



# Characteristics of aggressive religious groups

**Pressure and deception:** *using high-pressure recruitment tactics and not being up-front about their motives.*

- Do they offer instant friendship and intimacy?
- Will they not take 'no' for an answer; invitations are impossible to refuse without feeling guilty and/or ungrateful?
- Were you warned of serious spiritual or physical repercussions for not conforming to group doctrines or beliefs?
- Is the group reluctant to accept you as you are? Do you feel a pressure to change?
- Do they feel that it is proper to deceive people for the sake of the group?

**Totalitarian world-view:** *not encouraging critical and independent thinking and claiming to possess the truth exclusively.*

- Does the group seem too perfect? Do the people all agree and accept all orders cheerfully?
- Do they claim to have 'all the answers' to your problems?
- Is it unacceptable to doubt or question what the group teaches or does?
- Are doubts and questions taken as signs of weakness for which you will be punished?

**Alienation:** *encouraging you to sever ties with others who are not members of their group.*

- Does the group say that your parents and friends cannot understand or help you with religious matters?
- Does the group view all aspects of your former life as bad? Do they use information about your former lifestyle to blackmail you into staying?
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## Need help?

The purpose of the Faith & Spirituality Centre is to support the spiritual well-being of students, staff, and faculty and to increase our understanding of and respect for religious beliefs and practices. If you've been in contact with an aggressive religious or other high pressure group, or if you just want some help, here's what you can do:

### Contact the Faith and Spirituality Centre (FSC)

If you are made to feel unsafe or have any questions about a particular group or organization on campus, please contact the FSC Manager  
Adriana Tulissi: 1.403.220.5451 or [artulissi@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artulissi@ucalgary.ca)

### Get in touch with a Chaplain

Any of the university's chaplains can help you determine whether a group is being aggressive. They can also help you connect with your own or another faith community. ([ucalgary.ca/fsc/contact-us](http://ucalgary.ca/fsc/contact-us))