

Facilitator Guide: Tactic Spotter Debrief

Companion guide for running the Tactic Spotter practice module with a group

Tactic Spotter walks students through six fictional scenarios and asks them to name the manipulation tactic at work in each one. This guide is for whoever runs that activity with a group — a teacher, counselor, or program facilitator — and gives you framing language, per-case discussion questions, and a whole-group debrief so the practice turns into a real conversation.

Before You Start

- Suggested time: 25–35 minutes for all six cases plus debrief, or split across two shorter sessions.
- Best group size: works for a full classroom or a small group; students can answer individually on their own devices or as a class discussion projected on a shared screen.
- Set expectations up front: every scenario is fictional and made up for practice. No one needs to share a personal experience to take part.
- Let students know they can talk to you privately afterward if a scenario feels close to something real happening to them.

Opening framing (read aloud or adapt)

"We're going to practice spotting manipulation tactics using made-up scenarios — like a drill, not a real report. The goal isn't to get every answer right the first time; it's to start recognizing the pattern faster, because these tactics show up in real situations more often than people expect."

Per-Case Discussion Questions

Use these after each case reveals its answer, either as a quick pair-share or a hands-up class discussion. They're designed to take the practice beyond "name the tactic" into why it works and what to do.

Case 1: The device excuse — Tactic: Impersonation

1. What details in the message made it feel believable at first?
2. Why do people fall for impersonation even when they know the person well?
3. What's a safe way to double-check someone's identity without seeming rude?

Case 2: The loyalty test — Tactic: Guilt-Tripping

1. Why does tying a request to "loyalty" or "friendship" make it harder to say no?
2. What's the difference between a real friend asking for something and this?
3. How could you respond without it turning into a bigger conflict?

Case 3: The quiet cut-out — *Tactic: Exclusion*

1. Why might someone point out an exclusion ("you're not in the chat") instead of just leaving it silent?
2. What makes group exclusion hard to "prove" compared to a direct insult?
3. Who could a student go to if this happened to them?

Case 4: The leverage move — *Tactic: Coercion / Leverage*

1. Why is complying with a threat like this often not the end of the pressure?
2. What should someone do in the first five minutes of receiving a message like this?
3. Why is this case flagged as a safety issue rather than a social one?

Case 5: The middle-man — *Tactic: Triangulation*

1. What effect does "I probably shouldn't tell you" have on how believable the rumor feels?
2. What happens when a rumor gets passed through two or three people before it reaches you?
3. What's a better move than repeating what you heard?

Case 6: The secrecy ask — *Tactic: Isolation from Trusted Adults*

1. Why is asking someone to hide something from a parent or trusted adult treated as a bigger warning sign than the other cases?
2. Have you noticed this pattern (not this exact scenario) in movies, shows, or things you've heard about — where does secrecy show up as a red flag?
3. What's one trusted adult a student could go to if someone asked them to keep a secret like this?

Whole-Group Debrief (after all six cases)

- Which tactic was hardest to spot, and why do you think that one is more easily missed?
- Did any of these patterns remind you of something you've seen — online, at school, or in a show or movie? (No need to share personal specifics.)
- What's one thing you'll look out for now that you might not have noticed before?
- If you spot one of these tactics happening to a friend, what's the first thing you'd do?

Watch-Fors for Facilitators

- If a student seems to personalize a scenario (gets quiet, disengages, or asks a pointed follow-up question), don't press for details in the group setting — check in with them privately afterward.
- Reinforce throughout that recognizing a tactic is not the same as it being their fault when they miss it in real life — these patterns are designed to be convincing.
- If a student discloses something real during the activity, treat it the same as any other disclosure: listen, don't promise secrecy, and follow your school's reporting process.

If a disclosure raises a safety concern, follow your school's reporting protocol right away.

National Cyber Tipline: [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org) / 1-800-843-5678 • Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741