

Feel Good English

# Don't Let Others Control Your Life - "Emotional Blackmail" by Susan Forward



The transcript tp episode #58

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Hello there. Kevin and here with another episode of the Feel Good English podcast, the podcast that is helping you become a more fluent English speaker, and a more fluent person, meaning more fluent at life, able to deal with business relationships and anything else with more fluency.

Going to start this episode off with a story. So there was a young college student in New Zealand, started dating a pretty little gal, and after dating for a while they moved into the same apartment. Quickly things deteriorated, and the relationship didn't go well. So the girlfriend moved out of the house. What happened next? The boyfriend - or the ex-boyfriend - sent this girlfriend a text message and said, 'If you don't come back to my apartment, give me seven hundred pounds, and clean my apartment, I am going to put a tape that we made of us having sex on the internet.' Threatening to put a sex tape of this girlfriend and him on the internet if she didn't give him seven hundred pounds and clean his apartment.

This is a true story. Well, I found it on the internet, so that means

it's true, right? What we're talking about here is blackmail. When somebody does this to another person, when they threaten them, or when they have bad intentions for them if that other person doesn't do something or does something that the person wants, we call this blackmail. Well, there's something also called emotional blackmail. Maybe you're not dealing with money, but you are dealing with people's emotions. In relationships, we often find people trying to manipulate or control others so they can get what they want. That is today's lesson. It is based on a book called "Emotional Blackmail" by Susan Forward, and I'm going to teach you some lessons on this, and how to recognize this emotional blackmail to see if people are trying to control you, and manipulate you, how you can start avoiding these situations, and also how you can help others in these negative relationships to not do this and to start to transform these relationships into more healthy ones.

"Emotional Blackmail" by Susan Forward is the book we are going to talk about today. By the way, if you want transcripts to this and other Feel Good English episodes, go to [feelgoodenglish.com](http://feelgoodenglish.com), where you will find the podcast extras, you can become a member, get all past/future episodes, or you can also get the starter pack. For just seven dollars, you can get the starter pack which includes \*twenty\* transcripts, and an invitation to our private Facebook group. And without further delay, let's get into today's book lesson.

So the basis of blackmail is to try to get somebody else to do something for you. You have an intention, and you're trying to manipulate or control somebody else, so they do what you want. Often in movies and TV shows you'll see a typical situation. Somebody with some power does something wrong, another person takes photographs of this person doing this wrong thing, sends this person the photographs in the mail and says, 'Give me a million dollars or I will send these photographs to the newspaper.' So the

powerful man has to send this person a million dollars so these pictures aren't published in a newspaper. Well, this also happens in very close relationships with emotions called emotional blackmail, and I'm going to use an example to kind of take you along these lessons of emotional blackmail, and I'm going to talk about a couple.

So there's a guy, we'll call him John, and then there's a girl, we'll call her Susan. John and Susan have been dating for a while, and then John wants Susan to move in with him. He wants her to live in his apartment. She doesn't want to. They're not married yet, and she was waiting to get married before she moved in with him. However, John's not happy with that, so he's going to start controlling her behavior, and try to convince her and manipulate her into moving in with him. This could be through threatening her - 'If you don't move in with me, I will leave you' - it could be through acting sad and upset all the time so she has to kind of help him feel better, it could be *turning a blind eye* to her, John could turn a blind eye to Susan and just ignore her - these are all forms of manipulation, also called emotional blackmail.

And the first main point here is, this happens to all of us, but we don't want to see it. People love us, we are in close relationships - family members, good friends, and colleagues, often will find themselves in these situations, but we don't want to admit that somebody is trying to control us or manipulate us, because we care about these people.

And one important note is, just because somebody is doing this and trying to manipulate you doesn't necessarily make them a bad person. It's just how they have learned how to deal with people, and how to deal with conflict, and how to get what they want. So don't really blame these people for doing these things. Accept them, and what I'm going to do - and if you really like this material - go and find the book and read deeper into this, so you can go even

deeper and learn how to deal with people that might be doing this to you. And emotional blackmail can be difficult to recognize, but in the book she talks about six key symptoms or components of this behavior.

