

How to Stop Going Silent When She Needs You to Talk — Checklist

Use this before a difficult conversation or right after you've gone quiet again.

Before You Start

- ☐ ☐ Identify your flood signals (jaw tension, chest tightness, losing track of her words)
- ☐ ☐ Choose your bridge phrase and say it out loud once before the conversation
- ☐ ☐ Lower the bar: the goal is to stay present longer, not to have a perfect conversation
- ☐ ☐ Put your phone down before the conversation starts

What To Watch For

- ☐ ☐ Feeling the urge to leave the room or go quiet
- ☐ ☐ Your voice going flat or clipped
- ☐ ☐ Scanning for exits instead of tracking her words
- ☐ ☐ Saying "I'm fine" when you're not
- ☐ ☐ The conversation ending without anything being said

What To Say

- ☐ ☐ "I'm getting overwhelmed and I need a few minutes. I'm coming back to this."
- ☐ ☐ "I don't know what to say right now. That doesn't mean I don't care."
- ☐ ☐ "I hear that you need me to say something. I'm not gone."
- ☐ ☐ After the argument: "I want to check in about earlier. I know I went quiet."
- ☐ ☐ Re-entry after shutdown: "I wasn't done with that conversation. Can we try again?"

What Not To Do

- ☐ ☐ Don't wait until you have the perfect words before saying anything
- ☐ ☐ Don't respond to her feelings with a logical explanation of why the situation is fine
- ☐ ☐ Don't leave the room without a return time
- ☐ ☐ Don't let the argument go unaddressed overnight if you can help it

- ☐ ☐ Don't promise to do better without practicing the scripts before the next conflict

Repair Move

If you shut down completely and the conversation ended badly:

- ☐ ☐ Name it directly: "I shut down and I'm sorry I went quiet like that."
- ☐ ☐ Don't over-explain your shutdown
- ☐ ☐ Ask to try again: "Can we come back to this? I'm ready now."
- ☐ ☐ Use the re-entry script from the Playbook if you're not sure what to say

Success Check

- ☐ ☐ You noticed the flood earlier than last time
- ☐ ☐ You said something instead of going completely silent
- ☐ ☐ You came back when you said you would
- ☐ ☐ The distance after the argument felt smaller than usual
- ☐ ☐ She reached for you in some small way in the hours after