



The Social Situations Workbook

What would you do? Hundreds of real situations — and what actually happens next.

This book has no right answers

Most social skills books have a correct answer at the back. Tick B. Well done.

This one doesn't work like that, and the reason matters.

If a book teaches you that there's one correct way to behave, what it's really teaching you is to hide the way you'd naturally do it. That's called masking, and it has a cost. Research with autistic adults has found that camouflaging — masking or “passing” in social situations — is linked to poorer mental health, with people who mask heavily or who switch between masking and not masking reporting more anxiety, depression and stress (Cage & Troxell-Whitman, 2019, *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 49(5), 1899–1911).

So this book does something different. Every situation gives you options. Instead of marking them right or wrong, it tells you **where each one tends to lead** — and then you choose, based on what you actually want to happen.

Sometimes the answer is “say nothing and walk away.” Sometimes it's “tell them they've got it wrong.” Sometimes it's “do the thing that costs you least today.” All of those are allowed.

You are not being trained. You're being handed the map.

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You're being handed the map.

How to use this workbook

You don't start at page one. Open it at whatever's bothering you this week. The parts are grouped by situation, not by difficulty.

One scenario is enough. Some days you'll do six. Some days one is plenty. Neither is better.

Write in it. Cross things out. Argue with it in the margin. If you think all four options are terrible, write your own in box D — box D is there for exactly that.

There's no time limit and no score. The tracker at the back is for noticing what changed, not for measuring how well you're doing.

Skip anything you want. Some situations won't apply to you. Some will feel too close to something that already happened. Turn the page. Come back or don't.

The star system

Every scenario is marked with stars — that's how much it costs you, not how hard it is.



Everyday, low stakes, happens most weeks



Needs a bit of nerve, or something's at risk



Someone's upset, something's gone wrong, or you have to repair it

What each scenario looks like

Every one has the same six parts, so you always know where you are on the page.

WHERE
YOU ARE

the setting, in one line

WHAT HAPPENS

the situation itself

WHAT
WOULD YOU DO?

four options, A to D, with D always blank for your own

WHERE
EACH ONE LEADS

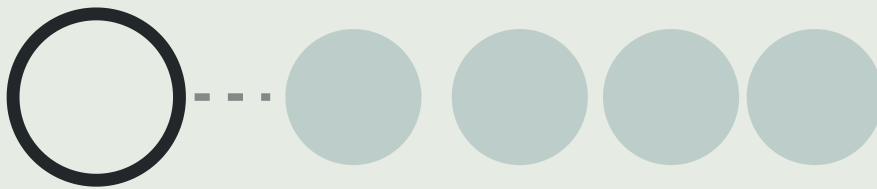
what tends to happen after each choice, without judging it

THE
BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

the hidden rule, said out loud

TRY IT

an optional small step in real life



PART ONE

People and Space

Bodies, seats, queues, and the invisible bubble everyone pretends doesn't exist.

SCENARIOS 1.1 – 1.20



Someone sits next to you

WHERE YOU ARE

A bench at break, or a seat on the bus. You're on your own and you were fine with that.

WHAT HAPPENS

Someone comes over and sits down next to you. They don't say anything. You don't know if they want to talk to you or if they just wanted the seat.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing. Carry on with what you were doing.
- ☐ **B** Say "hi" and then carry on with what you were doing.
- ☐ **C** Ask them something — "you alright?" or "is this your stop too?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH ONE LEADS

- A** Usually nothing happens. Most people who sit next to someone aren't planning to talk. Silence next to a stranger is normal and it isn't rude. It only reads as cold if you already know them well.
- B** This is the low-cost one. "Hi" signals *I've seen you, I'm not annoyed* and then closes the door politely. Most people say hi back and leave you alone.
- C** This opens a conversation. Choose it if you want one. Don't choose it out of politeness, because you'll have to keep it going.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Sitting next to someone is usually about the seat, not about you. People pick seats for weird reasons — shade, plug sockets, being near the door. You're allowed to assume it means nothing until they say otherwise.

TRY IT

Next time it happens, do B. Notice how long the interaction lasts. Most of the time it's under two seconds.

Someone stands very close behind you in a queue



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Queuing to pay, or waiting to get into a room.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The person behind you is closer than feels comfortable. You can hear them breathing. The queue isn't moving.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Put up with it. It'll be over soon.
- ☐ **B** Take a small step forward, closing the gap in front of you.
- ☐ **C** Turn slightly sideways so you're not directly in front of them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works if the queue is short. Costs you if it isn't — you'll spend the whole wait tense and be worn out afterwards for reasons nobody can see.
- B** The standard move, and completely invisible. Nobody reads it as a complaint. If there's no room in front, it doesn't work.
- C** Turning sideways gives you back some space without moving anywhere. It also breaks the direct line, which most people find less intense.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most close-standers have no idea they're doing it. Queue distance varies enormously between people, countries and families. It's rarely an attempt to pressure you.

Someone hugs you without asking



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A family gathering, or seeing someone you know after a while.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They come towards you with their arms out. You've got about one second.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept the hug. Get it over with.
- ☐ **B** Put your hand out for a handshake or a wave instead — arm straight, before they reach you.
- ☐ **C** Say “I’m not a hugger, but it’s good to see you.”
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fastest in the moment. But if it’s a person you’ll see often, accepting it once teaches them it’s fine, and it gets harder to change later.
- B** Works because it’s physical, not verbal — the outstretched arm arrives before they do and most people redirect automatically. No explanation needed.
- C** Sets it for good. Some people will be briefly hurt; nearly all adjust within a couple of meetings. The people who don’t adjust are telling you something useful about themselves.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You are allowed to not be touched. That isn’t a preference you have to justify, and “I don’t like hugs” is a complete sentence. If saying it feels impossible right now, B does most of the same job silently.



You need to get past someone

WHERE
YOU ARE

A narrow corridor, an aisle, a doorway.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Someone is standing in the way, talking to somebody else. They haven't seen you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait until they move.
- ☐ **B** Say "excuse me" and wait for them to step aside.
- ☐ **C** Squeeze past without saying anything.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Safe, and sometimes right. But conversations can run long, and people who don't know you're there won't move.
- B** This is what "excuse me" is for. It's not an apology or an interruption — it's the standard signal. Two words, and people move without breaking their conversation.
- C** Works in a crowd where everyone's squeezing past everyone. In a quiet corridor it startles people, which then needs more repair than "excuse me" would have.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"Excuse me" is one of the few phrases in English that nobody ever finds rude. You can use it as often as you like.

You sit down, then realise it was someone's seat



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A classroom, a waiting room, a hall.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Someone comes back with a coat over the chair and a look on their face.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Get up straight away, say "sorry, didn't realise."
- ☐ **B** Get up without saying anything.
- ☐ **C** Say "there wasn't a coat on it" and stay.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends it in three seconds. Almost nobody stays annoyed after a quick "didn't realise."
- B** Also ends it, but leaves the other person unsure whether you're annoyed. Fine with strangers; a bit costly with people you'll see again.
- C** You might be completely right. It still turns a two-second thing into an argument, and people remember arguments longer than they remember seats.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"Sorry" here doesn't mean you did something wrong. In British English it's mostly a traffic signal meaning *no conflict intended*. You can use it without accepting blame.

Someone keeps looking at you

WHERE
YOU ARE

Anywhere public.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've noticed the same person glancing over. Twice. Maybe three times.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Ignore it and carry on.
- ☐ **B** Look back once, briefly, then look away.
- ☐ **C** Move somewhere else.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually correct, because most looking means nothing. Eyes move around a room and land on people at random.
- B** One brief look back tends to stop it. It reads as *I've noticed*, and most people then look away out of embarrassment.
- C** Always available. You never have to earn the right to move.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People are usually looking *near* you, not *at* you — at the clock, the door, the window behind your head. But if being looked at is making you feel unsafe rather than uncomfortable, that's different, and moving or telling an adult is the right call, not an overreaction.

Someone picks up your things



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A table, a desk, a shared space.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Somebody has picked up something of yours to look at it. They didn't ask.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing and wait for them to put it down.
- ☐ **B** Say "can I have that back, please" and hold your hand out.
- ☐ **C** Take it out of their hand.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs you nothing outwardly, but if it's something precious you'll be watching their hands the whole time, which is exhausting.
- B** Clear, quick, and rarely causes offence. The outstretched hand does most of the work — people hand things over almost automatically.
- C** You'll get it back fastest. It also reads as aggressive to onlookers who didn't see them pick it up, so you can end up looking like the one who started it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most people think picking something up to look at it is a compliment. They're not taking it. Knowing that doesn't mean you have to like it.

There's one seat left and it's next to a stranger



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

A bus, a train, a waiting room.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everywhere else is full. You'd rather stand, but it's a long journey.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stand anyway.
- ☐ **B** Sit down without saying anything.
- ☐ **C** Gesture at the seat and wait for them to nod before sitting.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine for a short trip. On a long one, standing to avoid a stranger costs more energy than sitting next to one.
- B** This is what almost everyone does. No permission required — an empty seat is an offer.
- C** Polite, and some people appreciate it, but it starts a small interaction where none was needed.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

On public transport, the rule is you don't have to acknowledge each other at all. Sitting next to someone in total silence for an hour is completely normal and nobody thinks anything of it.