The first component out of six is desire. So somebody wants another person to do something, but this desire is blocked by resistance. In this case, John has a desire for Susan to move in with him, however, Susan doesn't want to so there's resistance there, and this resistance creates problems, and creates tension.

Next, we're going to have pressure. So John didn't get his way, he didn't convince her, so he's going to start pressuring Susan, and threatening her to do what he wants. Those are the next two - to pressure and to threat. Very similar, but he's going to pressure her. It could be subtly, very calmly, doing little things and little changes in behavior to try to convince Susan to move in with him, or straight up threaten. 'If you don't do this, I will do this.' That's pretty toxic behavior, and this is a clear sign of emotional blackmail. Next what we have is compliance. Susan doesn't want to lose John, he's the love of her life, so she complies. She says, 'Okay John, I will do this even though I don't feel right about doing it.' So what happens? The last component - repetition. John says, 'Well that worked. Cool. Maybe I can do that in the future, too.' So as a human we learn what works and repeat it. So again, the six components - desire, you have a desire, the second one resistance, the other person resists, and then you have pressure, and threats against that other person, so the other person complies, and then you repeat, a cycle of blackmail, emotional blackmail.

And there's a key difference. So we all have conflicts in relationships. Don't think that now you have to look at every single behavior of your partner, or colleague, or parents, and say 'Uh-oh, you're blackmailing me. Stop it.' No, that's not the point here. We

need to recognize when it's blackmail, or when it's just problems or conflict in a situation. And one main difference - and this is from the book, and this is very important to keep in mind - the difference between emotional blackmail and just somebody maybe having a different opinion than you, is the desire to resolve a situation or to find a solution. Case of John and Susan - so John wants her to move in with him, she says no. He gets upset, and he doesn't want to hear, he *turns a blind eye*, gives her the cold shoulder, completely ignores her, when she talks to him he rolls his eyes and treats her badly. This is not trying to find a solution. However, if John says, 'Well, let's talk about it. Maybe we can find a compromise. Maybe we can think about doing this in six months, or maybe you can live closer to me, or maybe we can talk about getting married.'

So trying to find a solution, trying to resolve the issue, is a sign that the person is not blackmailing you. However, if the person is not open to helping and to compromise, and simply threatening and putting pressure and doing all of these things, making you feel guilty, making you feel trapped and stuck, that's not good. What happens if you find yourself in these situations?

Next, the tips from the book on how to avoid blackmail, emotional blackmail.

So the first tip the author gives is to resist reacting to the situation. So John says, 'Hey, Susan. If you don't move in with me, we're done.' Susan gets upset, says, 'You're crazy,' and slaps him in the face, that would be reacting to the emotions of a situation, which would probably make it worse. We want to resist reacting at that moment, so what we need to do is calm down, take a breath, and possibly tell the other person, 'I need time to think about what you said, please give me my space, I'll call you later,' whatever, but don't think you have to come up with a response just because the other

person is impatient. So that's the first tip, is to not react based on emotions.

The second one is to detach yourself from the situation, and this helps in life in general. Meditation, by the way, is a great tool to use to be able to detach yourself from situations. Detach, disconnect, pull yourself out, pull your mind out of the situation so you can kind of see the situation more objectively. Look at both sides, imagine you and the other person there, and you're looking at the situation from afar. That's why we can always give advice to another couple, or to other people. We see the situation more clearly, but when it happens to us and we have emotions involved, it's hard. So literally you can kind of visualize Susan and John having an argument and think about both sides of the argument, and who's doing what, and even you could put yourself in this, and separate yourself, and look at yourself and the other person, who's trying to do what, getting rid of those emotions that might distort your view of these things. Also, while you're thinking about this, pay attention to your emotions. How do the behaviors of the other person affect your emotions? If you're feeling guilty, sad, trapped especially, meaning you can't get out of the situation, you're stuck, frustrated, that's a clear sign the other person might be manipulating you, because they're not giving you the space, or respecting your opinion, so you feel trapped in the situation.

