The Silent Treatment

“Why won’t you talk to me?”

This seems like a question too many of us have had to ask. Ignoring someone is a form of avoidance. It is easy to give someone the silent treatment as a way to escape conflict. I’m sure we have all been guilty of this at some point in our lives. However, shutting someone out can lead to a relationship’s demise. The silent treatment is a passive aggressive action that can lead to devastating consequences. It is often used as a form of emotional abuse and control.

The silent treatment is part of the demand-withdraw pattern, in which one partner is the demander and the other is the avoider. Don’t fall into this trap! Having open communication is essential in any relationship, especially the one between you and your significant other. When someone is shutting you out and giving you the silent treatment, it’s important to understand why. Remember that the problem can’t be solved until your partner lets you know what is bothering them. Most of us are incapable of reading someone else’s mind, so work hard to gain clarification from your partner. As hard as it may be, don’t use the silent treatment on your partner!

To avoid falling into the pattern of using the silent treatment, keep lines of communication open. The staff at Youth & Family Services’ Stronger Family Program have a wonderful class that is designed to help individuals learn how to communicate more effectively. We also have Family Support Coaches that can assist your family in challenging times, providing direction, advocacy and intervention methods uniquely designed just for your family. To find out more, please call us at (605) 791-5025. We would be happy to meet with you!

Tip: Mind Reading Doesn’t Work

Make sure to tell your partner that the silence upsets you! You can’t fix something if you don’t know it’s broke! If you need to give yourself some space, run an errand or go to a different room. Revisit your feelings once tensions have calmed down. Offer to listen to your partner when they’re ready to talk and let them know you care about your relationship.

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