Someone sits in your usual spot



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

The place you always sit. Same chair, same table, every time.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Today someone else is in it. It's not officially yours. It's yours.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Sit somewhere else, this once.
- ☐ **B** Say "I usually sit there — do you mind?"
- ☐ **C** Sit as near to it as you can get.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works if the room is otherwise fine. Doesn't work if the spot mattered for a reason — away from the door, out of the light, near the exit.
- B** Most people move, especially if you say it lightly. It helps to add the reason if there is one: "I sit there because of the noise from the corridor."
- C** A decent compromise, and nobody has to negotiate.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

If a spot matters for a sensory reason — light, noise, having your back to a wall — that's a real need, not a fuss. It's worth telling one adult in that room so it stops being a daily negotiation.

Someone walks with you when you wanted to walk alone



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Leaving school, leaving a session, walking to the bus.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Someone falls into step beside you and starts chatting. You were looking forward to the quiet.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Walk with them and talk.
- ☐ **B** Walk with them but keep answers short.
- ☐ **C** Say “I’m going to head off on my own today — see you tomorrow.”
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine occasionally. If the walk is the only quiet part of your day, giving it away every day adds up.
- B** Most people read short answers and drift off, but not all — some read it as you being in a mood, which can come back later.
- C** Blunt, and it works. Adding “see you tomorrow” is the bit that stops it sounding like rejection. That five-word ending does more work than the whole rest of the sentence.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Wanting to be alone after a long day isn’t a problem with the friendship. Saying so directly protects the friendship better than avoiding them does.



An animal comes over to you

WHERE
YOU ARE

Someone's house, a park, a session.

WHAT
HAPPENS

A dog — or a cat, or somebody's pet — walks straight up to you and stops.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay still and let it decide what to do.
- ☐ **B** Ask the owner "can I stroke him?"
- ☐ **C** Move away.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often the best thing for the animal, too. Standing still and letting an animal approach is what handlers do.
- B** Always the right question, and owners like being asked. It also gives you the answer to *where* — some animals are fine on the shoulder and not on the head.
- C** Completely allowed. You never have to interact with an animal you're not comfortable with, and no explanation is owed.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Animals are easier than people for a lot of us, because they mean exactly what they do. There's no hidden second meaning in a dog's face. If you find animals restful and people tiring, that's a known thing, not a fault.

Someone keeps bumping into you on a busy bus



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Standing, holding the rail, no space anywhere.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Every time the bus turns, the person next to you knocks into your arm.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Put up with it until your stop.
- ☐ **B** Shift your grip and turn your shoulder away from them.
- ☐ **C** Say “sorry, could I have a bit more room?”
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Survivable, and sometimes the only option. Expect to be tired afterwards — repeated unexpected touch takes more out of you than people realise.
- B** Small physical adjustments solve most of this without a word. Turning your shoulder changes the contact point from arm-to-arm to back-to-arm, which is far less intense for most people.
- C** Reasonable, and usually met with an apology. It only works if there’s room to give.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

On a packed bus, contact isn’t personal and isn’t controllable. If busy transport regularly wrecks your day, that’s worth naming to whoever plans your journeys — travelling twenty minutes earlier is a real solution, not an avoidance.

You're in a lift with one other person



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Doors closed. Six floors.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Neither of you has said anything and the silence has weight.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing. Watch the numbers.
- ☐ **B** Say “which floor?” and press it for them.
- ☐ **C** Comment on something — the weather, the lift being slow.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The default everywhere. Lift silence is expected and nobody finds it rude.
- B** A small, useful thing that isn't really conversation. It fills the moment and then ends cleanly.
- C** Opens something you'll have to carry for six floors. Fine if you want to; unnecessary if you don't.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Watching the floor numbers is what the numbers are for.
Everyone does it for the same reason you do.

Someone's perfume or aftershave is overwhelming



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Sitting near them, for a while.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's strong enough that you can taste it. It's giving you a headache.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Put up with it.
- ☐ **B** Move seats.
- ☐ **C** Ask an adult if you can sit somewhere else.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Possible for a short time. Over an hour it will take the rest of your day with it.
- B** If moving is allowed where you are, this needs no explanation at all. People change seats constantly.
- C** Needed where seats are fixed. Giving the reason helps — “the perfume is making me feel sick” is concrete and hard to argue with.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Smell is the sense people take least seriously in others and most seriously in themselves. Telling the person directly rarely goes well; moving away from it almost always does.

Someone's bag is on the seat you need



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A bus or a waiting room. One free seat, occupied by a rucksack.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've seen you. The bag hasn't moved.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stand.
- ☐ **B** Look at the bag, then at them, and wait.
- ☐ **C** Say "is anyone sitting here?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs you the seat. Reasonable if it's one stop.
- B** Often enough on its own. Most bag-owners move it the moment they realise somebody's waiting, because they were on autopilot rather than defending it.
- C** The standard phrase, and it works even though everyone knows nobody is sitting there. It gives them a way to move the bag without admitting anything.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"Is anyone sitting here?" isn't a real question. It's a polite formula that means *please move your bag*, and it's designed so neither of you has to say that.

You have to share a table with strangers



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A café, a canteen, a library. No empty tables.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You need to sit at a table where somebody's already sitting.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait for a table to free up.
- ☐ **B** Ask "do you mind if I sit here?"
- ☐ **C** Sit at the far end without asking.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes quick, sometimes never.
- B** Always works. Nobody says no. It also settles the question so you're not wondering for the next twenty minutes.
- C** Fine in a busy canteen where it's obviously shared. In a quiet café it can feel abrupt to the person already there.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Sharing a table doesn't come with a conversation attached. You can sit two feet from somebody for an hour and never speak, and that's the normal outcome.

Someone takes a photo and you're in it



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group, an event, a session.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The camera's out. You're in the frame.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay where you are.
- ☐ **B** Step out of the shot.
- ☐ **C** Say "I'd rather not be in photos."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine if you don't mind. Worth knowing where the photo goes afterwards, though.
- B** Silent, quick, and complete. Stepping sideways out of frame is normal and mostly unnoticed.
- C** Sets it permanently, and reasonable adults will respect it. If the photo is going online, this is the moment to say so — much easier than asking for it to come down later.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You have a say in photographs of you. Where you're under 18, a school or an organisation should have a permission form covering it — and you're allowed to ask what was ticked on yours.

Someone stands behind you while you're working



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

At a desk, a screen, a table.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're reading over your shoulder. You've stopped being able to think.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Carry on and hope they move.
- ☐ **B** Turn round and ask if they need something.
- ☐ **C** Say "I can't work with someone behind me — do you mind?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** They usually do move, eventually. Meanwhile you produce very little.
- B** Turning round breaks the position and most people step back automatically. It also gets you the reason, which might be that they were waiting to talk to you.
- C** Direct and rarely taken badly. Plenty of people feel the same and just don't say it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being watched genuinely changes how well people perform a task. It isn't oversensitivity — it's a well-known effect, and asking for space is asking to do your work properly.

The room's too loud and you can't leave yet



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

An assembly, a party, a hall.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The noise has stopped being background. You can feel it in your teeth.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Hold on until it ends.
- ☐ **B** Move to the edge, the back, or near a door.
- ☐ **C** Use ear defenders, headphones or earplugs if you have them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** You may get through it. The cost usually shows up an hour or two later.
- B** Edges and doorways are quieter and give you an exit route, which helps even if you never use it.
- C** The direct fix. The barrier is usually worrying about being looked at — which lasts a few seconds, against a noise that lasts an hour.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Knowing you *could* leave makes staying easier. If nobody has told you where the exit is or whether you're allowed to use it, that's a fair thing to ask an adult before the event, not during it.

Someone offers you their seat and you don't need it



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

A bus, a train.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Somebody stands up and gestures at their seat, and you're fine standing.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Take it anyway.
- ☐ **B** Say "no thanks, I'm getting off soon."
- ☐ **C** Say "I'm fine, thanks."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easiest. Costs you nothing and makes the other person feel their offer landed.
- B** A reason makes refusing smoother, and it doesn't have to be true in detail.
- C** Complete and polite. Some people offer again once; "honestly, I'm fine" ends it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Refusing an offer is not rejecting the person. Most offers are made quickly and forgotten just as quickly.



PART TWO

Starting, Joining and Leaving Conversations

SCENARIOS 2.1 – 2.20

Someone interrupts you

WHERE
YOU ARE

Mid-sentence. You'd got about halfway.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They start talking over you, and the conversation moves on without the rest of your point.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go. Say the point later, or not at all.
- ☐ **B** Wait for the next gap and say "can I just finish what I was saying?"
- ☐ **C** Keep talking at the same volume until they stop.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Lowest cost right now. If it keeps happening with the same person, they learn that interrupting you works, and it gets more frequent, not less.
- B** The reliable one. Said flatly, without irritation, it almost always gets you the floor back — most interrupters didn't notice they'd done it and are mildly embarrassed.
- C** Sometimes works. In a group it usually means two people talking at once, and whoever stops first loses the point anyway.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

In a lot of groups, interrupting isn't rudeness — it's how people show they're interested, and they expect to be interrupted back. It's an overlapping style rather than a turn-taking one. That doesn't mean you have to join in. It means the interruption probably wasn't about you.

TRY IT

Next time, count to two before you decide whether it was an interruption or an excited overlap. The two seconds change what you do next.

