



## ASK AMANDA JAYNE

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# Are you a control freak?

Control issues can affect all sorts of relationships and can have their roots in childhood stress or trauma, as west Norfolk based psychotherapist and counsellor **Amanda Jayne** explains.

**A**re you a control freak or do you know someone who is? Control issues manifest in varying degrees from having to keep everything ordered and tidy to controlling people around you.

Some people have major control issues they are not even aware of. Subconsciously may be they are a controlling partner or parent who has to micro-manage, or in more extreme and destructive ways, they use subtle tactics which demean and diminish others into submission. It can be something you are not aware of until it starts to seriously affect relationships or you go into therapy.

The need to control can stem from childhood. If there has been a disruptive childhood in any way, this can have an effect on a person's ability to feel 'safe'. They therefore develop methods in order to feel safe and these

methods continue into adulthood if disruptions are not addressed properly as a young person. They however won't be aware that they are using these methods, which will feel perfectly justifiable to them.

### A disruptive childhood may include:

- Divorce/separation
- Abuse either to the child or abuse that the child witnesses
- Continuous conflict in the home, rarely resulting in resolution
- Witnessing a parent leave, not knowing where or why they have gone
- Sudden changes of address or changes of school or repetitive changes in address/school
- Changes in address or school at a crucial age (teenage years)
- A death or loss of some kind
- Parents who behave inconsistently (one minute you are good, the next you are bad)
- Volatile or unpredictable environments

### Controlling behaviour may include:

- Needing a timetable of events and finding spontaneity very difficult
- Needing the environment to be very ordered and controlled
- Excessive tidiness
- Controlling oneself by being a perfectionist and getting very upset when that (inevitably) cannot be achieved

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### Controlling behaviour which is especially difficult and badly affects relationships may include:

#### **SILENCE.**

This is a powerful punishment tool. If you are ever on the receiving end of silence or a refusal to talk, you know that it is extremely painful; frustrating; confusing, and destroys any good feeling you may have towards that person. The silent one may have had to use this to survive in a volatile situation in childhood and may retreat automatically when things get too difficult. They won't be conscious of this but it doesn't take away how painful this is to be on the receiving end of.

#### **WITHOLDING FEELINGS/ ANSWERS/INFORMATION**