If they treat you badly, if they ignore you, and they've changed their behavior a lot since they've wanted whatever they've wanted, that also is a clear sign of emotional blackmail, so you can know what's going on in the situation. So that is a clear way on how to see what's going on, and when we find ourselves in a situation that is not healthy for us, we can separate ourselves from that situation. Now that you know how to recognize this and how to detach from the situation and see what's going on, how are you going to deal with it?

We can't just avoid these things; we have to deal with the situation. And this can help us, and it can also help the other person, and in the end help these relationships. So the first thing here is to know your boundaries. What are your limits? What's important to you? What are your values? And if somebody is stepping over these values, and stepping over your boundaries, you have to know when this is happening, and not let this happen. So telling the other person exactly what they can and can't do, with you being clear to them, teaching them and showing them your boundaries, can help them communicate with you more effectively, and if they don't respect that, if they don't start doing that, then you just simply leave.

Second tip here is to communicate effectively, and with understanding with the other person. This is crucial. You can't attack this person, be offensive - you have to be understanding, be frank, and be calm. If you really want to nip this in the bud, you're going to have to learn how to communicate effectively and off emotions. Express that you understand her problems and her feelings, but also that they need to understand yours, and maybe you can come up with a solution and a compromise in this situation. Be upfront, tell them what you will accept and what you won't accept, and then it's clear on how you can communicate with each other. And also remember it takes time for people to change their behavior. Some people might be really used to reacting with other people in this way. This is what they've done for their whole life to get things that they wanted. They've used this situation, they've used these tactics to control other people, and they might not do it on purpose, but that's just what they are used to. That's how they were brought up, that's how they were raised - their upbringing often is the cause of how people behave in life, and how they react with other people in life.

So you can't just learn these things, read this book, and then go change people the next day. It takes time. So you have to understand too that people will try and try to relate better, but it won't be an instant change. So be patient, and most importantly know what's right and wrong for you. Self-awareness, be aware of what's important to you, your values, what you accept and what you don't accept - this is the first step. Don't try to make other people change first; make sure you're working on yourself more than anything.

So I'm going to summarize all this and give you one action step that you can take, but first I'm going to go over the vocabulary from today's lesson, and then I will finish the lessons from Emotional Blackmail by Susan Forward. So going over the vocabulary from today's episode again, once you listen to this you will know some of the words and expressions you might have missed, might have not understood in the lesson, so listen to this, finish the episode, and then go back and listen again, and hear these words in context. A very powerful way to learn new English. The first one is a verb, 'to threaten'. You can also use it as a noun, a threat. To threaten, T H R E A T E N, threaten - to tell someone your intentions to harm them if they do or don't do something. So if somebody wants you to do something or doesn't want you to do something, they'll say, 'If you do this/if you don't do this, I will hurt you, I will do this, I will do something negative.' So to threaten somebody is to tell them you're going to do something bad to them if they don't follow your intentions.

An expression 'to turn a blind eye' is to ignore. So think about your eyes, turning a blind eye, you don't see anything, and you can't see out of your blind eye, and then you even turn it, so you see nothing. You completely ignore someone or a situation to turn a blind eye. To move in with somebody, to move in is when you can move into a

house or an apartment. It just means you occupy that place, but if you're going to move in with somebody, it means you're going to live with them. 'Next week I'm going to move in with my girlfriend,' or 'I really don't want to move in with my mother, but I have no money, so that's what I'm going to have to do.' To keep in mind, another expression 'to keep in mind' is to consider. So I really want you to keep this in mind - most people behave based on how they were raised by their parents. So don't blame them for their behavior, be compassionate. So that would be to keep something in mind is to consider something. To be willing, W I L L I N G, is to accept responsibility for doing something, to take action. I am willing to help you. I will help you. That's an easy way to remember - will, I will help you, and to be willing is to take action in the future. So connect the future auxiliary verb 'will' with 'willing'. There you go.

