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EX-MORMON AUTHOR CONNECTS THE DOTS BETWEEN MIND CONTROL AND THE LDS CHURCH

Writing from personal experience, Luna Lindsey releases 'Recovering Agency' this July

SEATTLE, Wash. – When Luna Lindsey left the Mormon faith in 2001 at the age of 26, she didn't think she had anything to recover from. But as she dug deep inside herself, she discovered that the church was using more than just spiritual answers to keep itself alive.

In *Recovering Agency: Lifting the Veil of Mormon Mind Control* (July 22, 2014), Lindsey connects the dots between LDS policies, doctrines, and culture to reveal the secrets, coercion, and brainwashing she found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which she backs up with the most current scientific research on social psychology.

In her tell-all book, Lindsey shares a story about a friend who got pulled into a small cult. The cult's leader ironically suggested to Lindsey that that she be "deprogrammed" from her experience in the LDS Church.

"I didn't take her seriously at first, but something inside me chimed," Lindsey says. **"I began reading books about cults. What I discovered about other groups and their methods resonated strongly within me about how Mormonism operated."**

In those pages, Lindsey found healing, and she wanted to pass on her newfound knowledge. She connected online with other ex-Mormons and discovered that she was not alone.

"I discovered suffering souls who had been disowned by their families," Lindsey says. **"Those who had lost jobs for changing their religious views. Those who had lost their faith, but still pretended to believe for the sake of their families and marriages. Those who, sadly, told the truth about their beliefs and lost their spouses, their children."**

Recovering Agency outlines 31 manipulative mind control techniques used by the LDS Church to keep their members obedient, and the detrimental effects of belonging to such high-demand factions.

"I'd really like to help all people find freedom of thought, integrity, self-actualization, self-awareness, and awareness of the world around them," Lindsey says. **"This book focuses on how Mormonism infringes on these principles, but other organizations and even societal thought structures do the same."**

Meet Luna Lindsey



Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, indie author [Luna Lindsey](#) grew up in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and left the Mormon faith in 2001, at age 26.

Her newest book, “Recovering Agency: Lifting the Veil of Mormon Mind Control” (July 22, 2014), exposes the world of secrets, brainwashing, and coercive psychology that pervades the LDS Church.

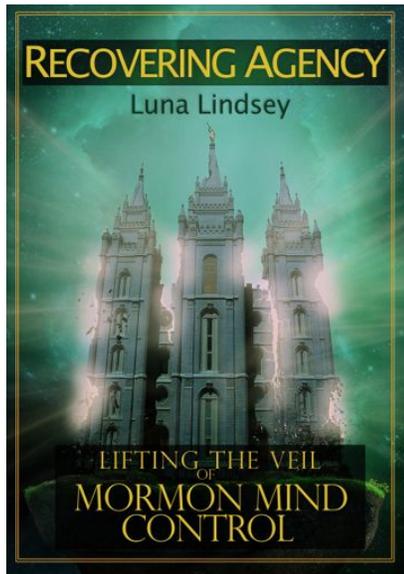
Her first story – about a hippopotamus – crawled out of her head at the early age of 4. After running out of things to say about hippopotami, she switched to sci-fi, fantasy and horror. She became an accidental expert on mind control, computers and faeries. Since becoming a full-time writer in 2010, she has penned four novels and more than 40 short stories. Her writing has appeared in the *Journal of Unlikely Entomology*, in the *Penumbra eMag* as the January 2013 Rising

Talent, and in *Crossed Genres* as the August 2013 New Author Spotlight.

Lindsey is the author of “Emerald City Dreamer” (2012), an urban fantasy novel about faeries in Seattle and the women who hunt them. She is the winner of the 2013 Northwest Independent Writer’s Association Seal of Quality Award.

When Lindsey is not busy traveling to improbable worlds, she can be found enjoying life near Seattle, Wash., with her large family.

Book Details



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In 2012, Mormon General Authority Marlin K. Jensen acknowledged that members are leaving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “in droves.” Access to the internet is often credited and blamed for this mass exodus, where members learn about problematic doctrines and cover-ups of LDS history.

Many are happy as Mormons. And many are not. Those who leave, and those doubters who stay, face struggles that few others can understand. Much of this suffering is caused by manipulative and controlling techniques pervasive throughout LDS doctrines and culture. Understanding these techniques will help recovering Mormons overcome the effects of belonging to a high-demand group.

