

## 6. The Power Dynamics of Social Pressure

In the first version of this course, this lesson was merged with the verbal expressions of power.

But the dynamics of social pressure are such an important topic that it deserves its own lessons.

So here we are, this lesson will help you understand one of the most important aspects of social power dynamics: social pressure.

# Persistence, Pressure & Power

The person who applies social pressure, in the beginning, has more power.

However, the ultimate power dynamics and the higher social status will be awarded to the one who “wins” in the end.

Here are the rules that govern pressure:

1. The longer and stronger the pressure, the bigger the consequences to the power relations
2. The longer and stronger the pressure, the more likely it is that you will break rapport and harm the relationship
3. The more concessions the winner has to give to win, the smaller the consequences to the power relations

I know, they are not the simplest concepts.

Reflect on them for a minute and below are the examples.

## Pressure And Persistence In Dating

As we will see, power and dominance are crucial in the dynamics of dating.

It's best for a man not cave in to a woman's pressure if he is trying to seduce her.

And for a woman, if she really likes him, it might be a strategic choice not to resist and contradict him too much (or he might stop pursuing her).

That means that if a man starts by saying he won't do something, it's best if he sticks to it -or, second best option, gets equal concessions back before caving in-.

Here is an example of social pressure from a partying teenager in Australia:

<https://youtu.be/xc0CB6URrV0>

The interviewer had already asked him to remove his glasses earlier. Now she charges back on.

At that point, there was no middle way for him: big win or big loss.

Giving in would have meant looking vanquished and won. Holding on, meant coming across as strong and powerful.

Different situations but exact same dynamics to what happened to Trump and the government's shutdown over the wall in January 2019. He prolonged the issue for so long that when he finally did the most sensible thing, reopening the government, it looked like a huge loss.

Here is one more example:

*Her: How old are you*

*You: I'd rather not say*

*Her: Why not, it's just about age*

*You: Yeah indeed, it's just about age, so who cares*

*Her: Well I care, that's why I'm asking*

*You: But I didn't ask you how old you are*

*Her: But I do am asking you, just say it*

*You: OK... 46*

Since he started by saying that he'd rather not say, now it looks like he is caving in to the pressure and that she is more dominant.

It would have been better for him not to give in.

But, crucially, he must do so tactfully because on a fresh relationship it's easy that a single instance of rapport-breaking can derail the whole interaction.

The movie Crazy Stupid Love has a good example of a dynamic of pressure and resistance that escalated the wrong way (and got weird):

<https://youtu.be/l77EEsMA1Qw>

I recommend two techniques when you reach an impasse and you don't want to give in:

1. Make it a slight joke (it takes the sting out of the denial)
2. Move on quickly (it won't allow bad feelings to fester)

And optional:

Make it a mutual agreement and be friendly afterward

Here is this technique applied to our previous example:

*Her: How old are you*

*You: Let's say that for now I'll keep it a secret*

*Her: Why not, it's just about age*

***You:** Yeah indeed, it's just about age, so who cares. I really do not, I don't mind about your age.*

***Her:** Well I care, that's why I'm asking*

***You:** Well, I really wish I could tell you... But then I know you'd be stalking me on Internet fantasizing about me and my Facebook pictures*

***Her:** Ah come on, just say it*

In real life, it rarely ever goes on for this long (it only happened once or twice to me).

However, if she keeps going after you humorously deflect a couple of times, then a good option is to get serious:

***You:** Look, jokes aside, you seem to be making it a big deal out of it. I don't like opening the whole book right away. And for now, this is something I'd rather not share. Then, if we like each other and get to know more of each other, I'll be happy to let you in on more stuff about me. That OK with you?*

That "OK with you" is crucial.

Why?

Because after the pressure has been going on for long it feels like an adversarial exchange of winner and losers.

And that's why it's important that you ask her for confirmation: it rebuilds goodwill and it feels like a common agreement instead of you steamrolling her.

Alternatively, you can give her the information later on.

But make sure it's on your terms. It will feel even better for her, like she has earned your trust enough for you to open up.

And don't make it a show that you are "opening up" or it will seem like you were really heavily fixated into it and you're keeping track of power dynamics.

There is a quiz on this topic later on so you understand this important dynamic even better.

### **Making Losers Feel Good**

Nobody likes losing.

And that's why "pushing for a yes" is a losing technique (and that's why people hate pushy salesmen).

That's the danger of social pressure: after you "win", it's easy for people to resent you. And it's easy to sour relationships when you apply lots of pressure and "win".

And that's why people who get *really* good at applying pressure also get good at making the "loser" not feel bad about the loss.

How to do that?

After you "win", be slightly nicer, make the "loser" feel good about the decision and deliver a good experience.

Then you can even ask them "aren't you glad we did X?". And they will love you even more for having "won".

On the other hand, the dumbest of the dumbest thing you can do is to rub your victory in their faces -unless you want revenge, of course.. :-).