

Forward, Susan, Frazier, Donna

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## Page viii | Highlight

Why is it that some people are able to emotionally overpower us, leaving us feeling defeated?

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## Page viii | Highlight

Though we may be skilled and successful in other parts of our lives, with these people we feel bewildered, powerless.

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## Page ix | Highlight

In such relationships, we keep our focus on the other person's needs at the expense of our own, and we relax into the temporary illusion of safety we've created for ourselves by giving in. We've avoided conflict, confrontation—and the chance of a healthy relationship.

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## Page ix | Highlight

Often these instances of manipulation get labeled miscommunication.

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## Page ix | Highlight

the source of friction isn't in communication styles. It's more in one person getting his or her way at the expense of another. These are more than simple misunderstandings—they're power struggles.

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## Page x | Highlight

what we're talking about here is pure and simple blackmail—emotional blackmail.

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## Page x | Highlight

Emotional blackmail is a powerful form of manipulation in which people close to us threaten, either directly or indirectly, to punish us if we don't do what they want. At the heart of any kind of blackmail is one basic threat, which can be expressed in many different ways: If you don't behave

**Page x | Highlight Continued**

the way I want you to, you will suffer. A criminal blackmailer might threaten to use knowledge about a person's past to ruin her reputation, or ask to be paid off in cash to hide a secret. Emotional blackmail hits closer to home. Emotional blackmailers know how much we value our relationship with them. They know our vulnerabilities. Often they know our deepest secrets. And no matter how much they care about us, when they fear they won't get their way, they use this intimate knowledge to shape the threats that give them the payoff they want: our compliance.

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**Page xi | Highlight**

FOG is a shorthand way of referring to Fear, Obligation and Guilt, the tools of the blackmailer's trade.

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**Page xi | Highlight**

Always want more, no matter how much you give?

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**Page xii | Highlight**

Consistently label you as selfish, bad, greedy, unfeeling or uncaring when you don't give in to them?

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**Page xiii | Highlight**

fear—fear of loss, fear of change, fear of rejection, fear of losing power—is a common ground stretching beneath those who become blackmailers. For some, these fears are rooted in a lengthy history of feeling anxious and inadequate. For others, they may be a response to more recent uncertainties and stresses that have undermined their sense of themselves as secure, competent people. I'll demonstrate how the potential for blackmail skyrockets as fears build in the blackmailer's life. And I'll show how triggering events such as rejection by a lover, the loss of a job, divorce, retirement or illness can easily turn someone close to us into a blackmailer.

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**Page xiv | Highlight**

It's easy to focus on other people's behavior and to think that if they change, things will be fine. But what we really need to find is the commitment and courage to understand ourselves and to change the way we interact with would-be blackmailers.

**Page xiv | Highlight**

Our compliance rewards the blackmailer, and every time we reward someone for a particular action, whether we realize it or not, we're letting them know in the strongest possible terms that they can do it again.

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**Page xv | Highlight**

The blackmailer's comments and behavior keep us feeling off-balance, ashamed and guilt-ridden.

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**Page xv | Highlight**

We begin to doubt our ability to keep promises to ourselves, and we lose confidence in our own effectiveness. Our sense of self-worth erodes.

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**Page xvi | Highlight**

Nothing will change in our lives until we change our own behavior. Insight won't do it. Understanding why we do the self-defeating things we do won't make us stop doing them. Nagging and pleading with the other person to change won't do it. We have to act. We have to take the first step down a new road.

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**Page xvii | Highlight**

where your responsibilities to other people begin and end—one of the most important keys to freeing yourself from manipulation.

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**Page 4 | Highlight**

1: A demand.

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**Page 5 | Highlight**

2: Resistance.

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**Page 5 | Highlight**

3: Pressure.

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**Page 5 | Highlight**

4: Threats.

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**Page 5 | Highlight**

Blackmailers may threaten to cause us pain or unhappiness. They may let us know how much we're making them suffer.

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**Page 6 | Highlight**

5: Compliance.

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**Page 6 | Highlight**

6: Repetition.

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**Page 7 | Highlight**

Manipulation becomes emotional blackmail when it is used repeatedly to coerce us into complying with the blackmailer's demands, at the expense of our own wishes and well-being.

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**Page 7 | Highlight**

Remember, it's important that we not label every conflict or expression of strong feelings or especially instances of healthy limit-setting as emotional blackmail.

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**Page 9 | Highlight**

Amy is honestly acknowledging her feelings and taking good care of herself by setting limits on how much she can hear of Denise's good news. Amy has the right to do that.

**Page 9 | Highlight**

This scenario contains all the elements of emotional blackmail: a demand, resistance, pressure, threats and compliance. And it's a scenario just ripe to be repeated.

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**Page 10 | Highlight**

a sharp distinction between appropriate limit-setting and emotional blackmail.

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**Page 11 | Highlight**

And if I couldn't make those commitments, she wouldn't be able to stay in the marriage, because she wasn't going to live with insecurity and uncertainty and suspicion.

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**Page 11 | Highlight**

If someone confronts us fairly about something we've done, the words and feelings may be strong, but if there are no threats and no pressure, there is no blackmail. Appropriate limit-setting isn't about coercion, pressure or repeatedly characterizing the other person as flawed. It's a statement of what kind of behavior we will and won't allow into our lives.

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**Page 12 | Highlight**

she wants what she wants when she wants it. I'm supposed to drop everything and go right then.

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**Page 13 | Highlight**

If people genuinely want to resolve a conflict with you in a fair and caring way, they will: Talk openly about the conflict with you Find out about your feelings and concerns Find out why you are resisting what they want Accept responsibility for their part of the conflict

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**Page 13 | Highlight**

If someone's primary goal is to win, he or she will: Try to control you Ignore your protests Insist that his or her character and motives are superior to yours Avoid taking any responsibility for the problems between you When you see that other people are trying to get their way regardless of the cost to you, you're looking at the bottom-line behavior of the emotional blackmailer.

**Page 14 | Highlight**

How much flexibility do I have, and allow, in this relationship?