As a former Mormon, Luna Lindsey experienced this coercive persuasion firsthand. “Recovering Agency” presents years of research into social psychology and the science of cult dynamics, to describe 31 mind control techniques, alongside examples of their use in Mormon scripture, lessons, and from the pulpit.

Even if you have never been Mormon, chances are that coercive influence techniques have been used to manipulate you at some point. Turn the pages and learn the answers to longstanding questions about this unique American religion and about the human mind.

Q&A with Luna Lindsey

What was the most difficult part about rebuilding your personal identity from scratch after leaving the world you knew behind?

The world becomes a very confusing place when the core of everything you know abruptly becomes untrue. I had to question everything, not just religious questions, but *everything*. When you're told your entire life that the universe works one way, and suddenly find out the rules are different, you begin to doubt all of reality. If so much "truth" turned out to be fiction, what else could be false?

I had to rebuild from the ground up, asking myself who I really was, who I could trust, which ethics and morals were valid and which were not, and how to measure truth so I would never be deceived again. Integrity has always been my most important personal value, and I held tightly to that throughout my psychological ordeal.

For the first time in my life, I feared death. I had come to disbelieve in God, especially the kind of God who concerned himself so closely with human lives, who established a complex system of prayer, revelation, and eternal rewards and punishments for various behaviors. It wasn't the thought of nothingness after death that scared me. It was the thought that I was wrong, that Mormonism would turn out to be true. I feared Judgment Day.

Yet fear was not enough to convince me that the Church was true. Even Pascal's Wager wasn't enough to keep me in the Church "just in case."

I found peace when I realized that if there was a personal God, and he was benevolent, he would understand the reasons behind my apostasy and my subsequent decisions. If I had to face the judgment bar, I would be forgiven, because I was living by integrity; I made choices according to my fervent beliefs, just as I'd been raised to do, even when those fervent beliefs had changed so dramatically.

You went on a quest to connect with other people who had left the Mormon faith. What did you find?

I discovered suffering souls who had been disowned by their families. Those who had lost jobs for changing their religious views. Those whose faith had dissolved, but still pretended to believe for the sake of their families and marriages. Those who, sadly, told the truth about their changing beliefs and lost their spouses, their children.

I found many who felt betrayed after giving decades of their lives over to trusted servants of God in a faith they genuinely believed to be true, only to uncover a mountain of lies about church history, past prophets, the behavior of certain church leaders, hidden doctrines, and the church's problematic stances on racism, feminism, and LGBT issues.

I found many who had been sexually or physically abused as children by their families or congregation members, and who found nothing but victim-blaming and dismissal from their church leaders. And those who were sexually assaulted or in abusive marriages as adults who found the same treatment.

No matter their background, these struggling members and exmembers typed the same kinds of words in the forums: "I can't believe anymore. I feel so betrayed and misled. I am lost. I'm afraid what my family will think. I don't know where to turn. I don't know who I am. I have no friends outside the Church. How do I build a new life? Why did I fall for it? I am so angry because X or Y happened. I feel guilty for feeling angry. I feel even more guilty for the things I've done to others that I now see were wrong. I feel so alone because I'm the only one I know who feels this way. I'm afraid of all the things the Church says will happen to those who leave. I'm losing my entire family, my social circle, and means of support. What do I do next? I am afraid to make these decisions by myself. I feel like a horrible person for leaving."

Mormons have a saying, "You can leave the Church but you can't leave it alone." It's meant to frighten people into staying, and to demean those, like me, who have left but can't stop talking about it. My quest turned up thousands of hurting people who couldn't leave it alone because the wounds were still too raw.

Why do people put the blame on themselves when questioning their faith?

One of the mind control techniques I describe in *Recovering Agency* is called “Blame Reversal”, otherwise known as “Blame the Victim.” It’s an easy deflection to shift fault onto the person who was harmed, or to blame an accuser of the very crime they are bringing to light. It keeps the accused of having to account for their own problems or harmful behavior. We see this often in child abuse situations, “If you didn’t act up I wouldn’t have to hit you.”

When a devoted church member says, “The gospel isn’t making me happy or bringing me blessings like the scriptures promised it would,” the easiest answer is, “You misunderstood the scriptures,” or “You must be sinning in some way. Try harder.” These are preferable answers to the reality, which is, “That doctrine is incorrect,” which tends to lead to more difficult conclusions, like, “...because the Church isn’t true.”