You want to join a conversation that's already going



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Standing near a group. They're mid-topic and you know something about it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

There's no obvious way in. Every time you think of something, they've moved on.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stand nearby and listen without joining.
- ☐ **B** Wait for a laugh or a pause, then add one sentence.
- ☐ **C** Ask a question about what they're discussing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** More acceptable than people think. Standing at the edge of a group listening is a recognised position and most groups treat you as part of it after a while.
- B** The standard route. Laughter is the widest door — the group is already loose at that moment and an addition doesn't cut across anyone.
- C** Easier than a statement, because a question invites an answer and you don't have to carry it. "How did that happen?" works on almost any topic.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You don't have to be greeted to be in a group. Nobody is going to formally admit you. Standing there long enough is, socially, joining.

You want to leave a conversation that won't end



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Cornered, politely, by someone who's still going.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've been trying to leave for five minutes and every ending they start turns into a new beginning.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait it out.
- ☐ **B** Say "I'd better get on — see you later" and start moving as you say it.
- ☐ **C** Give a reason: "I need to catch the bus / find my mum / get to the next thing."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Some conversations genuinely never end on their own. You can lose an entire break this way.
- B** The movement is the part that works, not the words. People finish conversations when the other person turns their body. Standing still while saying goodbye invites another topic.
- C** A reason makes it easier for both of you, and it doesn't have to be a big one. "I need to get on" is a complete reason.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Ending a conversation isn't rejection and nearly everybody wants the exit at roughly the same time. The person still talking is often waiting for you to go first.

Someone asks “how are you?” and you don’t know how much to say



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

A corridor, a doorway, the start of anything.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They’ve asked. You’ve had a terrible morning. They’re already half past you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say “fine, thanks” and move on.
- ☐ **B** Say “not great, actually” and see what they do.
- ☐ **C** Tell them what actually happened.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Right nearly every time. In passing, “how are you?” is a greeting, not a question — the honest translation is “hello, I’ve seen you.”
- B** Four words, and it works as a test. If they stop walking, they meant the question. If they say “oh no, anyway —”, they didn’t, and you’ve lost nothing.
- C** Right with the small number of people who actually asked. Wrong in a corridor with someone heading somewhere, because they’ll be trapped and you’ll both feel it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

How to tell the difference — did they stop moving? A person who has stopped walking and turned towards you is asking. A person still walking is greeting you.

You run out of things to say

WHERE
YOU ARE

A one-to-one conversation that was going fine.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've said everything you had. The silence is growing.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let the silence sit.
- ☐ **B** Ask them something about themselves.
- ☐ **C** End the conversation.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Silence is far less awkward for the other person than it feels for you. Comfortable pauses are a normal part of talking, especially with people who know each other.
- B** The reliable rescue. People rarely run out of things to say about themselves, and a question hands the work over.
- C** Absolutely allowed. Conversations are supposed to end. Ending one at a natural stopping point is skill, not failure.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Running out isn't a sign the conversation went badly. Long conversations are made of several short ones with gaps between them — the gap is where the next one starts.

THREE
QUESTIONS TO
KEEP IN YOUR
POCKET

Someone says your name and you didn't hear the rest



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

A noisy room, or you were concentrating.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You caught your name and nothing after it. They're waiting.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "yes" and hope.
- ☐ **B** Say "sorry, say that again?"
- ☐ **C** Say "I heard my name but not the rest."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Occasionally fine. Often lands you agreeing to something, and unagreeing later is much harder than asking now.
- B** Universal, costs nothing, works everywhere. Nobody has ever thought badly of somebody for asking this.
- C** Slightly better than B when the room is loud, because it tells them the problem is noise and they'll repeat it louder rather than differently.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Hearing your name and nothing else is a specific, extremely common thing — your brain flags the name and drops the sentence around it. Everyone does it. It isn't inattention.

Two people are talking at once and you can't follow either



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group, a car, a dinner table.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Two conversations have started in the same space and both are aimed partly at you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Pick one and follow it.
- ☐ **B** Say “hang on — one at a time, I can’t do both.”
- ☐ **C** Stop trying to follow either and wait for it to resolve.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works if you can pick. The person you didn’t pick may notice, though usually they don’t.
- B** Direct, and people almost always comply — most of them can’t follow both either and are relieved someone said it.
- C** Cheapest in energy. These situations usually resolve themselves within a minute because one conversation wins.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Filtering one voice out of two is a processing job that some brains do automatically and some don’t. If you can’t, that’s an auditory processing difference, not rudeness or drifting off — and it’s worth naming to the people you’re regularly in rooms with.

You've told them this story before



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Halfway through. You've just seen their face.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've heard it. Possibly twice.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Finish it anyway.
- ☐ **B** Say "I've told you this, haven't I" and laugh.
- ☐ **C** Stop and change the subject.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually completely fine. People retell stories constantly and mostly don't notice they're doing it, including the person listening to you.
- B** Ends the awkward feeling instantly and often gets "yeah but tell it again" — which is a genuine answer, not politeness.
- C** Stopping mid-story is more noticeable than finishing it, and can leave them wondering what they did.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Repeating a story to the same person is one of the most normal things people do. It's a sign of being comfortable with them.

Someone changes the subject and you weren't finished



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A conversation that's just swerved.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You had more to say. The topic has gone.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go.
- ☐ **B** Say "before we move on — I hadn't finished that bit."
- ☐ **C** Come back to it later in the conversation.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine for most things. If the point mattered to you, letting it go repeatedly builds up into feeling unheard, which surfaces later as something bigger.
- B** Works, and reads as engaged rather than awkward, as long as it's said without irritation.
- C** Often the smoothest — "going back to what I was saying about the trip" is a normal move and people follow it easily.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Subject changes are usually accidents, not dismissals. Somebody's brain jumped and they went with it. It rarely means your topic was unwanted.

You need to talk to someone who's busy



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A staff room door, a kitchen, a desk.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're in the middle of something. What you need isn't urgent, but it isn't nothing.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait until they look free.
- ☐ **B** Ask "have you got two minutes, or shall I come back?"
- ☐ **C** Just start talking.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Some people never look free. You can wait a whole day.
- B** The best sentence in this book, near enough. It offers them the exit, which makes people far more likely to say yes right now. It also tells them how long it'll take.
- C** Works with some people and irritates others, and you can't tell which from the outside.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Giving somebody a way to say "not now" is what makes them say "go on then." Requests with an exit built in get agreed to more often than requests without one.

Someone asks you a question in front of a group



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A classroom, a meeting, a circle.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone's looking. You need a moment to think and you haven't got one.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say the first thing that comes.
- ☐ **B** Say "can I have a second?" or "can you come back to me?"
- ☐ **C** Say "I don't know."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Gets it over with. Often produces an answer you'd not have given with ten more seconds.
- B** Almost always granted, and it reads as thoughtful rather than stuck. "Come back to me" is a standard adult move in meetings — it isn't a child's excuse.
- C** A complete and honest answer. It ends the attention faster than anything else, and no reasonable adult should push past it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Needing longer to process a question is about processing speed, not about knowing the answer. They're separate things, and the gap between them is where a lot of people get underestimated.

You want to talk about your interest and you're not sure they do



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

With someone you like.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've got a lot to say about the thing. You've been told before that you go on about it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing about it.
- ☐ **B** Say a bit and watch what they do.
- ☐ **C** Ask "do you want the long version or the short version?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Safe, and lonely. Never talking about the thing you care about most is a real cost, and it's the cost that's usually invisible to everyone else.
- B** Watch for questions. A person asking questions wants more. A person saying "mm" and nodding is being polite.
- C** Excellent, and slightly unusual, which is why it works — most people find it funny and pick long.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People who love you generally like watching you be enthusiastic, even about things they don't care about. Enthusiasm is likeable in itself. The right audience matters more than the right length.

WHO GETS THE
LONG VERSION?

They keep saying “mm” and looking away



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Mid-conversation.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The responses have got shorter. They're looking past you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Carry on.
- ☐ **B** Stop and ask them something.
- ☐ **C** Wind it up and leave it there.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes right — they may be tired, or distracted by something behind you that has nothing to do with you.
- B** Turning it back to them resets the conversation and usually revives it. It also tells you which of the two things was happening.
- C** Never a wasted move. Ending a conversation slightly early costs almost nothing; ending it much too late costs more.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

“Mm” plus looking away is the main way people signal they're done without saying it. It's worth learning as a signal — not because you must always obey it, but because reading it puts you back in control of when things end.

You said something and nobody responded

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. You spoke. Nothing.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The conversation carried on as if you hadn't.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Leave it. Don't repeat it.
- ☐ **B** Say it again, louder, at the next gap.
- ☐ **C** Say it to one person instead of the whole group.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Cheapest, and this happens to everyone in groups constantly. Contributions get lost in noise, not rejected.
- B** Sometimes works. Occasionally lands badly because the moment has moved and it now sounds out of place.
- C** The best of the three. One person will always respond, and if what you said was good they'll often bring it back to the group for you.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

In groups of four or more, plenty of things get said that nobody picks up. Watch for it happening to other people — once you see how often it does, it stops feeling personal.

Someone talks to you while you've got headphones on



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Anywhere. Headphones in for a reason.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've started talking. You've heard about a third of it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Take them out and ask them to repeat it.
- ☐ **B** Take one out and answer.
- ☐ **C** Point at the headphones and shake your head.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Standard and expected. Nobody minds being asked to repeat something when headphones come out.
- B** Most common. Keeps some of the sound protection while you deal with it.
- C** Clear and wordless. Fine with strangers. With people you know it can read as dismissive unless you follow it with something.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

If headphones are managing noise for you rather than playing music, it's worth telling the people around you once. Most people read headphones as "not interested" rather than "coping," and one sentence fixes that permanently.