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**Page 14 | Highlight**

When the willingness to compromise begins to disappear, the status quo becomes the template for the future. It's as though we're not allowed to change, or move away from a role that may not always fit. We're frozen.

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**Page 16 | Highlight**

She gets what she wants by making me feel so damn guilty all the time.

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**Page 16 | Highlight**

He also did what many people do when they are pressured by neediness or possessiveness: He misinterpreted it as a sign of how much she cared about him. As we will see throughout this book, understanding and compassion get you nowhere with an emotional blackmailer. In fact, they only add fuel to the blackmail flames.

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

Punishers, who let us know exactly what they want—and the consequences we'll face if we don't give it to them

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

Self-punishers, who occupy the second category, turn the threats inward, emphasizing what they'll do to themselves if they don't get their way.

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

Sufferers are talented blamers and guilt-peddlers who often make us figure out what they want, and always conclude that it is up to us to ensure that they get it.

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**Page 17 | Highlight**

Tantalizers put us through a series of tests and hold out a promise of something wonderful if we'll just give them their way.

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**Page 18 | Highlight**

active punishers—or unleash a smouldering fury, the mode of passive punishers.

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**Page 19 | Highlight**

These statements are strong—and they're scary. They're also highly effective because they give us a sharp picture of what will happen if we don't give aggressive punishers their way. They can make our lives miserable, or at the very least unpleasant.

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**Page 19 | Highlight**

because the threatened consequences can be serious, we live in fear of the one time the active punisher follows through.

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**Page 19 | Highlight**

a cold and emotionally abusive marriage.

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**Page 21 | Highlight**

Parents who are punishers often make their children choose between them and other people they love, setting up a situation in which any choice is seen as betrayal.

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**Page 21 | Highlight**

Parents using this kind of blackmail will inevitably find a flaw in the next person, and the next, and in anyone who represents a threat to their control.

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**Page 23 | Highlight**

Silent punishers barricade themselves behind an impenetrable facade and deflect any responsibility

for their feelings onto us.

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Page 26 | Highlight

Obviously, in the heat of emotional blackmail, blinded by the intensity of their own needs, punishers seem to be oblivious to our feelings and not terribly introspective about their own behavior. They genuinely believe in the correctness of what they're doing and the rightness of what they want.

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Page 26 | Highlight

"Don't argue with me or I'll get sick or depressed."

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Page 27 | Highlight

High drama, hysteria and an air of crisis (precipitated by you—of course) surround self-punishers, who are often excessively needy and dependent.

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Page 27 | Highlight

Where punishers turn their targets into children, self-punishers cast their targets in the role of the grown-up—the only adult in the relationship. We're the ones who are supposed to come running when they cry, comfort them when they're upset, figure out what's making them uncomfortable and fix it.

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Page 29 | Highlight

Karen's statement that she had no choice is one I hear often from targets of blackmail, and it reflects the sense of victimization that targets feel.

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Page 29 | Highlight

Their relationship has become increasingly distant. The sex is gone, and so is the closeness.



**Page 30 | Highlight**

staying with someone is no guarantee that you can save them. Ultimately, the decision to be self-destructive is theirs, not yours.

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**Page 30 | Highlight**

The image of the sufferer is etched into our culture in a familiar picture: A sour-faced woman sits in a dim apartment, waiting for one of her children to call. “How am I?” she says when the phone finally rings. “You’re asking me how am I? You don’t call me, you don’t visit. You’ve forgotten your own mother. I may as well stick my head in the oven for all you care about me.”

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**Page 30 | Highlight**

Sufferers take the position that if they feel miserable, sick, unhappy or are just plain unlucky, there’s only one solution: our giving them what they want—even if they haven’t told us what it is. They don’t threaten us or themselves with harm. Instead, they let us know in no uncertain terms, If you don’t do what I want, I will suffer, and it will be your fault.

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**Page 31 | Highlight**

Sufferers are preoccupied with how awful they feel, and often they’ll interpret your inability to read their mind as proof that you don’t care enough about them. If you really loved them, you’d be able to figure out what’s bothering them without a single verbal clue. The parlor game they’ve mastered is “Guess What You Did to Me.”

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**Page 31 | Highlight**

because I felt so guilty when I saw Joe looking so sad.

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**Page 32 | Highlight**

Sufferers look in the mirror and see a victim. They rarely take responsibility for clearing the air or asking for what they want.

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**Page 32 | Highlight**

Sufferers may look weak on the surface, but they are actually a quiet form of tyrant. They may not

yell or make scenes, yet their behavior hurts, mystifies and enrages us.

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Page 33 | Highlight

Sufferers like Tess tell us how the cards are stacked against them, the fates have conspired to keep them down. Their theme song might be the old blues tune that goes “If it wasn’t for bad luck, I wouldn’t have no luck at all.” All they need is one little break to turn things around.

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Page 33 | Highlight

They effectively activate our rescuer-caretaker instinct.

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Page 34 | Highlight

Tantalizers are the most subtle blackmailers. They encourage us and promise love or money or career advancement—the proverbial carrot at the end of the stick—and then make it clear that unless we behave as they want us to, we don’t get the prize.

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Page 35 | Highlight

—a never-ending series of tests and demands. A typical tantalizer, Alex was full of gifts and promises, all accompanied by conditions for Julie’s behavior:

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Page 36 | Highlight

My father was a control freak and couldn’t bear to have anyone stand up to him.

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Page 37 | Highlight

that fantasy I cherish of smiling faces around a beautiful holiday table.

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Page 37 | Highlight

All the forces that were working on Jan—her guilt; the temptation to look like the successful, adequate one; the tantalizing promise of family that Carol held before her—tapped a deeply

Page 37 | Highlight Continued

vulnerable place within her.

Page 38 | Highlight

But don't for a minute discount the corrosive effects of the quieter types, the ones who are more like termites than tornadoes. Silent or dramatic, both can bring the house down.

Page 38 | Highlight

recognizing them as blackmailers can be extremely painful.

Page 39 | Note

FOG  
- fear  
- obligation  
- guilt

Page 39 | Highlight

I use FOG as an acronym for fear, obligation and guilt,

Page 39 | Highlight

FOG is penetrating, disorienting, and it obscures everything but the pounding discomfort it produces.

