

## SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL:



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Most people use Emotional Blackmail on each other from time-to-time. People in healthy relationships call each other on it and set boundaries. People in unhealthy or abusive relationships don't realize it is happening or feel powerless to stop it. Recognizing the signs early on will enable you to avoid ending up in an abusive marriage or an abusive long-term relationship.

### **THE DEMAND. Your date consistently won't take "no" for an answer.**

When you are asked to do something, go somewhere or voice an opinion your date will not allow you to do what you want or convinces you his/her way is the only way. In actuality you realize requests are really demands. You come to the conclusion it is better just to agree than to try to get or do something you want.

*How to spot this:* Choose an activity you want to do and ask to do that. Does he/she say, "Sure, no problem" or "That's a good idea but this weekend doesn't work for me. I was hoping you could join me for \_\_\_\_\_." The next weekend is good though. Let's plan that for the following weekend." Or something like, "I don't enjoy doing that but why don't you go and have a good time."

Or does he/she try to make you do what he/she wants to do by pouting, shouting, threatening, ignoring you or using passive-aggressive behavior to get his or her own way? Testing needs to occur over several weeks. You're looking for consistency and patterns, not isolated incidences.

### **RESISTANCE. Does it feel like every discussion turns into an argument?**

When you try to discuss your wants, observations, opinions and needs, does it feel like every discussion turns into an argument?

*How to spot this:* Ask yourself how you feel after a disagreement. Do you feel your partner listened to you? Do you feel your partner respected your opinions? If you disagreed, do you feel okay with that or do feel like you might lose your partner because he/she doesn't like what you said?

This last statement is key. If after a disagreement you feel nervous about your relationship, you're being manipulated. A healthy relationship is open to acceptance and disagreement without fear of reprisal, loss or ridicule. Note whether you are just feeling guilty

(because deep down you know you are BSing) or if the result made you nervous as to the security of the relationship. Remember you're looking for consistency and patterns, not isolated incidences. Make a note each time you feel this way. If discussions turning to arguments are the norm, this is not a good situation.

**PRESSURE. Your date pressures you to go along.**

You know when you're being pressured. It's an uncomfortable feeling and your rebellious streak starts to show. You feel like the person is backing you into a corner or placing conditions on your love or presence. If you feel guilty about not agreeing, fearful that your partner will be displeased or are afraid to speak up, you are being pressured.

A second manner of applying pressure and emotional manipulation is using silence. This can be ignoring you until you give in or discounting what you say by not responding. In negotiations, the first person to talk is the less strong of the two. It is the person who holds his tongue and doesn't speak who keeps the power. Men use silence as a weapon more often than women. It is a way to control the person and the situation and force through discomfort the resolution they are seeking.

*How to spot this:* Look for the signs of conditions, manipulation and pressure. These usually follow a action/consequences format with your partner delivering the consequences: "If you don't, "If you love me," or "A mature person wouldn't act this way," "You're naive", "This is for your own good", "You can't make a decision so I'll do it for you," etc. You're looking for consistency and patterns, not isolated incidences. Make a note each time you feel this way.

**THREATS. Your date uses threatening or coercing tactics: *threatening to end the relationship, tears, vilification, derogatory remarks, rage or badgering.***

*How to spot this:* Watch for anger or name-calling in men and self-pity, name-calling or victimization in women. If he refers to you even in jest as a bitch, whore, fat, lazy, old, useless, dumb, stupid, cow or any other derogatory remark either directly or indirectly with his friends, this is form of threatening. Raising his arm to feign hitting you, shoving a clenched fist in your face or using physical force to make a point is threatening.

If she begins crying when she doesn't get her way, uses the children as pawns for affection, withholds sex or affection, destroys or damages your property or calls you names like the

above, this is a form of threatening. Women tend to be less physical in their threats but many will throw or break things to make a point. This is threatening.

**COMPLIANCE. If you give in, you're setting a dangerous precedent.**

Your date now knows you can be pressured into giving in to him or her, and this will increase the intensity of what your date is willing to do to pressure you.

*How to spot this:* Pay attention to your own reactions because compliance is your reaction to the above techniques. Are you giving in to avoid a fight? This is compliance. Are afraid if you don't allow him/her to do what he/she wants the person will no longer like you? This is compliance. Do you feel like you are not appreciated? This is compliance. Do you say yes to things you don't want to do or don't agree with? This is compliance.

**REPETITION. An obsessive person will go through these previous five steps over and over, wearing you down each time.**

Be sure when you say "no", it means no.

No person is perfect and most people will occasionally use the tactics described above from time to time. The difference between an abused person and one who doesn't get abused is how they react once they realize what they have done or what has been done. A person who doesn't get abused confronts the situation and states clearly their objection and the preferred behavior. They then enforce this through boundaries and leave the situation if the other person continues to use the same tactics.

If the person abusing is healthy, this person will acknowledge and apologize for the behavior, making amends and not allow it to happen again. Over a period of time, such behavior will be infrequent and not a normal reaction. A person who is prone to abusing others may be nice for a few weeks or months but the old patterns will resurface in the future, escalating in intensity each time as the need for control increases.



**It Ends With You:**  
*Grow Up and Out of Dysfunction*

(New Page Books 2003)

Dr. Tina's new book examines not just the statistics that show that children of divorce can't keep their own marriages together, or children of alcoholics gravitate to dysfunctional partners, but why people have these problems, how they come to be, and, most importantly, what they can do to fix them.