You have to make a phone call

WHERE
YOU ARE

Holding the phone. Not dialling.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You need to book, ask or cancel something, and there's no way to do it in writing.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Put it off.
- ☐ **B** Write down the first sentence, then ring.
- ☐ **C** Ask somebody else to make it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The thing gets worse and the call gets harder. Putting off a call reliably makes the call longer when you finally make it.
- B** The first sentence is the whole barrier. Once it's said, the other person takes over and asks you questions, which is much easier than starting.
- C** Allowed. Some calls should be made by somebody else, and there's no age at which asking becomes shameful.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Phone calls are harder than face-to-face for a lot of people because there's no face and no gap — you can't see whether they've finished. That's a real structural difficulty, not nerves.

MY OPENING
LINE

You need to say hello to someone you half-know



WHERE
YOU ARE

Passing them in the street or the corridor.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've met twice. You're not sure they'd remember you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Look away and keep walking.
- ☐ **B** Nod.
- ☐ **C** Say "hi" or "alright?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine, and about half of everyone does this. It costs nothing unless they saw you see them.
- B** The perfect low-cost option. A nod is deniable, requires no words, and satisfies almost every version of this situation.
- C** Slightly more, and it commits you to nothing beyond one word — passing greetings don't require stopping.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Nobody is keeping score of greetings. If you get it wrong in either direction, the other person has forgotten within about four seconds.

You can't remember their name



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Face to face with somebody who clearly knows you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nothing. Complete blank.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Get through the conversation without using a name.
- ☐ **B** Say "I'm so sorry — remind me of your name?"
- ☐ **C** Introduce someone else to them and hope they say it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually achievable, because names come up less often than you'd think. Falls apart if you have to introduce them to somebody.
- B** Universally forgiven and forgotten. The longer you leave it, the more awkward it gets — asking in minute one is nothing, asking in month three is a thing.
- C** The classic dodge. Works about half the time and fails visibly the other half.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Names are stored differently from faces, which is why you can remember everything about a person except what they're called. It says nothing about how much you care about them.

Someone waves and you're not sure it was at you



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Across a room, a street, a car park.

WHAT
HAPPENS

A hand went up. There are other people around.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Don't wave. Carry on.
- ☐ **B** Small wave.
- ☐ **C** Wait a second to see who they're looking at.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** If it was for you, they'll assume you didn't see. No real damage.
- B** A small wave works either way. If it wasn't for you, they'll think it was for someone else and you'll never hear about it. The size is what makes it safe.
- C** Buys information. Waves last about two seconds, so you often run out of time.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Waving at the wrong person is one of those things that feels enormous and is forgotten by everybody else immediately. It happens to everyone, several times a year.

There's a gap in the conversation and nobody's filling it



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Two or three of you. It's gone quiet.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The silence has lasted long enough for you to notice it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it run.
- ☐ **B** Say something about where you are — the weather, the room, the wait.
- ☐ **C** Look at your phone.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Comfortable silence exists and is a good sign in a friendship. It's more common than the panic suggests.
- B** This is what small talk is actually for. Commenting on the shared surroundings is the lowest-risk topic there is, because you both already have the information.
- C** Ends the pressure and also ends the conversation, which is sometimes exactly what you want.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Silences feel roughly three times longer to the person worrying about them than to anyone else in the room.



PART THREE

When You Don't Understand

SCENARIOS 3.1 – 3.20

You don't understand what someone means



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Any conversation. They've said something and stopped, and are looking at you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You heard the words. You don't know what they wanted.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Nod and hope it becomes clear.
- ☐ **B** Say "sorry, what do you mean?"
- ☐ **C** Say back what you think they meant: "do you mean you want me to go first?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes it does become clear. When it doesn't, you end up two or three steps into something you didn't agree to, and unpicking it later is much harder than asking now.
- B** Works, and costs almost nothing. Nobody thinks less of a person who asks. The problem is that some people just repeat the same sentence louder.
- C** The strongest one. Guessing out loud gives them something to correct, which is easier for them than explaining from scratch. Even a wrong guess speeds things up.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People are often unclear because they're being polite. "Are you busy on Saturday?" usually means "I want to ask you to do something on Saturday." Hinting is meant to be kind — it gives the other person a way to say no without saying no. It just doesn't work if you can't hear the hint, and you are allowed to ask for the actual question.

TRY IT

Pick one hint you've noticed before and write what it probably meant: *They said: They probably meant:*

Someone hints instead of asking



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A conversation with something underneath it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

"It's quite cold in here, isn't it." "Are you doing anything Saturday?" They want something and haven't said what.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Answer the words as spoken.
- ☐ **B** Guess the request and say it back: "do you want me to shut the window?"
- ☐ **C** Say "is there something you want to ask me?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Completely reasonable, and sometimes it ends there. Occasionally somebody gets annoyed at you for not picking it up, which is unfair but does happen.
- B** The most useful skill in this whole part. Guessing out loud is quick and lets them correct you.
- C** Direct, and it works with people who know you. With people who don't, it can feel confrontational, because they were hinting precisely to avoid asking.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Hints exist so nobody has to be refused out loud. "Are you busy Saturday?" lets you say "yes" without ever hearing the invitation. It's meant kindly. It just doesn't work if the hint is invisible to you — and asking for the real question is allowed.

You've been asked to do something and don't know where to start



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Task given. Everyone else has begun.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You understood every word and still can't see the first move.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Start anything and adjust.
- ☐ **B** Ask "what's the first step?"
- ☐ **C** Watch what somebody else does first.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes unsticks you. Sometimes produces work you have to undo.
- B** A better question than "I don't understand," because it's specific and gets a specific answer. Most adults answer it happily.
- C** Copying the first move is a legitimate strategy, not cheating, and it's what most people are quietly doing anyway.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Knowing what to do and knowing how to begin are two different problems. Starting is its own separate difficulty — naming it as "I can't find the first step" gets you far better help than saying you don't understand.

Someone says “you know what I mean” and you don’t



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Mid-explanation. They’ve stopped, expecting agreement.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You don’t know what they mean.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Nod.
- ☐ **B** Say “not really — say a bit more?”
- ☐ **C** Say back the bit you did follow, and stop there.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fast. It also means the rest of the conversation is built on something you didn’t get.
- B** Almost always fine. People who say “you know what I mean” usually can explain; they were being efficient, not secretive.
- C** The strongest. Showing where you got to tells them exactly where to pick up, which is much less work for them than starting again.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

“You know what I mean” is mostly a verbal tic. Half the time the speaker isn’t sure what they mean either.

The instructions were spoken and you've lost half of them



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Three-part instruction. You have part one.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone's started. You're still on the first bit.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Do the part you remember.
- ☐ **B** Ask for it again.
- ☐ **C** Ask for it in writing, or write it down as they say it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Gets you moving and you may pick up the rest by watching.
- B** Works once. Asking repeatedly, every time, wears thin with some adults — which is why C exists.
- C** The permanent fix. Verbal instructions vanish; written ones stay put and can be checked as many times as you like without asking anyone.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Holding several spoken steps in your head at once is working memory, and it varies enormously between people. If yours drops the third instruction every time, that's a known, common difference — and having instructions written down is a standard adjustment, not a favour.

Someone says “it’s fine” and you can’t tell if it is

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

After something happened.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They’ve said it’s fine. Their face isn’t doing “fine.”

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Take it at face value.
- ☐ **B** Say “are you sure? I don’t mind talking about it.”
- ☐ **C** Leave it now and check tomorrow.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes exactly right — plenty of people say “it’s fine” and mean it. If they didn’t, though, this can become the thing that’s brought up weeks later.
- B** One check is generous. Two checks turns into pressure, and people who wanted it dropped will now have to reassure you as well.
- C** Often the best. Time changes what people are willing to say, and coming back to it later shows you didn’t just forget.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You are not expected to decode this reliably. Nobody can. The people who look like they can are guessing too, and getting it wrong regularly.

You've asked twice already

WHERE
YOU ARE

Still stuck, and now embarrassed about it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Asking a third time feels impossible.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Give up and guess.
- ☐ **B** Ask again, differently: "I've got this bit — it's the next part I've lost."
- ☐ **C** Ask a different person.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Guessing costs more than asking, nearly always. Redoing work is worse than one awkward question.
- B** Changing the question is what unsticks it. Two identical answers didn't work; a more specific question gets a more specific answer.
- C** Frequently the fastest route. Different people explain differently and the second explanation often lands where the first didn't.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Asking three times isn't a sign you're slow. Two of the three explanations probably weren't very good.

Someone uses a word you don't know



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Any conversation.

WHAT
HAPPENS

One word in the sentence is a blank.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Work it out from the rest.
- ☐ **B** Ask what it means.
- ☐ **C** Look it up afterwards.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works most of the time. Context carries most words.
- B** Perfectly normal and takes three seconds. Adults do it to each other constantly in meetings.
- C** Fine, and it means you'll have it next time. The risk is forgetting to.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Nobody knows all the words. Asking looks like interest, not ignorance.

