

WEED OUT

PROPAGANDA

Learn to spot the
S.E.E.D. of propaganda
before it takes root.

Propaganda is information that's been molded to influence what you think and do – for better or for worse. This mind control isn't magic; it's carefully cultivated manipulation. Your best defense: recognizing the techniques propaganda uses to spread ideas and persuade the public.

Simplification
Propaganda reduces complicated issues to basic ideas and packages them with catchy slogans and images so they're easy to understand and remember.

Watch out for:

EXTREMES. Describing people and issues as good or bad, right or wrong. No complexity or room for compromise.

LEAPS OF LOGIC. Using minor connections or coincidences to "prove" a point.

INCOMPLETE FACTS. Citing only convenient or helpful facts. Ignoring or glossing over counter-arguments.

SETTING UP EASY TARGETS. Simplifying the other side's arguments or twisting their ideas to make them easier to bring down.

Exploitation
Propaganda uses emotional messages to play on universal weaknesses, fears and desires.

Watch out for:

FEAR-MONGERING. Promising worst-case scenarios will come true if you don't back the cause.

FLATTERY. Suggesting that people who support the cause are smart, strong and attractive.

SHOCKING CONTENT. Shaping content to elicit strong emotional reactions -- positive or negative.

DEADLINES AND PEER PRESSURE. Taking advantage of your fear of being too late or missing out on something big.

Exaggeration
Propaganda paints its cause as unbeatable, without flaws or weaknesses.

Watch out for:

OUTLANDISH OUTCOMES. Making big promises, but not offering any evidence to back them up.

PIGGYBACKING ON SUCCESS. Tying the cause to bigger ideas and issues that already have public support, like religion, patriotism or morality.

OVERHYPED SUCCESS STORIES. Using testimonials from supporters to illustrate the benefits of supporting the cause.

POWER PLAYS. Using images and descriptions of the cause that emphasize how popular, well-respected and powerful it already is.

Division
Propaganda sets up "us" versus "them" scenarios, broadening divisions between different people, groups and ideas.

Watch out for:

HEROES AND VILLAINS. Depicting key figures as either flawless superheroes or despicable demons rather than human beings.

PUSHING PEOPLE TO PICK A SIDE. Framing those who disagree as enemies and not to be trusted.

COZYING UP. Using celebrities, recognizable places and pop references to make the cause seem more friendly and familiar than the other options.

STEREOTYPES AND NAME-CALLING. Reducing whole groups of people to exaggerated features and behaviors to dehumanize them and devalue their beliefs.