**Page 41 | Highlight**

one of the most painful parts of emotional blackmail is that it violates the trust that has allowed us to reveal ourselves and develop a more than superficial relationship with the blackmailer.

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**Page 45 | Highlight**

Just the hint of anger in another person's voice frequently sparks fears of rejection, disapproval or abandonment and, in the extreme, visions of violence or harm.

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**Page 46 | Highlight**

the targets of emotional blackmail exhibit conditioned reflexes whenever they have been through an event that's created significant fear in them.

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**Page 47 | Highlight**

playing a dangerous game called Peace at Any Price.

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**Page 47 | Highlight**

The price for Josh? His own self-respect and the physical and emotional costs of letting anger build, both within him and in his relationship with his father.

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**Page 47 | Highlight**

We all come into our adult lives with well-established rules and values regarding how much of ourselves we owe to other people and how much of our behavior ought to be determined by such ideals as duty, obedience, loyalty, altruism and self-sacrifice.

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**Page 48 | Highlight**

Blackmailers never hesitate to put our sense of obligation to the test, emphasizing how much they've given up, how much they've done for their targets, how much we owe them.

**Page 48 | Highlight**

They push far beyond the limits of a give-and-take relationship, letting us know that, like it or not, it's nothing less than our responsibility to do what they ask.

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**Page 50 | Highlight**

Reluctance to break up a family keeps many people in relationships that have gone sour.

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**Page 51 | Highlight**

Maria remembered to do what was best for everybody except herself. Most of us have a terrible time defining our boundaries, where our obligations to others begin and end. And when our sense of obligation is stronger than our sense of self-respect and self-caring, blackmailers quickly learn how to take advantage.

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**Page 51 | Highlight**

More like an open-ended loan than a gift, it's always got payments attached—with interest—and we can never seem to get out of the red.

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**Page 53 | Highlight**

Obligation is a particularly tough feeling to keep in proportion in our lives. Too little and we shirk our responsibilities. Too much—as when Lynn started “billing” for every contribution to the relationship—and we're pressed flat beneath the weight of inescapable debts and the inevitable resentment they produce. Blackmail is quick to follow.

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**Page 53 | Highlight**

Guilt is an essential part of being a feeling, responsible person. It's a tool of the conscience that, in its undistorted form, registers discomfort and self-reproach if we've done

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**Page 53 | Highlight**

our sense of guilt can easily give us false readings about the impact of our actions.

**Page 53 | Highlight**

In undeserved guilt, the remorse we feel has little to do with identifying and correcting harmful behavior.

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**Page 54 | Highlight**

layered with blame, accusations and paralyzing self-flagellation.

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**Page 54 | Highlight**

In simple terms, the process that produces undeserved guilt looks like this: I act. The other person gets upset. I take full responsibility for the other person's upset, whether I had anything to do with it or not. I feel guilty. I will do anything to make reparations so that I can feel better.

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**Page 54 | Highlight**

One of the fastest ways for blackmailers to create undeserved guilt is to use blame, actively attributing whatever upset or problems they're having to their targets.

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**Page 55 | Highlight**

Though the details vary, one phrase, often unspoken but always just under the surface, serves as the blame peddler's slogan: It's all your fault. It's the hook that makes us buy what they're selling. I'm in a lousy mood (and it's all your fault). I have a bad cold (and it's all your fault). I know I drink too much (and it's all your fault). I had a bad day at work (and it's all your fault).

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**Page 60 | Highlight**

Like parents who punish their children while saying "I'm only doing this for your own good," blackmailers are expert rationalizers, and they use their tools to persuade us that the blackmail somehow serves us.

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**Page 61 | Highlight**

Blackmailers see our conflicts with them as reflections of how misguided and off-base we are, while they describe themselves as wise and well-intentioned. In the most simplistic terms, we're the bad guys, and they're the ones in the white hats.

**Page 62 | Highlight**

Blackmailers let us know that they ought to win because the outcome they want is more loving, more open, more mature. It's what's best.

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**Page 62 | Highlight**

They are entitled to it. At the same time—and sometimes in the most polite way—they call us selfish, uptight, immature, foolish, ungrateful, weak. Any resistance on our parts is transformed from an indication of our needs to evidence of our flaws.

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**Page 62 | Highlight**

spin involves applying adjectives—positive ones to the blackmailer and the compliant target, negative ones to the person who resists.

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**Page 63 | Highlight**

When the spin is effective, it confuses us about what's harmful or healthful and makes us question what we see going on between ourself and the blackmailer. We buy into the spin because we want our friends, lovers, bosses and family members to be right and good, not mean, unfeeling or oppressive.

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**Page 64 | Highlight**

In addition to discrediting the perceptions of their targets, many blackmailers turn up the pressure by challenging our character, motives and worth.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Some blackmailers tell us that we're resisting them only because we're ill or crazy.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Pathologizing is a way of making us appear "sick" when we don't go along with a blackmailer.

**Page 65 | Highlight**

Because the experience of being pathologized by blackmailers can be a devastating blow to our confidence and sense of self, it's an especially toxic—and effective—tool.

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**Page 65 | Highlight**

Pathologizing often arises in love relationships when there's an imbalance of desires. One person wants more than the other—more love, more time, more attention, more commitment—and when it's not forthcoming, he or she tries to get it from us by questioning our ability to love.

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**Page 66 | Highlight**

Alice liked to play therapist, especially when Roger talked about his fear that their relationship was moving too fast. He was trying to control things, she told him, and he needed to stop resisting.

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**Page 67 | Highlight**

There's nothing "wrong" with you just because you don't want someone as much as they want you. Like many pathologizers, Alice misused the word love. Her actions were full of dependency, desperation and the need to possess Roger totally, none of which has anything to do with mature love. But to her the pressure was justified in the name of her grand, overpowering passion for him—and if Roger couldn't match her intensity, the only explanation she could live with was that he must have some horrendous psychological problem.