You're not sure if it was a question or a statement



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

They've said something. Their voice didn't go up at the end.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You don't know whether you're supposed to answer.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing and wait.
- ☐ **B** Say "sorry — was that a question?"
- ☐ **C** Answer it as if it was.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** If it was a question, the silence gets awkward and they'll repeat it. No real damage.
- B** Direct and slightly unusual, which makes it memorable rather than rude. Most people find it fair.
- C** Costs nothing if you're wrong — you've just added a comment. This is usually the smoothest option.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

English marks questions mainly with tone, and tone is exactly the bit that gets lost when someone's tired, distracted or on a phone. This is a flaw in the language, not in you.

You've misread the situation and just realised



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somewhere in the middle of it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You thought it was one thing. It was another.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing and adjust quietly.
- ☐ **B** Say "I've got the wrong end of this — can we go back a step?"
- ☐ **C** Carry on as planned.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually possible and usually unnoticed. Most misreadings are smaller from the outside than from the inside.
- B** Costs a moment of awkwardness and saves everything after it. People generally respect this more than they judge it.
- C** The most expensive option, because the gap between what you're doing and what's happening keeps growing.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Noticing you've misread something is a skill. Plenty of people never notice at all.

Someone answers a different question to the one you asked



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

You asked something specific. You've been given something else.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They think they've answered you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it and work it out yourself.
- ☐ **B** Ask again, narrower: "sorry — I meant specifically what time?"
- ☐ **C** Assume the answer they gave is the one that matters.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Leaves you where you started.
- B** Narrowing works. "Specifically" and "just to check" are the two most useful words for this.
- C** Sometimes true — people occasionally answer the question you should have asked. Sometimes it isn't, and you find out later.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People often answer the question they expected rather than the one you asked, because they're half-listening. It isn't evasion.

You don't know if you're invited



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Something's happening. It's been mentioned near you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nobody has said whether you're included.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Assume not, and stay away.
- ☐ **B** Ask "am I coming to that?"
- ☐ **C** Turn up.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Safe from embarrassment. It's also how people end up excluded from things they were welcome at, repeatedly, for years.
- B** Five words, and it settles it. Asked plainly it doesn't sound needy — it sounds organised.
- C** Sometimes completely fine, especially with a group who assume everyone's in. Sometimes not, and it's the version that hurts most if it goes wrong.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Group invitations are often genuinely vague — nobody decided you weren't coming, because nobody decided anything. Asking converts a guess into a fact.

The rules of the game keep changing



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Playing something with other people.

WHAT
HAPPENS

What was allowed a minute ago isn't now.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Go along with it.
- ☐ **B** Ask what the rules are now.
- ☐ **C** Say the rules changed and ask why.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Keeps the game going. If the changes always go against you, this is worth noticing.
- B** Neutral and gets information without accusing anyone.
- C** Fair to say, and it depends heavily on who you're with. Some groups will sort it out; some will call you a bad sport for asking.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Lots of children's games have no fixed rules and are improvised as they go — for some people that's the fun part, and for others it makes the game unplayable. Both of those are real. It's fine to prefer games with written rules.

Someone says “whenever you’re ready” and you don’t know when that is



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Waiting for an instruction that hasn’t come.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They’ve handed you the timing and you don’t know what they want.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Start now.
- ☐ **B** Ask “do you mean now, or have I got a few minutes?”
- ☐ **C** Wait for a clearer instruction.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Right about eighty per cent of the time. “Whenever you’re ready” usually means now, said politely.
- B** Removes the guess entirely and takes one sentence.
- C** The clearer instruction may never arrive, and waiting can read as refusing.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

English is full of these — “when you get a chance,” “no rush,” “at some point.” Nearly all of them mean *soon*, softened. Ask for the actual deadline and most people will give it.

You can't tell if they're annoyed



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

With somebody whose face you can't read.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Something's different. You don't know if it's you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Carry on as normal.
- ☐ **B** Ask "are you annoyed with me?"
- ☐ **C** Ask somebody else what they think.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often correct, because most of the time it isn't about you. People carry moods in from elsewhere.
- B** Direct and usually answered honestly. The risk is asking it repeatedly, which becomes its own pressure on the other person.
- C** Useful once. It also spreads the question round, which can make a small thing into a bigger one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Reading faces is unreliable for everyone — people are wrong about each other's emotions constantly. Asking is more accurate than looking, and it's not a weakness that you have to.

Someone says “we should meet up” and nothing happens



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

End of a conversation.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They said it warmly. Weeks have passed.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Leave it. They’d have got in touch.
- ☐ **B** Message them with an actual date.
- ☐ **C** Ask if they meant it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Nothing happens. This is how most “we should meet up” ends.
- B** The thing that turns it real. A specific date is much easier to answer than a vague suggestion, and it doesn’t put anyone on the spot about whether they meant it.
- C** Puts them in an awkward position, and you’ll probably get “of course!” regardless.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

“We should meet up” is usually sincere and never a plan. It’s a friendly way to end a conversation. Somebody has to convert it into a date, and it might as well be you.

You've been given a choice and you don't know which is the real option



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

An adult has offered you two things.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You suspect one of them isn't actually allowed.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Pick the one you think they want.
- ☐ **B** Pick what you actually want and see.
- ☐ **C** Ask "is that a real choice, or do you need me to do the first one?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Keeps things smooth. It also means you never get what you'd have chosen.
- B** Sometimes gets you it. Sometimes gets you a no you could have avoided.
- C** Direct and honest, and most adults respect it. Some fake choices are habits rather than tricks, and being asked makes people notice they're doing it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Adults offer fake choices a lot — "would you like to put your coat on now or in a minute?" It's meant to give a feeling of control, not to deceive. Asking which kind it is is completely fair.

Their tone doesn't match their words



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

They've said something nice in a way that didn't sound nice.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The words and the voice are pointing in different directions.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Go with the words.
- ☐ **B** Go with the tone.
- ☐ **C** Ask: "I can't tell how you meant that."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Defensible, and it keeps things calm. If they meant it unkindly, they'll usually escalate until it's clear.
- B** Risky, because tone is the least reliable signal there is — tiredness, accent and phone speakers all distort it.
- C** The honest one, and it works far more often than people expect. Most decent people clarify immediately.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

When words and tone disagree, most people believe the tone. That's the general rule — but it's a rule with a high error rate, which is why asking beats guessing.

You've been told off and you don't know what for

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

In it. Already happening.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've got the anger and not the reason.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Apologise and work it out afterwards.
- ☐ **B** Ask "what did I do?"
- ☐ **C** Say nothing until it's over, then ask.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends it fastest. It also means agreeing to something you might not have done.
- B** Reasonable, though in the moment some adults hear it as arguing. Tone matters more here than anywhere else in this book.
- C** Often the best. Asking calmly afterwards — "can you tell me what I did, so I don't do it again?" — gets a much better answer than asking during.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You cannot change a behaviour that hasn't been named. Asking for the specific thing isn't cheek — it's the only way the telling-off does any good, and a fair adult will recognise that.

The plan changed and nobody told you

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somewhere that isn't what you were expecting.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone else seems to know. You had the old version.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

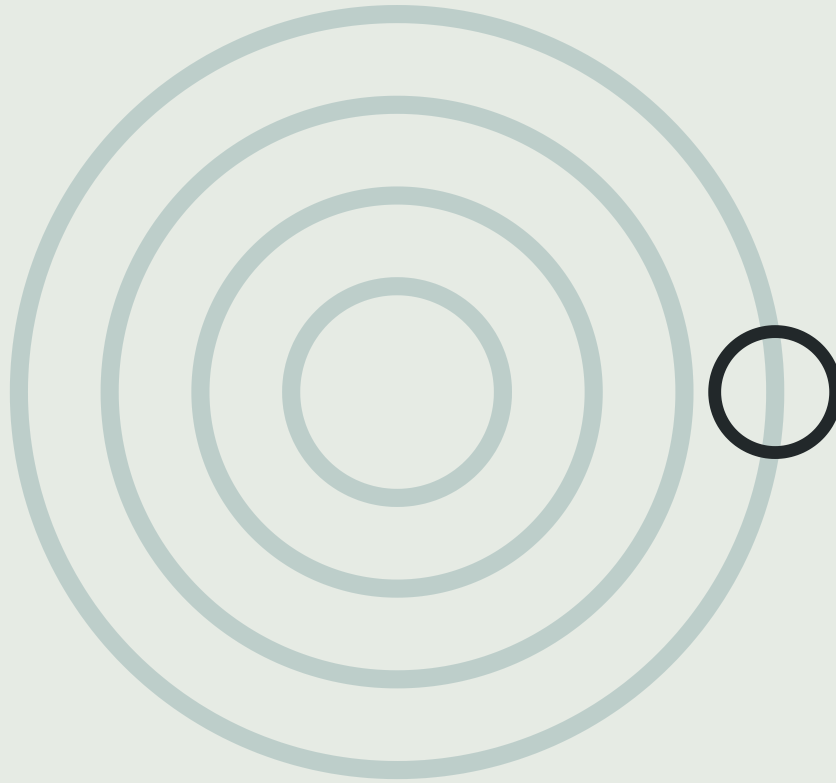
- ☐ **A** Follow everyone else and catch up.
- ☐ **B** Ask one person what's happening now.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult you didn't know and need a minute.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Gets you through. It can be very hard if you'd built the day around the old plan.
- B** Fastest information, and asking one person is much easier than asking the room.
- C** Legitimate. Sudden change is harder for some people than others, and a minute to re-set is a small ask compared to what happens without it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Unexpected change is one of the most common causes of a bad day, and it's almost always preventable by somebody telling you earlier. If it keeps happening in the same place, that's worth raising with an adult as a pattern, not as a one-off complaint.



