

Are you getting the silent treatment?

Special
Report

Have you fallen out with a friend who is now keeping their distance? Or maybe someone who's normally happy to speak to you is giving you the cold shoulder?

Whether it's your mum, partner, sister or a pal who is refusing to talk to you, you have to find a way to confront the person who is ignoring you without making things worse.

Start by looking at the reason you fell out. Was it something you said? Maybe you accused them of something or turned down a request for help. Did you do something wrong or behave badly?

Whatever it was, non-talkers can take control of the relationship and the situation by cutting you off. They are also punishing you. And if they feel vulnerable, it will seem sensible to stop communication so you



Was it something you said?

can't hurt them again.

So what can you do? Here's a three-point plan for getting back on speaking terms.

1. Take responsibility and apologise.

This doesn't mean taking all the blame or suggesting that it's completely your fault.

Simply admit that you could have done things

differently and say you're sorry it happened. For example, 'I was angry and shouted — I'm sorry I lost my temper over it' or 'I didn't do what you asked me to do — I'm sorry I let you down'.

2. Find out how the other person is feeling.

Do they feel hurt or frustrated? Maybe they simply feel let down. Try

asking: 'How do you feel about what happened between us?'

Acknowledge what they say about how they feel. Explain how you feel, but be careful not to find fault or lay blame.

3. Explain what you can do to put things right.

You could, for example, say: 'I know that when I get angry and shout, you don't get a chance to have your say.

'In future if I feel I'm losing control, I'll leave the room until I feel calmer,' or 'I know I let you down. Can I make up for it in some other way?'

If you still cannot get through to them, you may have to find another way to communicate. One method is to put what you want to say in writing.

Again, take responsibility for what you could have done differently. Remember not to find fault or lay

blame but do acknowledge how you think the other person is feeling.

Saying, for example: 'I can see that you are angry,' shows that you're taking their feelings seriously. Explain how you feel and what you are willing to do to put things right.

Another possibility is to ask someone else to help patch things up between you — a friend

who could step in and explain how much you want to get back on good terms.

If, despite all your attempts to break down the wall of silence, you cannot get through, you will know that you have tried your best. You just need to decide if you are willing to leave the door open for the other person to come through once they feel like talking again.

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