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**Page 68 | Highlight**

Alice used a tactic that most pathologizers rely on: throwing back in Roger's face uncomfortable things that he'd confided to her about himself and his family.

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**Page 68 | Highlight**

Emotional blackmailers often accuse us of being unable to love or maintain friendships simply because we don't feel as close to them, as friends or lovers, as they feel we should.



**Page 68 | Highlight**

we see intimate relationships as the litmus test of mental health. Though it's a stretch for blackmailers to argue that if a relationship isn't working, it's because we are sick or damaged,

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**Page 69 | Highlight**

Pathologizing is especially persuasive when it comes from an authority figure—a doctor, professor, lawyer or therapist. Our relationships with these people are based on trust, and we tend to cloak professionals in a mantle of wisdom that some don't deserve.

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**Page 71 | Highlight**

We may desperately need to express the truth of what's happened to us, but it takes determination, preparation and support to counter the pervasive pathologizing that goes along with long-term abuse or deep problems within a family.

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**Page 71 | Highlight**

We know we can't be completely objective about ourselves, and many of us are terrified that we have unknown demons inside. Pathologizers play on that fear.

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**Page 74 | Highlight**

Wisdom resonates differently in each of us, and none of us can claim a monopoly on it, but we can count on blackmailers to insist, by pulling selective quotes, comments, teachings and writings from a host of sources, that there is just one truth: theirs.

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**Page 75 | Highlight**

"Why can't you be like . . ." Those five words pack an emotional punch that connects powerfully with our sense of self-doubt, our fear that we don't measure up.

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**Page 75 | Highlight**

Negative comparisons make us feel suddenly deficient. We're not as good, not as loyal, not as accomplished as so-and-so, and we feel anxious and guilty about it.

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**Page 79 | Highlight**

we need to return to the place the blackmail began—the moment when the blackmailer wanted something from us and our words or actions said no.

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**Page 80 | Highlight**

There's nothing wrong with wanting.

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**Page 80 | Highlight**

It's OK to plead or reason and even to beg and whine a little—as long as we let a firm no mean no.

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**Page 80 | Highlight**

Frustration becomes the trigger not for negotiation but for pressure and threats. Blackmailers cannot tolerate frustration.

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**Page 80 | Highlight**

But in the psyche of blackmailers, frustration symbolizes something far beyond being blocked or disappointed, and when they encounter it they can't just regroup or shift gears. To the blackmailer, frustration is connected to deep, resonant fears of loss and deprivation, and they experience it as a warning that unless they take immediate action they'll face intolerable consequences.

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**Page 81 | Highlight**

Even mild frustration is viewed as potentially catastrophic, and they believe that unless they respond to it aggressively, the world—or you—will keep them from getting something they vitally need. A deprivation tape starts to play in their heads: This isn't going to work out. I never get what I want. I don't trust other people to care about what I want. I don't have what it takes to get what I need. I don't know if I can stand it if I lose something I want. Nobody cares about me as much as I care about them. I always lose anyone I care about.

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**Page 81 | Highlight**

lengthy history of feeling anxious and insecure,

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**Page 82 | Highlight**

Emotional blackmail is the only way Jo knows to cope with a world she doesn't trust, a world she is certain will rob her of what she loves.

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**Page 82 | Highlight**

Instead of being able to enjoy their relationship, she became frightened any time his plans didn't include her.

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**Page 82 | Highlight**

a core belief common to many emotional blackmailers: I don't trust that I'm going to get what I need, so I have to give myself every advantage. That justified all the clinging and all of the blackmail.

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**Page 84 | Highlight**

Like Jo, many blackmailers have a fantasy that the helplessness and inadequacy they felt as children will vanish, and now, as adults, they'll magically be able to "fix" a bad situation or an unhappy parent or guarantee the security they long for.

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**Page 84 | Highlight**

All they can see is what they want right now and how they'll get it.

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**Page 84 | Highlight**

I told Stephanie that she was indeed entitled to feel angry, hurt, betrayed and shocked, and I didn't want to discount her pain in any way. But, I told her, there is a big difference between confrontation and emotional blackmail. While she might be getting satisfaction from playing the avenging, wronged wife and punishing Bob, her marriage was going down the tubes.

**Page 85 | Highlight**

Some of the most puzzling blackmailers are the ones who seem to have it all and want more. It seems incongruous to suggest that they're motivated by deprivation because they seem to have had so few encounters with it. But often, people who have been overprotected and indulged have had little opportunity to develop confidence in their ability to handle any kind of loss. At the first hint that they might be deprived, they panic, and shore themselves up with blackmail.

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**Page 86 | Highlight**

People who grow up in such a safe harbor develop unrealistic expectations, believing that whatever they want will fall into their laps. Even more damaging, they are deprived of the chance to develop the essential skills we all need for handling frustration.

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**Page 87 | Highlight**

Maria watched Jay change from the charmer who'd swept her off her feet to a devious, manipulative stranger.

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**Page 87 | Highlight**

Much of the pain and confusion of emotional blackmail, in fact, arises from seeing people we care about and who we believe care about us become people who need to get their way so much that they are willing to ride roughshod over our feelings.

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**Page 88 | Highlight**

All the blackmailers we've seen are focused almost totally on their needs, their desires; they don't seem to be the least bit interested in our needs or how their pressure is affecting us.

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**Page 89 | Highlight**

Emotional blackmailers often behave as though each disagreement is the make-or-break factor in the relationship.

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**Page 89 | Highlight**

The ferocity of their desire only makes sense when you realize that they are not reacting to the

**Page 89 | Highlight Continued**

current situation but rather to what that situation symbolizes to them from the past.

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**Page 89 | Highlight**

he believed that a man can't get what he needs from an independent woman.

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**Page 90 | Highlight**

As with all overreaction, a lot of noise and emotion are vented, but the real, underlying feelings are rarely expressed

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**Page 92 | Highlight**

Most blackmailers operate from an I-want-what-I-want-when-I-want-it mind-set. They seem to have a childlike inability to connect behavior to consequences, and they don't appear to give any thought to what they will be left with once they've gotten the target's compliance.

