

# How Cults Recruit New Members

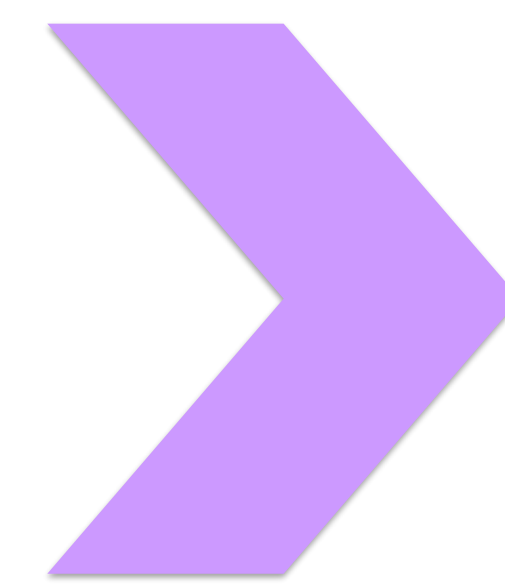
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## Stage 1 - Seduction

The cult recruiter describes a utopian lifestyle that the individual could have if they join the cult. The cult member offers simple answers to complex questions. They play on the emotions of the individual while distorting the truth. This causes the individual to compare his or her life with the life of the recruiter.

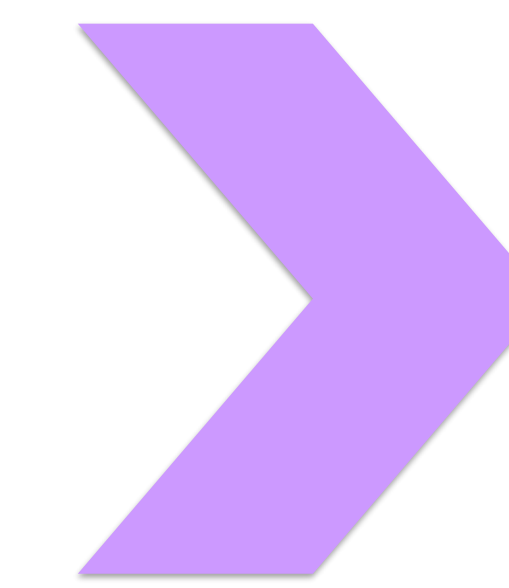
(Abgrall, 2000)



## Stage 2 – Persuasion

The cult member presents the cult's message to the individual. This message is very ambiguous and indirect. Imbedded in this message is a specific theme and how it is executed. If the individual appears to be defensive the recruiter will use an indirect approach and play on his or her emotions. The recruiter portrays his or herself as credible and confident. An example of this is Scientology's use of celebrities.

(Abgrall, 2000)



## Stage 3 – Fascination

Once the individual puts all doubts aside he or she becomes fascinated with the cult. This takes place when the individual is confronted by the cult's leader, who is a human representation of their god. The cult then requests that the individual fully commits himself or herself to the group. This stage is similar to a state of hypnosis, and once it occurs the individual becomes dependent on the cult.

(Abgrall, 2000)