PART FOUR

Jokes, Teasing and Sarcasm

SCENARIOS 4.1 – 4.20

Someone makes a joke you don't understand



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. Everyone else has laughed.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You didn't get it. There's about a second and a half before the moment passes.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Laugh along.
- ☐ **B** Say nothing and let it pass.
- ☐ **C** Say "I didn't get that one — what was funny?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Gets you through the second. It's also the most tiring option, because you have to keep tracking a conversation you've lost the thread of, and it can go badly wrong if the joke turns out to be about you or about someone you like.
- B** Nobody notices. Not laughing at one joke in a group is invisible — people are watching whoever told it, not you.
- C** Riskier and often better. Some people are delighted to explain. Some say "never mind," which stings. Who you're with decides which you get.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

A lot of group laughter isn't about the joke at all — people laugh to show they're part of the group, and plenty of them didn't get it either. And explained jokes stop being funny for everyone, which is why "never mind" happens. It's rarely a snub.

WORTH
KNOWING

If someone repeatedly makes jokes you don't understand and then enjoys your confusion, that's not humour. That's Part 12.

You take something literally and everyone laughs



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. Somebody said something and you answered it as written.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The laugh isn't cruel, exactly, but it's at you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Laugh too.
- ☐ **B** Say "oh — I thought you meant it."
- ☐ **C** Say nothing and let it pass.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends it quickest. Costs nothing if you actually find it funny; costs something if you don't and do it anyway.
- B** Honest and defuses it. It also quietly tells the group how you process language, which helps next time.
- C** The moment passes in about four seconds either way.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Literal interpretation is a reasonable response to a language full of things that aren't meant literally. The mistake is in the sentence, not in you.

Someone's being sarcastic and you answered seriously



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Just after it happened.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They said the opposite of what they meant. You answered the words.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Correct yourself out loud.
- ☐ **B** Carry on as if nothing happened.
- ☐ **C** Say "you were being sarcastic, weren't you."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine, though it draws more attention than the original moment did.
- B** Most of the time nobody's still thinking about it.
- C** Direct and often gets a friendly answer. With people you're comfortable with it becomes a running joke rather than a problem.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Sarcasm depends on tone plus knowing the person well. Missing it with somebody you've just met is normal for everybody. Missing it with a friend usually just means they said it flatly.

You make a joke and nobody laughs



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

You said it. Silence.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The conversation continues around it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Move on immediately.
- ☐ **B** Explain the joke.
- ☐ **C** Acknowledge it: "no? fair enough."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** By far the most common and least painful. Jokes fail constantly and get forgotten in seconds.
- B** This is the one that hurts. An explained joke gets a sympathy laugh at best and extends the moment at worst.
- C** Turns the failure into a smaller joke. It usually gets a laugh, which is a slightly unfair mechanism but a real one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Professional comedians fail most of the time. The rate at which jokes land is low for everyone, and the only person keeping track is you.

The joke is about you and you can't tell if it's friendly

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. Your name was in it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

People laughed. You don't know which kind of laugh it was.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Laugh along and decide later.
- ☐ **B** Say "was that a dig?"
- ☐ **C** Say nothing and watch what they do next.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Buys time, which is genuinely useful — you can think about it tonight instead of now.
- B** Direct. With a friend it gets an honest answer. With somebody unkind it gets "can't you take a joke," which is itself the answer.
- C** Watching is the best test. Friendly teasing goes both ways and moves on. Unfriendly teasing repeats, targets the same thing, and only ever goes one direction.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The test isn't the joke. It's what happens when you don't laugh. A friend checks; somebody being unkind does it again harder.

Someone says “I’m only joking” after something unkind



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Right after the sting.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They said something that hurt, then covered it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it and move on.
- ☐ **B** Say “it didn’t feel like a joke.”
- ☐ **C** Say nothing now, and avoid them afterwards.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes it really was a badly-aimed joke, and letting it go is fine.
- B** Names it, and with a decent person that’s the end of it — they apologise properly. With somebody who meant it, you’ll get an argument, but you’ll also know where you stand.
- C** Distance is a real tool and you don’t owe anybody a warning before using it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

“I’m only joking” is sometimes true and sometimes a way of saying something unkind without consequences. The way to tell: does it stop when you say it hurt? If it stops, it was a joke. If it doesn’t, it wasn’t — and that’s Part 12.

Everyone's laughing and you missed why



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

A room that's suddenly noisy.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You looked up too late.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Smile and carry on.
- ☐ **B** Ask the person next to you.
- ☐ **C** Ignore it entirely.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine, and invisible.
- B** Asking one person is easy and usually gets a whispered summary.
- C** Nothing happens. Group laughter is over in seconds and nobody audits who joined in.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

In a group of ten, at least three people laughed without knowing why. Laughter is contagious before it's understood.

Someone imitates the way you talk or move



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group, or one-to-one.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're copying you. Others are watching.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Ignore it.
- ☐ **B** Say "don't do that."
- ☐ **C** Leave.
- ☐ **D** Tell an adult.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Some imitation is affectionate and stops on its own. Mocking imitation usually escalates when ignored, because it's getting a reaction from the audience even if not from you.
- B** Three words, said flatly, and it works more often than people expect — mostly because it makes the audience uncomfortable rather than the person doing it.
- C** Always available and never the wrong answer.
- D** The right one if it's repeated. Mimicking how somebody moves or speaks, in front of others, is bullying, whatever it's called.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

There's a difference between somebody copying a phrase you use because they like it, and somebody performing you for a laugh. The first is a compliment. The second isn't yours to manage on your own.

A joke goes on too long

WHERE
YOU ARE

The fourth time somebody's repeated it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It was funny once and it isn't now.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep going with it.
- ☐ **B** Stop responding to it.
- ☐ **C** Say "alright, that's enough now."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Feeds it. Running jokes live on responses.
- B** Starves it. Most die within a day without reactions.
- C** Works with friends, said lightly. Works less well with a group that's enjoying it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

If the joke is about you and it's lasted more than a few days, it's stopped being a joke and become a nickname you didn't agree to. That's worth saying plainly to one person in the group rather than the whole group.

You laughed at the wrong moment



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Something serious. You laughed.

WHAT
HAPPENS

People looked.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say sorry immediately.
- ☐ **B** Say nothing and stay still.
- ☐ **C** Explain afterwards to whoever it affected.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Quick and usually enough. A short “sorry” costs less than a long explanation.
- B** Often fine. In a big room almost nobody worked out where the laugh came from.
- C** The right one if it landed on a specific person. “I laugh when I’m nervous — I’m sorry, it wasn’t about you” repairs it completely.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Laughing at serious moments is an extremely common stress response. It isn’t a sign of what you feel. Knowing that makes the explanation easier to give.

Someone tells a joke about a group you belong to



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. You're the one it's about, and they may not know it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

People laughed.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Say "I don't think that one's funny."
- ☐ **C** Say why, and tell them you're in that group.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs nothing outwardly. It does add up over time.
- B** Six words, no explanation owed. It's the version that doesn't disclose anything about you, which matters if you don't want to.
- C** More powerful and more exposing. You get to decide whether these are people you want to tell.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You never have to disclose something about yourself in order to object to a joke. "That's not funny" is a complete position on its own.

You're being wound up on purpose



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

With somebody who's found the thing that gets a reaction.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They keep going back to it and watching your face.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** React honestly.
- ☐ **B** Give nothing — flat face, flat voice, change the subject.
- ☐ **C** Walk away.
- ☐ **D** Tell an adult.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Understandable, and it's exactly what they're after. Reacting is the payment.
- B** The thing that actually works, and it's hard. Winding somebody up is only fun if something happens.
- C** Removes the audience and the target at once.
- D** Right when it's repeated, or when it's several of them and one of you.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being easy to wind up isn't a character flaw — it usually means you respond honestly to what's in front of you, which is a decent quality being used against you.

Someone shares a private joke in front of you



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Three people. Two of them are laughing at something you weren't there for.

WHAT
HAPPENS

"You had to be there."

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait it out.
- ☐ **B** Ask what it was.
- ☐ **C** Say "you two are being annoying" lightly.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** It passes quickly. Private jokes are short.
- B** Usually gets an explanation and a not-very-funny story, which ends it.
- C** Works between friends and gets a laugh, which puts you back in the group.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Private jokes aren't usually meant to exclude — they're a shortcut between two people who were somewhere together. Being on the outside of one is not the same as being left out.

You explained a joke and it died



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Just after.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They asked, you explained, and now nobody's laughing.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Move on.
- ☐ **B** Say "yeah, it was better in my head."
- ☐ **C** Try again with a different joke.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Nothing has been lost.
- B** Gets a laugh most of the time, and it's a useful all-purpose line.
- C** Immediately following a failed joke with another one is a hard sell. Leave a gap.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Explaining kills jokes as a rule of physics, not because of anything you did. This is why people say "never mind" instead of explaining — and knowing that should make "never mind" sting less when you're on the receiving end.

Someone teases a friend of yours



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. Your friend's gone quiet.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's tipped from funny into not.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay out of it.
- ☐ **B** Change the subject.
- ☐ **C** Say "alright, leave it."
- ☐ **D** Check on your friend afterwards.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Safe. Your friend may notice you did nothing, and that lasts.
- B** The quiet rescue, and it's underrated — moving the conversation on takes the spotlight off them without anybody having to lose face.
- C** Direct. It carries some risk of the attention turning to you, and it's usually what stops it.
- D** This one matters most. "That was out of order, are you okay?" afterwards is remembered for years.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

In most groups, the teasing stops when one person says it's enough. Everybody's waiting for somebody else to be that person.