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**Page 93 | Highlight**

Many times it does seem as though the goal of emotional blackmail is not only to make the blackmailer feel good but to make the target feel bad.

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**Page 93 | Highlight**

Punishers don't see themselves as punishing, but rather as maintaining order or keeping a firm hand on things or doing "what's right" or letting us know they can't be pushed around. They see themselves as strong and in charge. If their behavior hurts us, so be it. The end justifies the means.

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**Page 93 | Highlight**

many punishers see themselves as victims.

**Page 94 | Highlight**

Punishment also allows blackmailers to take an active, aggressive stance that makes them feel powerful and invulnerable

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**Page 94 | Highlight**

It's one of the most fascinating paradoxes of human behavior that angry, punitive people are really very frightened, but they rarely confront or diminish those fears.

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**Page 95 | Highlight**

Faced with the loss of his young lover, and seeing that his threats weren't working, Charles did something to ease his pain—he devalued her.

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**Page 95 | Highlight**

Devaluation is a common tactic for angry blackmailers.

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**Page 96 | Highlight**

Insults and infantilizing are similarly explained away with the “It’s for your own good” rationale.

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**Page 96 | Highlight**

erroneous idea of punishment as training.

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**Page 98 | Highlight**

punishment keeps a blackmailer in a strong emotional connection with you. In creating a highly charged atmosphere, blackmailers know they are activating the target’s feelings for them, and even if the feelings are negative, they’ve created a tight bond. You may resent or even hate the blackmailer, but as long as your focus is on them, they haven’t been abandoned or discarded with indifference. Punishment keeps a lot of passion and heat in a fractured relationship.

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**Page 99 | Highlight**

The most important thing to take away from our tour of the blackmailer's psyche is that emotional blackmail sounds like it's all about you and feels like it's all about you, but for the most part it's not about you at all. Instead, it flows from and tries to stabilize some fairly insecure places inside the blackmailer.

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**Page 101 | Highlight**

Blackmail takes two. It's a duet, not a solo performance, and it cannot work without the target's active participation.

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**Page 101 | Highlight**

But in order to break up the blackmail partnership, you'll have to turn your attention inward and look at the elements that have led you, often unknowingly, to participate in emotional blackmail.

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**Page 102 | Highlight**

some people, no matter how smart or together they are, seem to be so vulnerable to emotional blackmail, while others can brush it off?

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**Page 102 | Highlight**

The answer lies in our hot buttons, the sensitive bundles of emotional nerves that form inside all of us.

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**Page 103 | Highlight**

When our blackmailers are feeling safe, they don't either. But faced with resistance, their fears of deprivation flare up. They drop the compassion and use every bit of information they have about us to ensure that they prevail.

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**Page 104 | Highlight**

Ironically, it is these "protective" qualities that open us up to emotional blackmail. They are: An excessive need for approval An intense fear of anger A need for peace at any price A tendency to take too much responsibility for other people's lives A high level of self-doubt

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THE APPROVAL JUNKIE

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Page 105 | Highlight

approval junkies need a constant supply, and judge that they've failed if they can't get it. They believe they're not OK unless someone else says they are, and their sense of security depends almost entirely on outside validation. The approval junkie's motto is "If I'm not getting approval, I've done something wrong." Or worse yet, "If I'm not getting approval there's something wrong with me."

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Page 106 | Highlight

Maria, who was trying to withstand her husband's pressure to stay in their marriage even after she'd learned he was seeing other women, found herself dominated by a somewhat different concern: What will people think?

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Page 106 | Highlight

I can't stand the idea that I can't make this marriage work.

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Page 107 | Highlight

Maria began to realize that the beliefs she held so strongly had been imposed on her—the ideas she defended so fiercely weren't even her own—and her definition of what makes a good family or a good marriage was far broader and deeper than "one that stays together no matter what."

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Page 108 | Highlight

The support I have from my family and community is fragile. It can be withdrawn in a moment if I don't please them. I have to earn their approval.

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Page 108 | Highlight

THE ANGER AVOIDER/PEACEMAKER



**Page 108 | Highlight**

The peacemakers' desire to provide a measure of calm and rationality in difficult situations can be problematic when it becomes a rigid belief that nothing is worse than a fight.

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**Page 110 | Highlight**

Liz, and she'd never learned to express her own anger in an appropriate way. When her calming techniques failed, and she wound up unleashing her own stores of rage and frustration, a crisis quickly mounted.

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**Page 111 | Highlight**

Helen's adult strategy for avoiding anger—"I prefer not to be around people who get angry"—echoed her childhood strategy—run away and hide till it blows over, or hide in a place where it will never find you. What hadn't figured in Helen's plan was that anger is a normal human emotion, and no matter how diligently she tries to find a place where it doesn't exist, or a person who doesn't express it, she's bound to fail.

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**Page 111 | Highlight**

You'd think that the way to get to me would be to yell—that makes sense. But Jim is the opposite, and when he gets mad, he gets more quiet. He won't tell me what's wrong—he won't say anything. I almost wish he'd start yelling so I'd know what I was up against. This is the worst. When he withdraws, I just die inside. It's like I'm totally cut off—like I'm on an ice floe in the middle of the Arctic Ocean. I can't stand it when he gets mad in that quiet, icy way. I have to get him out of that shell, even if I have to stand on my head.

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**Page 112 | Highlight**

But many of us think that we have to take the blame for every problem that comes along in our lives or others', even though we had little or nothing to do with creating it. Blackmailers, of course, feed this notion.

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**Page 112 | Highlight**

Bizarre Blaming

**Page 113 | Highlight**

I felt like I was causing him to suffer just for being who I am, and I didn't know what to do.

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**Page 114 | Highlight**

How could she objectively evaluate Elliot's behavior when the bizarre was the norm for her?

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**Page 114 | Highlight**

People with the Atlas syndrome believe that they alone must solve every problem, putting their own needs last. Like Atlas, who carried the world on his shoulders, they weigh themselves down with the burden of fixing everyone else's feelings and actions, hoping to atone for past or future transgressions.