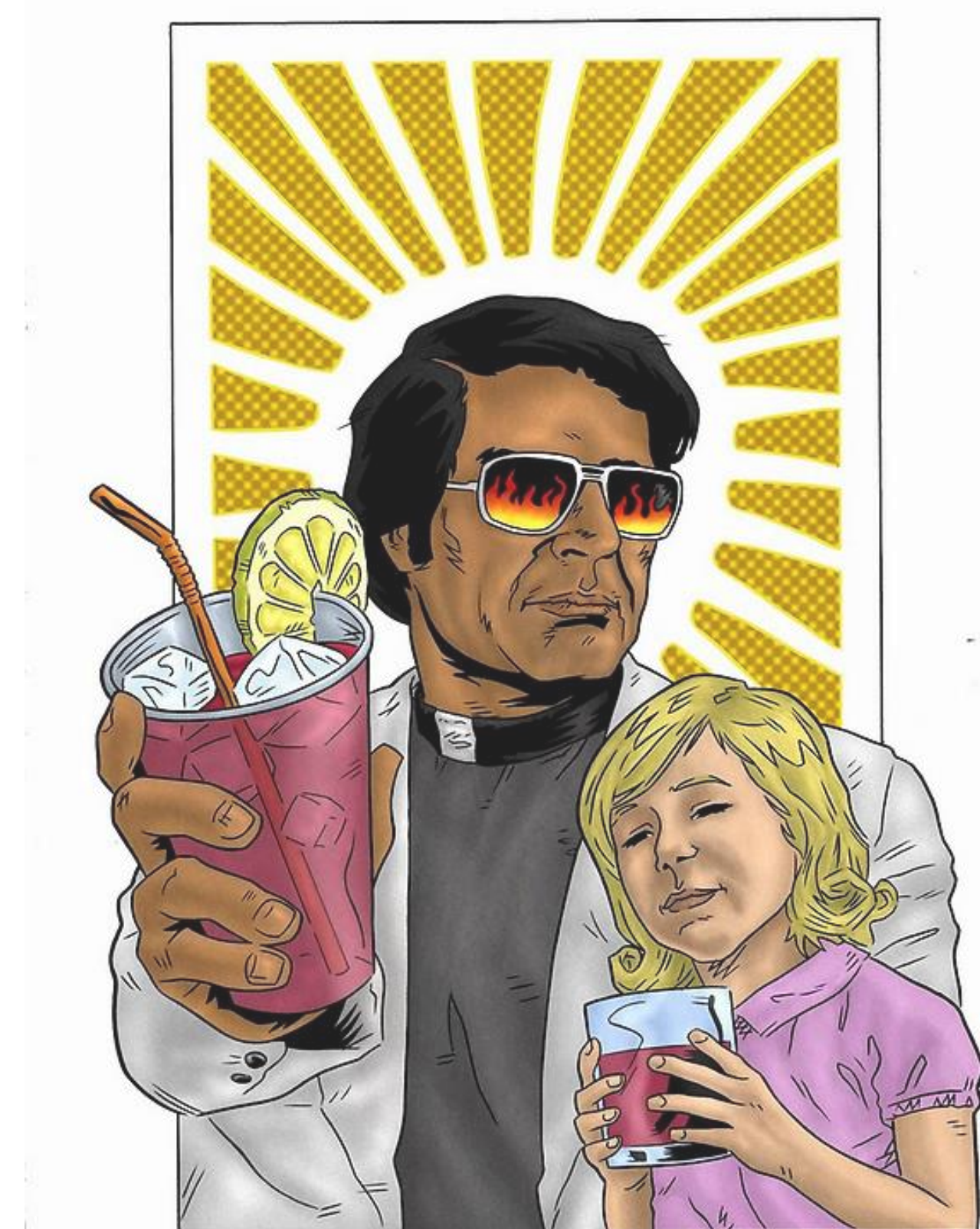
### Characteristics of Susceptible Individuals

- Little desire to conform to societal norms
  - Have experienced a turning point in their lives
  - Need for a sense of belonging
  - Passive
  - Easily persuaded
  - Dissatisfied with their lives and social status
  - Lack confidence in oneself
  - Desire for spiritual meaning
  - Unaware of the possibility of manipulation
- (Hunt, 2014; Lagone, 2008)



### Characteristics of Cult Recruiters

- Attractive
  - Dominant
  - Sympathetic toward the individual
  - Acts very interested in the individual and their lives
  - Creates the illusion of sincerity
- (Abgrall, 2000)



### How Cult Followers View Their Leader

- Charismatic
  - Mysterious
  - God like
  - Powerful
  - Authoritarian
  - Convincing
  - Superhuman
- (Wilson & Kwileck, 2003; Lalich, 2014)