In some ways, it’s a natural tendency for people to suspect they’re at fault when things go awry. But this tendency can be promoted and encouraged as a coercive technique, and in fact, this is done in the LDS Church. *Recovering Agency* illustrates this technique with a number of examples.

This technique is especially damaging because people end up blaming themselves for things which really aren’t under their control. They live life depressed, ashamed, and guilt-stricken for supposed crimes they did not commit. These feelings are unnecessary and disperse once the individual breaks through this illusion.

For a lot of people, this would be a difficult issue to talk about. What helped you become so open?

I naturally tend to be an open person. Overall, it’s been a good policy for living my life.

That doesn’t mean it’s always easy, and it can be scary. Certain topics are difficult to be open about, especially this. I’ve had my ups and downs while writing *Recovering Agency*, wondering if it was the right thing and worried about the potential backlash from the public and from my family. But it’s what I believe, and I know it will help people, so I need to share it with everyone.

Mormon culture can be extremely closed and judgmental. There are so many thoughts, questions, and doubts you just know you aren’t supposed to share because you will face some level of subtle or overt scorn or shunning. You feel ashamed just for thinking them. The transparent way I live my life now is the reverse. In a way, that’s the very theme of my book: Deception and manipulation are harmful. Learning about coercive influence is a first step to living a life of transparency, of being able to face the truth, whatever it may be.

For many exmormons, openness speeds the recovery process. On message boards and at in-person gatherings, they tell their exit stories and recount painful events that they were never allowed to discuss before. They vulnerably share their raw feelings among supportive people who will accept them. This a healthy and healing practice.

What exactly is mind control?

The terms “mind control” and “brainwashing” conjure images given to us by movies, which require visual gimmicks to propel their cheap plot devices. Truth serums, hypnotic spirals, and torture techniques to transform an unwilling victim into a mindless zombie? These are entirely fabricated for entertainment.

In real life, mind control is much less obvious or dramatic. The subject has to be completely unaware that it is happening. She must be in full cooperation with the process, which goes something like this:

An influencer gains your trust through friendship and promises, perhaps comforting you during a difficult time, and perhaps appealing to your existing ideals. Once you trust him, you’re ready to believe him. You are convinced that everything he says is true and for your own good and for the good of others. Then he has the power to influence all aspects of your life.

That’s when he teaches you a series of beliefs that will keep you from ever wanting to doubt those teachings or leave his group – even if later those promises are broken or the people turn unfriendly or you end up going against your original ideals.

Mind control is a type of persuasion that bypasses mental defenses against new beliefs, followed by the establishment of convictions to deflect all skepticism and criticism of the doctrine and leaders, isolation of members from doubt-inducing information, the creation of dependency on the group for social and psychological fulfillment, and the instilling of emotions like fear and guilt to keep you from leaving. It is key that all the while, members maintain perfect trust in the person or group doing the manipulating.

No one knows when they’re being controlled in this way – that’s entirely the point.

How do you define a “cult,” and do you consider the LDS Church to be one?

Like “mind control,” cult is a loaded term with lots of false notions about what that means. Many researchers, myself included, prefer the term, “high-demand group,” because it is more descriptive, even if it is more of a mouthful.

A high-demand group, or cult, instills complete trust in its members and demands an inordinate amount of time, energy, and money, using a totalist and inflexible ideology that permeates most or all aspects of the members’ lives. Such groups are known for isolating members either physically or culturally, suppressing serious questions and flexibility in thought, leaving little room for doubts or dissent, and never allowing criticism of leadership. The goal is ideological unanimity among all members.

And yes, the LDS Church fits this definition. I back up these claims with my research and examples within the pages of *Recovering Agency*.

In contrast, you have groups which I call “knitting circles.” They have very specific (not totalist) goals, for instance to help the homeless or to knit sweaters. They don’t try to tell members how to live their lives outside the group. Free discussion and dissent is allowed and even encouraged, for instance if you have new ideas on how to help the homeless or want to share a new scarf pattern. There are even religions with wider scopes which lean towards being more open, transparent, and flexible.

