

Steven Hassan (United States), therapist and author, is the best known exit counsellor today, thanks to his long experience and his approach to helping people under the influence of others, to find their ability to think and decide for themselves. A former recruiter and leader in the Moon sect, he warns one that people are under the mental control of a destructive sect or therapist:

- Have learnt to put up barriers preventing them from seeing the reality that concerns them, and to no longer trust what surrounds them, parents especially,
- May have been deceived by hypnotic techniques, testimonies and video footage,
- Have phobias, implanting phobias is a universal technique in order to manipulate and control individuals.

When counselling someone leaving a sect, Hassan advocates an interactive, respectful and sympathetic approach: one must get involved, show concerns, understanding, gain the person's attention, and manage to exert an ethical influence on him. One should not act too quickly or in an exaggerated manner. A strategic plan and goals suited to the person must be envisaged; involving several individuals close to him (friends, neighbours, even family) capable of creating a bond; one should seek out former members (who know the way witnesses think), and it is necessary to get a good prior understanding of indoctrinating techniques and what help to give when one leaves a sect. It will thus be possible not to question him about his group (which he would not wish to call a sect), but rather to lead him to think about it indirectly by referring to a well-known sect: for instance, to target certain matters which are forbidden or made compulsory, asking him what are the differences with his own group. This may encourage him to obtain information about this other sect and to think of the similarities with his own movement.

Source : <http://www.unadfi.org/FECRIS-Perpignan-october-2012>