To be adamant - another word I used - adamant is refusing to be persuaded, to not make compromises. I am adamant about this. I'm adamant about these new rules. I am adamant. I am adamant about not moving in with you. I will not be persuaded. There you go. To give someone the cold shoulder is to ignore them. You've been giving me the cold shoulder. He's ignoring me. Kind of a strange thing, but think of somebody turning their back to you and you just see their shoulder. To roll your eyes is kind of literal. If you think about somebody rolling their eyes, he rolled his eyes at me - his eyes looked up and it kind of would show his disapproval or his disgust and disappointment with me. He rolled his eyes, or you tell your daughter to do something she says 'I don't want to do that. It's stupid.' She might roll her eyes, so literally you're moving your eyes up. Another expression, strange expression - nip in the bud. Nip, N I P. So nip is like to cut, and Bud is the base of a flower. So literally you're nipping something in the butt, you're taking care of something, or you're resolving something quickly and permanently.

This problem has been going on for months, we need to nip it in the bud, B U D, to take care of this. Let's nip this in the bud.

To be frank is to be honest and open. I'm going to be frank with you. Interesting, I wonder where that expression came from - to be frank. Who is this Frank that was so honest? I have no way if that's what it came from, but to be frank I've heard this in Portuguese, too. I don't know. Interesting. Upbringing, lastly your upbringing - it's based on your upbringing. You talk about most people behave based on their upbringing. Upbringing is how your parents raised you, how they educated you, and taught you to be an adult, and could be bad things or good things, but an upbringing is like in some other countries you might call it the education, but it's not school. It's how you were raised in the house. I had a good upbringing, I had a strict upbringing, I had a bad upbringing, my parents were very good parents - whatever that may be. So there's no need to feel trapped, overwhelmed, frustrated, guilty by relationships. By learning to recognize the signs of emotional blackmail, how it impacts your life, you can start taking steps towards standing up for yourself and defending yourself, setting boundaries, and creating healthier more long lasting relationships.

So always listen to your inner voice. If somebody is treating you badly, or if they're being too demanding, putting too much pressure on you, don't just ignore that. Listen to that, pay attention to that, so you can see the signs of somebody trying to emotionally blackmail you. Now using some of these tips that I've talked about, you can deal with these situations, not attack this person, not avoid these relationships, but try to make them better. Alright? Cool. A little deeper lesson here, this is going to affect hit home with those people that are into psychology and things like that, but also in business and life and school and all of these situations you find yourself in, you will be able to use these tips, and now you might

start to see how people use these types of techniques with each other and how humans relate with each other, and start to kind of change and create more positive situations in your life.

That's it for today. Hope you enjoyed this lesson. You can go to [feelgoodenglish.com/blackmail](http://feelgoodenglish.com/blackmail) to learn more about this episode, read the vocabulary, show notes, get the main points, and listen to the lesson itself. That's also where you will find the transcript to this episode. Also, if you want to buy the book or download the digital version, you can find a link on my site and instantly download it from Amazon.com. If you have a Kindle or even an iPad, or you can read it on your computer that way, go to [feelgoodenglish.com/blackmail](http://feelgoodenglish.com/blackmail) to learn more about this lesson. And lastly, if you want to become a member and get transcripts to all of these episodes, or get the starter pack and get fifty episodes, go to [feelgoodenglish.com](http://feelgoodenglish.com) and join us.

Before I leave I have to leave you with a joke.

So Peter tried to talk his girl into making a sex tape. He says, 'Hey, let's make one of those sex tapes,' and she says, 'That's a great idea, Peter. But let's get somebody else to play your part in the tape.'

See you in the next lesson.