There is no single dividing line between healthy groups and cults. It’s a spectrum, and any given group, even knitting circles, can fall closer or further from that controlling end. I’ve seen “knitting groups,” i.e. small special-interest-focused groups turn from being very open and flexible to becoming more manipulative, shaming and ostracizing those who didn’t choose very specific ideological sides. I think it’s possible for a group to change in the other direction, as well, and that’s my hope for the Mormon Church.

What kind of false assumptions have people made about you since making the decision to leave the LDS Church?

There have been many, and all of them were assumptions I made about exmormons before I left. That’s because Mormons are specifically taught to believe disparaging things about apostates so they will be closed off to anything exmembers have to say. It’s a protective mechanism to keep insiders from learning that which might break up that ideological unanimity.

And it keeps believing members from reading books like mine.

People assume I left because I was weak and wanted to sin. Because I wanted to take “the easy path” through life. Because I was offended or angry at a specific person. Because I didn’t really understand the gospel in the first place. Because I hadn’t prayed hard enough or read the Book of Mormon. Because I’d been deceived by Satan or the ways of the world. Because I believed anti-Mormon lies. Because I was rebelling and going through a phase.

None of these are true.

People have assumed that I am confused, that I just don’t understand, and that I’m mocking God. That because I have not adopted a new religion, I am still an unsatisfied “seeker” who will one day find firm answers like they have. People assume that because I criticize the LDS organization, I hate Mormons and am attacking them personally. And they still assume I’m angry.

The most hurtful thing I have heard was when a family member dismissively told me, “Unlike you, I’ve figured out what’s important in life.” It was quite a jab, because I consider my spiritual beliefs and all my life’s choices to be extremely important and deeply personal. But it’s hard for me to blame him – the LDS Church has given him many reasons to think my non-Mormon way of life is frivolous and devoid of meaning.

The LDS Church has been in the news lately for threatening to excommunicate two prominent Mormon activists. What are your thoughts on that situation?

As of this writing, Kate Kelly has been officially excommunicated.

I feel sad for her. Kate truly believes the Church is true. She also truly believes that within the current structure of the Church, women lack equality. By publically asking hard questions, like, “Why don’t women have access to leadership roles?” and by asking the Church leaders to pray and ask God for a revelation on this matter, she has been exiled from the culture and faith of her childhood.

I also feel for the many Mormons who look up to her. There are others who hold the same or similar opinions. They have doubts, questions, new ideas, and suggestions for better ways to do things. And they’ve

published those ideas. They are feeling the pressure now, even when they've not been directly threatened. They've seen what happens when you openly speak your mind.

In *Recovering Agency*, I claim that serious questions or doubts about doctrine will not be tolerated inside the LDS Church, and these events have demonstrated my claim perfectly. To many outside the Church, their rigidity seems ludicrous. But I remember that mindset. Fifteen years ago, I would have thought Kate was completely out of line, rebellious, contentious, and "making demands." Such a "selfish" and "hardhearted" woman is deserving of excommunication. It's what Mormons are taught to think.

For the last year while writing this book, my focus has been on the problems of the Church. Ironically, these past weeks have shown me a new perspective that warms my heart: In spite of all this conditioning to be predisposed against Kate Kelly, I've seen faithful Mormons write in support of her, even when they don't agree with her or her methods. Their words are loving, understanding, and accepting. They look at her message and actions and see nothing contentious or disingenuous about them. They see a woman standing up for what she believes, even in the face of adversity, which is usually an admirable trait. They see her doing it with reverence and faith, all according to the laws laid out by God. They can't understand what she has done wrong.

I was raised to think the gospel was centered around Christ's teachings of unconditional love. "As I have loved you, love one another," seemed to be the central theme that is sadly mere illusion far too often. But when I see those loving Mormons defending her and other heterodox members, when I read their words of love and acceptance, I remember that childhood fantasy version of the Church. The gospel *does* contain many doctrines of charity, compassion, and other beautiful ideals. In the last couple of weeks, I've seen those demonstrated by many rank and file members and even many local leaders.

But I've not seen that demonstrated by from the Church organization itself, nor from many members who have listened to more prominent doctrines that conflict with the ideals of love: That apostates are aligned with Satan, deceived, angry, lying, attention-seeking, prideful, and selfish. They believe these things of Kate Kelly because they've been taught to believe these things.

The Mormon Church has great potential to be a powerful force for good. Absent these coercive methods and unhealthy teachings, it has the power to inspire millions to make the world a better place.