

# Brainwashing

Business



Brainwashing commences by making the target person feel completely helpless. Physical and psychological abuse, humiliation, and isolation serve to loosen former values and beliefs of an individual. When exhaustion, pressure and fear become unbearable, change occurs as the person begins to abandon former beliefs. In the case of prisoners who are coerced and intimidated by the officials, they may sign a false statement in order to cooperate for them to gain a relief. When they do so, they are suddenly rewarded with privileges, praise, food or rest.

From that point on, a mixture of hope and fear, plus pressures to conform, serves to solidify their new attitudes. In addition, both coercion and brainwashing involves practices of persuasion and mind control. Through such practices, certain beliefs and ideas are imposed upon people to the exclusion of other beliefs and ideas. The emphasis in the concept of brainwashing is on the prevention of critical and rational thinking about beliefs presented as absolute truths. Sternberg (28) claimed that ideas, beliefs, and self-misconceptions could not be imposed upon people who are unwilling to embrace them. Even in the extreme cases, where individuals are physically incarcerated and subjected to physical duress and threats, indoctrination efforts positively affect the inner beliefs and convictions of only a few among them.

This is attributed to the receptivity of the exceptional few to their pre-conversion personalities, emotional strains, past history and identity problems. As such, brainwashing and coercion must have an appeal to certain pre-existing personality traits, emotions, beliefs, values and ideas of its subjects in order to succeed. Indeed, external influence has an effect on

an individual's personality, and can affect the perception in the society.

According to Ewing and McCann (86), brainwashing can advertently affect the course of justice and its reliability in the society. For instance, in the case of Colleen, she lived under the sadistic control of Hooker.

She was imbued with the notion that she must be controlled, and anything that she undertakes must be obliged by her husband. Her character traits changed completely, she could not undertake any household chore without asking her husband. For example, when Colleen wanted to eat, sleep, or take a bath, she had to inform her husband in order to get the consent from him. She was totally compliant and submissive to her husband's brutal nature. Colleen's kidnapping became complicated when the victim was brainwashed, and her character changed to the advantage of the assailants. She became soft-spoken in the court and started to defend Hooker.

The court questioned this nature of kidnapping, as she was kidnapped for more than seven years without attempting to escape. The court concluded that Stan had been coerced and brainwashed to accept the fact that she was part of the family. In addition, after Hooker had changed her personality and perception, she allowed her to visit her family without any supervision. This implied that Stan had accepted, willing and with positive intent, to live with Hooker's family, as she did not disclose to her family that she had been kidnapped. The court case was complicated, as initially it was kidnapping, but later it was perceived that the victim had complied with the assailants; therefore, nullifying the whole case, though he was convicted following a series of testimonies (Jacobs 49).

The “ new self” that is imminent after being brainwashed is not an ego alien one. In the case of Colleen, her personality changed after she was confined, and she believed that the only true information was from Hooker. This feeling often emanates from an individual’s previously existing intuition with all their psychological, cultural, and social aspects. An individual relies on the assailant’s decision before undertaking any activity. However, brainwashing cannot be achieved without traces of coercion.

In an attempt to make an individual follow the defined ideas and beliefs, the assailant needs to incorporate force in the undertakings. Hooker, in his testimony, provided that the victim was subjected to attention drills, which was similar to Marine Corps training. She was confined to a box, whipped, deprived food and water, among others. This was aimed at coercing her to change her personality to resemble that of the assailant – compliance was ruthlessly instigated. In a normal scenario, when an individual is secluded and subjected to ruthless acts, he/she can definitely change the personality traits. As such, it was expected in the court, when Colleen demonstrated apathy and indifferent character to the one the family had known.

In addition, some of the factors that can change an individual personality, which Hooker used, include elimination of daylight through sensory deprivation, in order to disorient an individual. When an individual is subjected to the limited light, he/she cannot be able to have active sensory nerves. The assailant can undertake any activity that it pleases him/her on the victim. In the case of deprivation food, sensory and water from the captive, the assailant can incorporate personality traits to their intuition with ease. Depriving a person’s privacy is realized when Hooker prevented  
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Colleen from excreting normally. A victim should only have to undertake such activities under the consent of the assailant.

Therefore, it was easy for Hooker to manipulate Colleen personality traits (Weiten 26).