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**Page 116 | Highlight**

THE BLEEDING HEART

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**Page 117 | Highlight**

The Power of Pity

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**Page 117 | Highlight**

was a tailor-made training ground for a bleeding heart. When we're in close quarters with a parent or another important person who is physically or emotionally needy, we become ultrasensitive to their cues.

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**Page 118 | Highlight**

The joy of "helping" often blinds us to the fact that so much pity-evoking behavior is manipulative: Give the sufferers what they want and voilà! they're cured.

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**Page 118 | Highlight**

Again, ironies abound when sufferers meet targets who are bleeding hearts. The targets feel

helpless in the face of suffering, so rush in to stop it. But by saying yes to every tear-stained demand, they become even more helpless, unable to stop the personal suffering that comes of ignoring their own needs.

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Page 118 | Highlight

The Good Girl Syndrome

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Page 120 | Highlight

She was suffering from the Good Girl syndrome—a malady that affects many contemporary women who still harbor deep concerns about their ability to be powerful and successful and still be loved.

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Page 120 | Highlight

THE SELF-DOUBTER

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Page 120 | Highlight

Knowing that we're not perfect and that we're capable of making mistakes is healthy. But healthy self-evaluation can easily become self-deprecation. In the face of criticism from someone else, we may disagree at first, then come to believe that our sensors and gauges are faulty. How can we be right if someone important to us says we're wrong?

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Page 121 | Highlight

When Knowledge Feels Dangerous

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Page 121 | Highlight

"I know what I know, but I can't know it." Our knowledge feels uncomfortable, dangerous, and we feel we can't face the changes we'd have to make if we accepted our perceptions as true.

**Page 122 | Highlight**

It's not uncommon for one person to become the representative of everything that goes wrong in a family.

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**Page 123 | Highlight**

Emotional blackmail takes training and practice. Who provides the training? You do. Who else could tell a blackmailer with absolute certainty and precision: This is what works on me. This is the kind of pressure I always give in to. This is the tool that was custom-designed to probe my most sensitive spot.

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**Page 124 | Highlight**

What many of us don't realize is that emotional blackmail is built on a series of tests. If it works on a small scale, we'll see it again in a more significant arena.

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**Page 125 | Highlight**

Petty punishments like Michael's strip us of our adult dignity and power.

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**Page 125 | Highlight**

Blackmailers learn how far they can go by observing how far we let them go.

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**Page 126 | Highlight**

As all targets find, in emotional blackmail the present is a prologue to the future. What you teach today will come back to haunt you tomorrow.

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**Page 127 | Highlight**

How often do we deprive ourselves of something that's reasonable and well within our means simply because we fear another person's reaction? We shelve our dreams and plans because we're "sure" someone will object—though we've never tried bringing up our ideas.

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**Page 128 | Highlight**

Emotional blackmail may not be life-threatening, but it robs us of one of our most precious possessions—our integrity. Integrity is that place inside where our values and our moral compass reside, clarifying what’s right and wrong for us. Though we tend to equate integrity with honesty, it’s actually much more. The word itself means “wholeness,” and we experience it as the firm knowledge that “This is who I am. This is what I believe. This is what I am willing to do—and this is where I draw the line.”

**Page 129 | Highlight**

I take a stand for what I believe in. I don’t let fear run my life. I confront people who have injured me. I define who I am rather than being defined by other people. I keep the promises I make to myself. I protect my physical and emotional health. I don’t betray other people. I tell the truth. These are powerful, liberating statements to apply to ourselves, and when they genuinely reflect our way of being in the world, they give us a balance point, a sure sense of equilibrium that keeps us from being pushed off center by the stresses and pressures that are constantly coming at us.

**Page 131 | Highlight**

Patty was caught in the classic “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” dilemma that drowns so many blackmail targets in waves of self-condemnation.

**Page 131 | Highlight**

The unfortunate result of such self-flagellation, however, is that it creates a vicious cycle. Under pressure, we do something that doesn’t fit with our sense of who we are. In shock and disbelief, we realize what we’ve done and begin to believe that we are actually as deficient as blackmailers make us out to be. Then, having lost our self-respect, we’re even more vulnerable to emotional blackmail because now we’re especially desperate for the approval of our blackmailers—which would prove that we’re really not so bad. We may not be able to uphold our own standards, but maybe we can meet theirs.

**Page 132 | Highlight**

It takes a lot of mental and emotional energy to persuade ourselves that we can accept something that’s not OK for us.

**Page 133 | Highlight**

Emotional blackmail leaves us full of unexpressed smouldering feelings.

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**Page 134 | Highlight**

When emotional blackmail is as oppressive and omnipresent as it was for Eve, it creates emotions of such intensity that we do sometimes believe we are “going crazy.” I assured Eve that many people confuse strong emotions with going crazy and that there was much we could do to diminish those fears for her. She

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**Page 138 | Highlight**

But there’s no intimacy, genuine intimacy. I’m not talking about sexually. I’m talking about emotionally. I can’t tell him my real feelings, because he’s so vulnerable . . . fragile. I can’t tell him my dreams or plans, because he’s so threatened by them. They’re not safe subjects. There’s no real intimacy when you have to watch everything you say.

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**Page 138 | Highlight**

We stop talking about: Dumb or embarrassing things we did. Our blackmailers might ridicule us. Sad, frightened or insecure feelings. Our blackmailers might use them against us to prove we’re wrong to resist what they want. Hopes, dreams, plans, goals, fantasies. The blackmailer might shoot them down or use them as proof of how selfish we are. Unhappy life experiences or difficult childhoods. The blackmailer might use them as evidence of our instability or inadequacy. Anything that will show we’re changing and evolving. Blackmailers don’t like it when we rock the boat.

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**Page 138 | Highlight**

What’s left when we must consistently walk on eggs with someone? Superficial small talk, strained silences, lots of tension. Just below the artificial calm that surrounds a placated blackmailer and a target who’s given in is the widening chasm that’s opening between them.

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**Page 140 | Highlight**

he felt very alone, without the intimacy that comes from being able to share the dark times as well as the bright ones. Their marriage was in an emotional straitjacket.

