be successful with knowledge, patience and tenacity.

Last night during an intermission I was listening to a lady talk about her broken marriage and the terrible indignities she had suffered at the hands of her ex-husband. Why is it that some people feel they have to dominate and bully what should be their best friend? It is inconceivable that a person who claims to be a Christian would show not one of the 'Fruit of the Spirit' as mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Galatian Church. This man had an inside and outside face and most people outside had no idea what he was like in the home.

In case you are not aware, controllers are not always men. I don't know how statistics would look, but from experience I would say that the division might be evenly divided. From counseling the victims of control abuse I list the behaviors of such people:

- They are insecure and want you to be insecure, too.
- They are bullies and try to dominate in all situations.
- They may not want you to work so that you become more dependent on them.
- They may not want you to drive in case you go somewhere they don't want you to go and fear that you might tell somebody about your problems.
- They make you so afraid and threaten you with harm if you divulge.
- They try to ensure you have no friends and may even try to cut you off from family so that you have nobody to tell the truth to or to run to.
- They are amazing actors and know how to create an amazing outside persona.
- They ridicule you and verbally abuse you until you feel you have no worth.
- They usually try to control the finances so that you have little access to money.
- They rule the children with an iron fist ensuring nothing about home is leaked out.
- They expect you to perform their wishes immediately and without question.
- They use emotional blackmail to keep you in line so that you don't dare think for yourself.
- They try to control you even after the relationship is over by telling people what a terrible person you are and spreading rumors about you.

There are more 'attributes' of unhealthy control, but not enough space to present them all. These are unacceptable behaviors in any relationship and cannot be tolerated. A 'control freak' may not use all these tactics, but even one of them should not be excused. If you recognize from this description any of these factors in your relationship it is important that you get help even if you feel too afraid to do so!

If you are the controller then you really need healing through serious counseling thus dealing with the roots of your insecurity. We don't have the right to dominate the lives of others. We are entrusted with a spouse to love, cherish and honor. We are given children to love and to bring up to be like Jesus. I mentioned the 'Fruit of the Spirit' earlier. These fruits are the character of Jesus and anyone claiming to have a relationship with Him needs to display them inside and outside the home.

“The ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.