The teacher makes a joke and you don't know if you can laugh



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

A classroom.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They said something funny. Nobody's laughed yet.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Laugh.
- ☐ **B** Smile only.
- ☐ **C** Nothing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Almost always fine. Teachers make jokes because they want a response.
- B** The safest signal and works in every room.
- C** Also fine. Nobody's marking this.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Adults who make jokes at work are hoping somebody laughs. Being the one who does is usually welcome, not risky.

You said something rude by accident and everyone thought it was a joke



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Mid-conversation.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You meant it plainly. It came out sharper than intended and got a laugh.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let them think it was a joke.
- ☐ **B** Clarify: "I didn't mean that how it sounded."
- ☐ **C** Apologise to the person it was about.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easiest. The person it was about may not find it funny, though.
- B** Quick and clean, and worth doing while everybody's still there.
- C** Necessary if somebody was hurt. Private is better than public — see 8.1.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being blunt and being unkind aren't the same thing, but they can sound identical from outside. One clarifying sentence separates them.

A joke lands badly and the room goes quiet



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somebody else told it. The silence is everyone's now.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nobody knows what to do.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait.
- ☐ **B** Start a new topic.
- ☐ **C** Leave the room.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Somebody always fills it eventually.
- B** Being the person who moves things on is quietly appreciated by everyone in the room.
- C** Available if the joke was about something you can't be in the room for.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

After a joke fails, the group's attention is entirely on the person who told it. Nobody is looking at you.

Someone laughs and you don't know if it's at you



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Walking past a group.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Laughter behind you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Assume it isn't.
- ☐ **B** Look back.
- ☐ **C** Ask somebody afterwards.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Correct almost every time. People laugh constantly, at everything.
- B** Gets you information, and if it wasn't about you it can start something that wasn't there.
- C** Sensible if it keeps happening with the same group, in the same place.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Overhearing a laugh and assuming it's about you is one of the most universal human experiences there is. It's almost never right, and it still feels awful. Both things are true.

You're expected to have a comeback



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somebody's said something to you and the group is waiting.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone's looking at you for the reply.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Say "yeah, fair enough" and move on.
- ☐ **C** Try to think of something quickly.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The moment passes. It always does.
- B** Agreeing calmly ends the exchange and takes the fun out of it for anyone hoping for a reaction. It's the most reliable option in this book for this situation.
- C** Comebacks under time pressure are a specific skill, and most people who look good at it have used the line before.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The best comeback arrives four hours later in the bath. That happens to everybody, and nobody else remembers what you said anyway.

TWO LINES TO
KEEP READY, SO
YOU'RE NOT
THINKING FROM
SCRATCH



PART FIVE

When Someone Else Has Feelings

SCENARIOS 5.1 – 5.20

Your friend is upset



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Next to them. They've gone quiet, or they're crying.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Something's happened. You don't know what. They haven't asked you for anything.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Ask what's wrong.
- ☐ **B** Offer a fix — a suggestion, a plan, a solution.
- ☐ **C** Sit with them and say "I'm here if you want to talk."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** A good opening. Sometimes it gets a full answer. Sometimes it gets "nothing," which usually means *not yet* rather than *go away*.
- B** This is the honest instinct of a lot of people who think in solutions, and it's kind. But when someone's still in the middle of a feeling, a fix can land as *stop feeling this*. The fix usually works better twenty minutes later.
- C** The safest general-purpose move. It offers without demanding. It also lets you stay quiet, which is a relief if you don't know what to say — and staying is the part that counts.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You don't have to say the right thing. Most people can't remember what anyone said to them when they were upset — they remember who stayed. Being there and saying almost nothing is a completely valid way of helping.

ALSO TRUE

if you can't be near someone who's crying, that's a real thing and not a failure of caring. "I'm rubbish at this but I do care — do you want me to get someone?" is a good sentence. Write your own version:

Someone is angry with you

WHERE
YOU ARE

In front of them. It's already started.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're raising their voice. You're not sure yet whether they're right.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Defend yourself now.
- ☐ **B** Listen, say little, respond when they've finished.
- ☐ **C** Say "I want to sort this out but not while we're both shouting."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Natural, and it usually extends the argument. People can't hear a defence while they're still angry.
- B** Anger has a shape — it peaks and drops. Saying little through the peak means the conversation you have afterwards is a real one.
- C** A strong sentence, and it works with most people. It's not walking away; it's postponing, and saying which one you're doing is the part that matters.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being shouted at makes it physically harder to think — that's your body, not your character. Almost nobody argues well while it's happening, which is a good reason to do it later.

Someone's angry with somebody else, near you



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

In the room, not involved.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's loud and it isn't about you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay and stay quiet.
- ☐ **B** Leave the room.
- ☐ **C** Try to calm it down.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine if you can tolerate it. Some people find other people's anger almost unbearable even when it's nothing to do with them.
- B** Allowed. You are not required to witness an argument.
- C** Occasionally helps. More often it makes you a third person in the argument.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Feeling other people's tension in your own body is common, and it's why a row between two other people can wipe out your afternoon. Leaving isn't cowardice, it's sense.

A friend tells you something serious



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Just the two of you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've said something big and it's your turn to speak.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "thank you for telling me."
- ☐ **B** Ask a question about it.
- ☐ **C** Say you don't know what to say.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Almost always right, and it buys you time. It also tells them the telling was received, which is what they were most worried about.
- B** Good if it's a question about them — how they're doing, what they need. Less good if it's a question about the details, which can feel like being interviewed.
- C** Completely honest and better than a wrong guess. "I don't know what to say, but I'm glad you told me" is one of the best sentences in this book.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

When somebody tells you something serious, they're usually not asking you to solve it. They're checking whether they can still be themselves in front of you. Staying normal with them afterwards is the answer to that question.

IF WHAT THEY'VE
TOLD YOU MEANS
SOMEBODY
COULD GET HURT

including them — that's the one kind of secret you pass on to an adult. See 5.17.

Someone cries in front of you

WHERE
YOU ARE

Close enough that you can't pretend not to notice.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've started crying and you've frozen.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay and say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Offer something practical — a tissue, water, a quieter room.
- ☐ **C** Ask if they want you to stay or go.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Better than most people believe. Presence does the work.
- B** Practical help gives you both something to do, which relieves the pressure to say the right thing.
- C** Excellent, because it hands them the control. Some people want company and some want privacy, and you can't tell from outside.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Crying isn't a request for anything. People cry and then carry on with their day. You don't have to fix it and you haven't failed if it doesn't stop.

Someone's disappointed and trying to hide it



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

After they didn't get the thing.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're saying it's fine and doing a face that says otherwise.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Go along with "it's fine."
- ☐ **B** Say "that's rubbish, I'm sorry."
- ☐ **C** Change the subject to something good.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Respects the front they've put up, which is sometimes exactly what they want.
- B** Short, and it lands well with most people. Naming that something is bad, without dwelling on it, is usually a relief.
- C** Kind, and occasionally too fast — it can read as not wanting to hear about it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"That's rubbish, I'm sorry" is a complete response to almost any disappointment. You don't need anything after it.

Two friends have fallen out and you're in the middle

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Between them. Both are talking to you about the other.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They each want you on their side.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Pick a side.
- ☐ **B** Stay friends with both and refuse to discuss it.
- ☐ **C** Try to fix it between them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Simple, and it costs you one friend, sometimes permanently, over something that may blow over in a fortnight.
- B** Hard to hold and usually right. "I'm not getting involved, I like you both" said to each of them is the whole strategy.
- C** Occasionally works. More often you become the person both of them are annoyed with.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Falling out between two other people isn't yours to solve and passing messages makes it worse. The most useful thing you can be is the one place where neither of them has to be at war.

Someone's pet or family member has died



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Seeing them for the first time since.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You know. They know you know.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "I'm sorry about your dog / your grandad."
- ☐ **B** Say nothing about it and treat them normally.
- ☐ **C** Ask how they're doing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Right, and short is better than long. Naming the person or animal matters — it's why "sorry about Bess" lands better than "sorry for your loss."
- B** Some people badly want normality. The risk is they think you didn't notice or didn't care, so a short acknowledgement first, then normality, covers both.
- C** Fine, and be ready for either a real answer or a short one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most people are more hurt by silence than by somebody saying it slightly wrong. Getting the words imperfect is much better than saying nothing.

ALSO

grief for an animal is real grief. Anybody who treats it as a small thing is wrong about it.

Somebody's nervous and you're not



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Before the thing they're dreading.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're anxious about something you find easy.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Tell them it'll be fine.
- ☐ **B** Ask what would help.
- ☐ **C** Offer to do the hard part with them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Meant well and often lands badly, because it can sound like the worry is silly.
- B** Better, because it treats them as the expert on their own worry.
- C** Frequently the best thing anybody can offer. Going in with somebody is worth more than any reassurance.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Something being easy for you says nothing about whether it's easy for them. You already know this from the other direction.