**Page 140 | Highlight**

In one of the great paradoxes of emotional blackmail, the more we feel the blackmailer demanding our time, our attention or our affection, the less we feel free to give. We frequently hold ourselves back from expressing even casual affection because we're afraid it may be misinterpreted as a sign we've given in to their pressure. We turn ourselves into emotional misers, not wanting to feed the blackmailer's hopes or fantasies.

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**Page 140 | Highlight**

Roger, at that time in their relationship, didn't feel free to express his real feelings—even though they were positive—because he knew that whatever he said would wind through the loops and convolutions of Alice's unrealistic expectations and turn into ammunition for future emotional blackmail.

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**Page 141 | Highlight**

He says he loves me, but how can he?" Josh asked. "He doesn't even know who I am."

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**Page 141 | Highlight**

When safety and intimacy are gone from a relationship, we get used to acting. We pretend that we're happy when we're not and say that everything is fine when it isn't.

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**Page 144 | Highlight**

if we stick to our accustomed ways of responding, we'll never lay hands on the real keys to ending emotional blackmail.

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**Page 144 | Highlight**

It's vital to move from the comfortable, well-lighted arena of habitual responses into the far more uncomfortable sphere of behavioral change.

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**Page 144 | Highlight**

you have to begin the change process while you are still afraid.

**Page 145 | Highlight**

In most cases, though, all you'll need is courage and determination.

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**Page 145 | Highlight**

You've argued, tried to explain your position, offered up some active or passive resistance and ultimately given in.

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**Page 146 | Highlight**

Once you are less afraid and feel less manipulated by fear, obligation and guilt, you'll notice how many choices open up to you. You'll be able to decide who you want to be close to, how much you are responsible for other people, how you really want to use your time and love and energy.

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**Page 147 | Highlight**

Remember, commitment is a promise to yourself, and it's one well worth keeping.

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**Page 148 | Highlight**

Every day for the next week, I'd like you to set aside some private time to work with three very simple tools: a contract, a power statement and a set of self-affirming phrases. You'll need as little as 15 minutes a day.

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**Page 148 | Highlight**

The first thing I'd like you to do is sign a contract that lists a number of promises I'd like you to make to yourself—ground rules for this process.

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**Page 148 | Highlight**

Power statement: I CAN STAND IT.

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**Page 148 | Highlight**

they counter a belief that ushers us straight in to saying yes to our blackmailers: the idea that we



| can't stand the pressure.

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**Page 149 | Highlight**

| "I can't stand to hurt his feelings." "I can't stand it when she says things like that to me." "I can't stand my guilt!" "I can't stand my anxiety." "I can't stand it when she cries." "I can't stand his anger."

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**Page 150 | Highlight**

| Have you seen the clear acrylic shields that riot police sometimes use? Let "I can stand it" be a shield that comes between you and the blackmailer's words and nonverbal expressions.

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**Page 151 | Highlight**

| Emotional blackmail is very prevalent, and we're all in this together.

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**Page 151 | Highlight**

| Angry Weak Depressed Frustrated Emotionally numb Sad Powerless

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**Page 151 | Highlight**

| Agitated Scared

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**Page 152 | Highlight**

| Old: "I tell myself that what I want is wrong." New: "I ask for what I want, even when it upsets the blackmailer." Old: "I give in now because I'll take a stand later." New: "I hold my ground and take a stand now." Old: "I do things to please other people and get confused about what I want." New: "I do things to please myself as well as others, and I am clear about what I want."

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**Page 152 | Highlight**

| Strong Elated Self-affirming Proud Triumphant Powerful Confident Excited Capable Courageous

Hopeful

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Page 153 | Highlight

“I stand up to emotional blackmail and feel strong, confident, proud and elated.”

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Page 153 | Highlight

When you feel as though you’re sinking under the pressure of emotional blackmail, send up an SOS.

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Page 153 | Highlight

SOS: Stop. Observe. Strategize.

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Page 153 | Highlight

the first thing any target of emotional blackmail has to do is nothing. That means you don’t make a decision about how to respond the moment a demand is made.

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Page 154 | Highlight

you’ll need to learn some time-buying phrases that will slow things down.

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Page 154 | Highlight

I don’t have an answer for you right now. I need some time to think. This is too important to decide quickly. Let me think about it. I’m not willing to make a decision right now. I’m not sure how I feel about what you’re asking. Let’s discuss this a little later.

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Page 154 | Highlight

What makes emotional blackmail unique is the sense of a clock constantly ticking in the background. There’s a request on the table, and at some point you need to respond. A lot of the blackmailer’s pressure comes from the idea that there’s no time to lose.

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**Page 155 | Highlight**

in the vast majority of cases there is no urgency, except in the mind of the blackmailer.

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**Page 155 | Highlight**

Maybe the blackmailer does have an important deadline—but it's not your deadline.

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**Page 155 | Highlight**

the power of repetition is generally enough to deliver the message that you're serious.

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**Page 156 | Highlight**

Just by saying "I need time," you've shifted the balance of power in the relationship and put the blackmailer in the position of waiting to see what you're going to do—a reactive, and for them a much less powerful, role.

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**Page 156 | Highlight**

You might want to say something like: This is not a power struggle. This is not about my trying to control you. This is about my needing more time to give thought to what you want.

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**Page 157 | Highlight**

Bad habits are comfortable, seductively so—until you feel their consequences.

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**Page 158 | Highlight**

Internal discomfort is one of the major impediments to change, and we're so used to responding to it as though it were a fire to be put out that many of us haven't learned to live with it in the natural amounts that accompany change. We push it away, extinguish it, treat it as though it has no place in our lives—and by doing so, we eliminate some of our most effective options.

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**Page 159 | Highlight**

Discomfort, you think you're really hot stuff, don't you. You've been running the show for a long

time and I'm sick of it. I've given you a lot of power, but I'm putting you on notice that those days are over. I thought you were bigger than I am—and maybe you knew more—but when I look at you, I can see that you're small, you're ugly and you get me into trouble. In fact, whenever you take over, I'm such a wimp and a coward I don't even know who I am anymore. I'm really tired of you. Is there any good reason why I shouldn't just show you the door?

