

This Common Mistake Gets You Manipulated

Description

Squid games opens with death, right in the first episode. We see players introduced to the first game where they need to race to the other side of the yard without being seen by the robot. Get seen, get shot.

What Kind Of Idiot Signs Up For A Game Like This?

Well, a desperate idiot. Desperation is one of the few things that nearly guarantees that you will be taken advantage of. Desperation is weakness, and in the animal kingdom, the weak get preyed upon by the strong. (Stick around until the end to learn 2 ways the Squid Games leaders manipulate the desperate players.)

We see roots of desperation in the first episode of Squid Games where the players are brought to the arena.

Having been drugged, the players are understandably hesitant to commit to playing anything until they know what is going on. Would you cooperate with someone who just gassed you? But then the writers show us something important to understanding desperation. As the players argue, the referee starts revealing people's true motives for joining the game. Pay attention, these next few seconds will show you the kind of weaknesses that motivate people to risk their lives.

This Drives Desperation

One man embezzled money from his company. Another is in a great amount of debt. We later learn the main character, Seong, has a whole host of reasons to take a big risk. He is about to lose his daughter. He's already lost his dignity because his inability to provide emasculates him. His mother has problems but is forced to work. He is a compulsive gambler. He seeks thrill to cover up his inability to cope, and men are threatening to take his organs.

All of this leads us to the heart of desperation captured by one principle. People craft an image of themselves based on what they value. If you think of yourself as popular, you are more likely to try to wear certain clothes and use certain phrases. If you think of yourself as smart, you are likely to do things considered intelligent. But when humans fail to live up to these identities that they create, and begin to lose hope in achieving some version of their ideal life, something happens. Their tolerance for risk increases. If you want to know more about how to spot this from a scientific perspective, check out the bonus content for this episode for free on our website. It includes specific questions that measure desperation and its relationship to suicide or other extreme behavior.

How Did Squid Games Manipulate Player's Desperation?

Well, let's check out the first trick they use in the train station scene. Keep in mind, this trick is very common in daily life and very powerful.

The main character plays a game with a random man in the train station. The game seems too good to be true. He loses, he gets slapped. He wins, he gets money. He can keep playing until he wins. The Seong ends up winning the money, and the man he played against gives him his card. He tells Seong to call him if he wants to play another game with more money.

The same sneaky tactic was used by the Chinese in WWII prisoner of war camps. The Chinese were so effective at manipulating the American POW's that the POW's regularly informed on each other, and some even moved back to live there after the war. No violence was used.

The Chinese first had the POW's perform some small task, like pronouncing that the United States wasn't perfect. Then they asked them to write down statements like "communism isn't that bad." Eventually they were writing full letters back home and giving positive speeches about their captors.

Both the Squid Games and the POW camps used this compliance technique. It is called the Foot In The Door Technique. It is a tactic where the target is first asked to do something small, in hopes of getting them to do something large later. The foot in the door technique preys on people's desire to remain consistent with their first action of agreeing.

Just like in squid games, the actions are then ramped up each time until people are behaving in the desired fashion. At the beginning of the show, no one would have agreed to a one on one fight to the death, but that is what happens at the end.

Taking Advantage Of Basic Psychology

So once players knew they could die, why did they keep going? Well this leads us to the final way Squid Game took advantage of human psychology. Warning, I guarantee you fall prey every day to one of the following things.

Humans regularly experience a brain bias that can also contribute to risk taking or illogical behavior. It is called optimism bias. Combined with extreme desperation, this bias made the players come back to risk their lives.

We see things similar to optimism bias pop up all across psychology. People with narcissistic tendencies believe they are special and should be rewarded without any actual accomplishments. The Dunning Kruger effect is a cognitive bias that focuses on how people with low ability at a task overestimate their competence.

All of these brain biases made the players start telling themselves that they weren't going to die. They were special. The risk wasn't really a risk for them. They were going to win and escape their desperate lives. This narrative keeps hope close and desperation at bay. Find this tendency within yourself and squash it.

Check out the [MEMBERS ONLY area for studies](#) that back up this article.

Category

1. Manipulation

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