

Self-Care and Clarity of Mind...a weekly column by Princess Lakshman (Sister Iqra)



Welcome to my weekly column on **Self-Care and Clarity of Mind**. If you're taking time out to read this, pat yourself on the back because you have shown commitment to taking care of your mind and body.

Today, In Shaa ALLAH, we will explore the topic "**Emotional Blackmail**".

Experience and observations from my sessions with clients have confirmed to me a notion I have had for several years now - that Emotional Blackmail is the root cause of fear.

Emotional blackmailing involves threat in exchange of fear. The act of threatening someone to succumb them into believing that they need to perform a certain act or behave a certain way or else the consequence would be negative is known as Emotional Blackmail.

Believe it or not, Emotional Blackmail is practised in most homes on a daily basis, especially in parent-child and husband-wife relationships.

Notice the next time you say to your child something that sounds a bit like this - "If you don't score above 90% in your exams this year, you certainly won't be getting that new PlayStation game you've been asking for."

Or, how often have you heard something that may sound like - "If you don't do as I say, I'll leave you."

What happens to relationships when there is Emotional Blackmail?

When there is emotional blackmail in a relationship, love, respect and understanding get replaced by dictatorship, bullying and oppression. Instead of understanding why the child's exam results are lower than expected and trying to address the underlying causes, the parent emotionally blackmails the child into fearing a situation that is undesirable. Instead of understanding and empathising with our spouse, we give emotional ultimatums.

Adults who resort to emotional blackmailing are often suppressing anger and have an intense need to control. Adults who give in to emotional blackmailing are often lacking self-worth and self-esteem and identify themselves as victims of situations.

Each time a fear-inducing statement is made to emotionally blackmail another, fear takes over. As Muslims, we must understand that **where there is fear, there is no faith**. If we are to truly fear only ALLAH then we must live from the space of understanding, compassion and meaningful conversations.

Often the argument my clients make is that if they don't use emotional blackmailing, they feel things don't happen according to their expectations. But think about this for a moment - are you really in control? Do you really feel that succumbing to fear of situations would ever yield positive outcomes in the long term? People may obey you the first time or even several times, however, eventually resentment takes over and arguments, retaliation, rebelliousness and sometimes violence become the norm of the home.

3-Step-Strategy to avoid Emotional Blackmail

1. Self-reflection is important. Spend a whole day or week to be mindful and become aware of what you say to people and what they say to you. Do this as an observer without judgment.
2. Write down these observations in a notebook. Analyse these statements and look for those that revolve around fear and punishment.
3. Have a conversation with the people involved and say: "Let us discuss this issue with the goal to understand what is actually causing it. Once we understand the cause, we can work on a solution."

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Princess Lakshman

Writer, Clarity Coach, Founder and Facilitator of Healing Words Therapy - Writing for Wellbeing & Muslimah Mind Matters

E: info@healingwordstherapy.com / info@muslimahmindmatters.com Ph: 0451977786

Website: www.healingwordstherapy.com / www.muslimahmindmatters.com