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Page 159 | Highlight

You show me the door? That's a laugh. I'm not going anyplace. I like it here and I'm not leaving without a fight. It's pretty cushy here—all I have to do is make one tiny squeak and you jump to let me do whatever I want.

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Page 160 | Highlight

her discomfort wasn't going to go away without a fight. Her job would still be to change behavior while she was feeling uncomfortable.

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Page 161 | Highlight

It's essential when you get triangled into a conflict between two people in your life that you gracefully remove yourself from the ring by refusing to carry messages or become an arbitrator.

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Page 162 | Highlight

Just keep answering that you haven't made a decision, repeat that it'll take as long as it takes to decide—and then change the subject.

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Page 162 | Highlight

It's fine to answer with "I don't know." It's equally fine to say "I'll let you know when I've made a decision."

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Page 162 | Highlight

Buying time gives you a chance to experience your own thoughts, your own priorities and your own feelings.

**Page 163 | Highlight**

You can say “I need a drink of water” or “I need to use the bathroom—I’ll be right back.” Or if you feel really anxious, how about “I need a drink of water and I need to use the bathroom.”

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**Page 163 | Highlight**

Calm yourself, repeat “I can stand it,” and resolve to buy yourself time.

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**Page 163 | Highlight**

detached yourself from the blackmail drama,

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**Page 164 | Highlight**

Ask yourself: What just happened? It’s a good idea to write down the answers to the questions that follow.

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**Page 166 | Highlight**

Feelings aren’t the ephemeral, independent forces we often think they are. They’re a response to what we think. Almost every anxious, sad, fearful or guilty feeling we have in response to emotional blackmail is preceded by a negative or erroneous belief about our own adequacy, lovability and responsibility to others.

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Angry

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Anxious

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Trapped

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Threatened

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Insecure

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Scared

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Stuck

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**Page 167 | Highlight**

Sometimes our bodies will tell us a truth that our minds don't.

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**Page 168 | Highlight**

WHAT ARE YOUR FLASHPOINTS? The blackmailer's words and nonverbal language resonate within us in very particular ways, and it's important to know what our personal triggers are.

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**Page 168 | Highlight**

Then list the behaviors that get to you the most. Among the triggers I've seen are: Yelling Door-slamming Particular words (like "big shot," "selfish") that make us feel bad about ourselves Crying Sighing An angry face—red face, eyebrows drawing together, angry scowl The silent treatment Then connect the behavior to your feelings: When the blackmailer does \_\_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.

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**Page 168 | Highlight**

Don't judge the feelings, don't evaluate them, and don't try to decide whether they're valid or not valid or whether you have a right to be feeling them. Turn off the running commentary and observe.

Keep observing until you begin to make connections between your beliefs, feelings and behavior.

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Page 171 | Highlight

Is something in this demand making me uncomfortable? What is it? What part of the demand is OK for me, and what part is not? Is what the other person wants going to hurt me? Is what the other person wants going to hurt anyone else? Does the other person's request take into consideration my wants and feelings? Is something in the demand or the way it was presented to me making me feel afraid, obligated or guilty? What is it? What's in it for me?

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Page 171 | Highlight

The demand is no big deal. The demand involves important issues, and your integrity is on the line. The demand involves a major life issue, and/or giving in would be harmful to you or others.

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Page 172 | Highlight

The word automatic is one I'd like you to try to erase in any dealings with an emotional blackmailer. No matter how small the issue, examine the demand, especially the style in which it was presented to you.

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Page 173 | Highlight

many targets of emotional blackmail tend, like Leigh, to underreact. That means they often minimize their uncomfortable feelings, denying that anything is bothering them and using rationalizations to persuade themselves that their objections to other people's requests are groundless.

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Page 173 | Highlight

But if you've experienced discomfort and emotional bullying in a relationship, it's important to use a more critical eye than you would in other circumstances.

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Page 173 | Highlight

Is a pattern developing here? Do I seem to be in the habit of saying "It's no big deal," "No

problem,” “I don’t have a preference” or “I don’t care”? If it were entirely up to me, what would I do? Is my body telling me something different from what my mind is telling me? (For example, you’re thinking: It’s only a movie, so even though I don’t feel like it, I’ll go—but you notice that your stomach is pumping more acid than usual.)

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**Page 173 | Highlight**

you need to identify the elements of the demand that are troublesome to you and make a decision to tell the other person about them.

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**Page 174 | Highlight**

Don’t question your right to say no to something that seems relatively unimportant. Standing up for yourself on the small issues will give you an opportunity to develop the skills you need to hold fast if or when the stakes are higher.

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**Page 174 | Highlight**

The pressure blackmailers use can feel insulting, grating or demeaning, and it’s vital not to minimize it or let it pass just because the issue on the table seems insignificant and you’re not planning to object to it.

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**Page 174 | Highlight**

Conscious compliance is the yes you choose after thinking about what another person wants and after you have disabled the mechanisms of automatic compliance by observing and becoming aware of your thoughts, feelings and preferences.

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**Page 174 | Highlight**

Stop, Observe, Explore

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**Page 178 | Highlight**

If I say yes to the request: Am I taking a stand for what I believe in? Am I letting fear run my life? Am I confronting people who have injured me? Am I defining who I am rather than being defined by



other people? Am I keeping the promises I've made to myself? Am I protecting my physical and emotional health? Am I betraying anyone? Am I telling the truth? You may notice that these questions are based on the components of integrity. They're an effective way to reveal how and where we are not being true to ourselves. Jan found several of the questions sobering.

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**Page 179 | Highlight**

It's also very common for people, especially family members, to get set in rigidly defined roles around money: the rescuer, the family hero, the irresponsible and reckless child.

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**Page 180 | Highlight**

you need to evaluate the impact of troublesome requests or demands on your integrity and decide what you want to do.

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**Page 183 | Highlight**

If you've been stuffing feelings and talking yourself out of your anger, you'll probably want to do the same—or find other safe ways to begin expressing your frustrations—before you focus on your list.

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**Page 183 | Highlight**

many emotional blackmail targets have been holding in their resentments for so long that they're close to blowing.