



**BRAINWASHING--WHAT IS IT?**  
**#8 DISPENSING OF EXISTENCE**  
**A Series on Lifton's\* Eight Points of Thought Reform**

When a judicial committee of three elders within the Jehovah Witness/Watchtower organization is formed, they meet with an alleged “sinner” within the congregation and decide that person’s spiritual, emotional, and family fate. If they determine that the person is unrepentant, they will disfellowship that person, which typically results in shunning by family and cult “friends.” Since being involved with a cult is the ONLY path to salvation (according to the cult), then the leadership is exerting a tremendous amount of power over its members. For to kick someone out of the cult is to say, “You are dead, not just to us, but to our god as well; not just today, but for all eternity” (or until you become a cult member again). In other words, they dispense your right to exist.

Suicide is not uncommon for those kicked out of a cult because they oftentimes feel all hope is lost. Any hope for a future where they can be accepted by not only those they love *but also* the divine being is stripped away through dispensing of existence.

To say someone is not fit to exist is one of the most inhumane and unmerited things a person can do to another. Hitler is a prime example of someone who took this to an extreme. Cult mentality, like Hitler’s dispensing of existence, lives on today in thousands of cults around the world.

\*Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism—A Study of Brainwashing in China*

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