A friend's excited about something you don't care about



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

They're telling you at length.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You have no interest in the topic at all.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Listen and ask a question or two.
- ☐ **B** Say honestly that it's not your thing.
- ☐ **C** Change the subject.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** This is the trade. They listen to yours; you listen to theirs. Two questions is plenty.
- B** Honest, and fine with some friends. It can flatten their enthusiasm, which they'll remember.
- C** Noticeable if you do it every time.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You're not listening to the topic, you're listening to them being happy. That's a different thing and it's much easier to be interested in.

Somebody says they're fine and clearly isn't



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

With somebody who's shut the door.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You can see it. They've said no.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it.
- ☐ **B** Say "okay — I'm here if that changes."
- ☐ **C** Press them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Respects their answer. Sometimes people need to be left alone and asking again is a burden.
- B** The best version. It accepts the no and leaves the door open, and it costs them nothing to receive.
- C** Rarely works. People who've decided not to talk usually dig in when pushed.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Somebody choosing not to tell you isn't a judgement on your friendship. Plenty of people can't talk about something until much later, and the person they eventually tell is often the one who didn't push.

Somebody keeps talking about the same problem



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

The fifth conversation about it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nothing's changed and they're going round again.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Listen again.
- ☐ **B** Ask what they want to do about it.
- ☐ **C** Say you can't keep talking about it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Kind, and it has a limit. Listening to the same problem indefinitely wears people out and they usually stop replying rather than say so.
- B** Moves it forward without dismissing it. Sometimes the answer is "nothing, I just needed to say it," which is a useful thing to know.
- C** Honest, and it's allowed. "I care about this and I'm running out of ways to help" is the kind version.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You are allowed to have a limit on how much of somebody else's difficulty you can carry. Saying so early keeps the friendship; going quiet without saying so is what ends it.

A friend's being left out

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. They're on the edge of it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nobody's being cruel. They're just not being included.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Leave it.
- ☐ **B** Ask them a direct question in front of the group.
- ☐ **C** Go and stand with them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Nothing changes.
- B** The most effective move there is. Asking somebody a direct question puts them in the conversation without anybody announcing that they were out of it.
- C** Splits the group in two, which helps them and takes you out of the main one. Sometimes worth it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most exclusion isn't decided. It's what happens when nobody does anything. One question is often the entire fix.

Somebody apologises to you

WHERE
YOU ARE

They've said sorry and stopped.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You're not sure you're over it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "that's alright."
- ☐ **B** Say "thanks for saying that" and leave it there.
- ☐ **C** Say you need a bit longer.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends it fastest. It also says something you might not mean, which can sit oddly afterwards.
- B** Honest and complete. It accepts the apology without claiming to be fine.
- C** Entirely reasonable. An apology is not a receipt that has to be signed immediately.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You can accept an apology and still be upset. Those are two separate things and neither cancels the other.

Somebody thanks you and it feels like too much



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being thanked in front of people.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You'd rather this wasn't happening.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "you're welcome."
- ☐ **B** Say "no problem" and move on quickly.
- ☐ **C** Say it was nothing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Complete, and it ends the exchange.
- B** Shortest exit. Moving on is the bit that stops it continuing.
- C** Common, and it slightly dismisses their thanks, which can mean they say it again more firmly.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Thanks is for the person giving it as much as the person receiving it. Accepting it briefly is the kindest response, even if it's uncomfortable.

A friend asks you to keep a secret



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Before they've told you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

"You have to promise not to tell anyone."

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Promise.
- ☐ **B** Say "I won't tell anyone, unless it's something where somebody could get hurt."
- ☐ **C** Say you'd rather not know.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easiest, and it can trap you. Some secrets shouldn't be kept, and a promise made in advance makes that harder.
- B** The honest version, and most friends accept it. Saying it before you hear it is far easier than saying it afterwards.
- C** Legitimate. You don't have to carry everybody's information.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Keeping a secret about somebody being hurt protects the person doing the hurting, not your friend. Telling an adult in that situation isn't betrayal — it's the point at which the friendship needs somebody bigger than both of you.

A friend tells you something you think an adult needs to know



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Holding something heavy.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've asked you not to tell.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep it.
- ☐ **B** Tell them you're going to talk to an adult, and who.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult without telling your friend first.
- ☐ **D** Go with your friend to tell somebody together.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Leaves you carrying something too big, and leaves them without help.
- B** The straight version. They may be angry at first. Most people, later, are relieved.
- C** Sometimes necessary, especially if you think telling them first would stop them getting help.
- D** The best outcome when it's possible, because they keep some control over how it happens.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

This is the one place in this book where there is close to a right answer. If somebody could be seriously hurt, tell an adult. A friendship that survives everything except you getting them help was never going to survive the thing itself.

WHO I'D TELL

Somebody's jealous of you

WHERE
YOU ARE

You did well at something. They didn't.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've gone off with you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Play it down.
- ☐ **B** Carry on normally.
- ☐ **C** Name it: "are we okay?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Kind in the moment. Doing it repeatedly means never being pleased about anything in front of your friends, which is a real loss.
- B** Most jealousy fades within a week without anything being said.
- C** Direct, and it either clears it or gets denied. Either way you've shown you noticed.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You don't have to be smaller so somebody else feels bigger. A friend who needs that permanently isn't offering much of a friendship.

An adult in your house is upset



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Home.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Something's wrong with a grown-up and you don't know what.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Give them space.
- ☐ **B** Ask if they're okay.
- ☐ **C** Do something small and practical.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often what they want. Adults usually don't want to explain their problems to children.
- B** Kind, and you may get "I'm fine," which is likely to mean *not your job*, rather than a brush-off.
- C** Making a drink or tidying something says the thing without needing a conversation.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

An adult being upset is not your fault and not yours to fix. If it's happening a lot and it's frightening, that's something to tell another adult you trust — a teacher, a relative, anyone outside the house.

Somebody gives you a compliment



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Anywhere. You weren't expecting it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've said something nice about you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

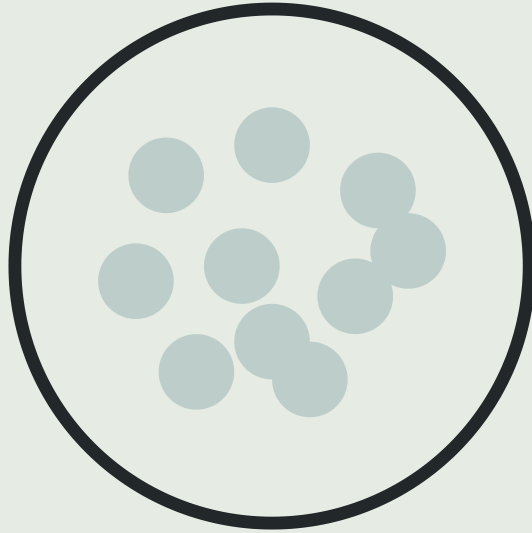
- ☐ **A** Say thank you.
- ☐ **B** Disagree with it.
- ☐ **C** Return one.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Complete. Two words and it's done properly.
- B** The instinct for a lot of people, and it puts the other person in the odd position of having to argue that you're good at something.
- C** Fine, though it isn't required, and an automatic return can sound like a transaction.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"Thank you" is the whole answer. You don't have to earn a compliment, prove it, or give one back.



PART SIX

When You Have Feelings

SCENARIOS 6.1 – 6.20

You're about to lose it and you're not somewhere private



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A classroom, a shop, someone's house.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's building. You know the feeling. There are ten minutes to go.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Hold on until it's over.
- ☐ **B** Leave the room without explaining, and come back.
- ☐ **C** Use the agreed signal or card, if you have one.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes possible. The cost usually arrives later, at home, in a much bigger form — which is why the people at home see something the people at school don't.
- B** Leaving is nearly always better than staying and exploding. Some adults will chase you, which is why C exists.
- C** The best version, but it has to be set up *before* you need it. That's an adult's job, not yours, and it's a fair thing to ask for.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Leaving a room is not a behaviour problem. It's the thing that stops the behaviour problem. If leaving gets you in trouble where you are, that's the system's fault, not yours — and it's fixable by an adult.

MY EXIT PLAN

My signal is

I go to

The adult who knows about it is

You've been left out

WHERE
YOU ARE

Finding out afterwards, usually from a photo.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Something happened and you weren't there.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Ask one of them about it.
- ☐ **C** Say "I'd have liked to come to that."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Nothing changes, and it stays in your head for days.
- B** Often gets a dull explanation — it was arranged in five minutes, or somebody's parent decided the numbers. Dull explanations are the most common ones.
- C** Short, not accusing, and it makes the next invitation more likely because it tells them you'd want one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most people are left out of most things. Groups don't invite everyone to everything, and it usually isn't a decision about you. It still hurts, and both those facts can sit together.

You're the only one who doesn't want to do it



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group deciding.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone's keen. You aren't.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Go along with it.
- ☐ **B** Say you'd rather not, and let them go without you.
- ☐ **C** Suggest something else.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes worth it for the company. Doing it every single time is how people end up in a friendship group that doesn't fit them.
- B** Perfectly allowed. "You go on, I'll catch you after" costs a lot less than people expect.
- C** Works if you suggest early. Once a group has decided, changing it is much harder.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Saying no to one activity isn't saying no to the people. Most groups take it much better than you'd think, and think about it for about a minute.

You're overloaded and somebody keeps asking questions



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Full. Nothing else fits.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They want answers and you haven't got any.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Answer as best you can.
- ☐ **B** Say "I can't do questions right now."
- ☐ **C** Leave.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often produces answers you don't mean, which cause problems later.
- B** Six words and most people stop. Adults who know you'll come back later usually accept it straight away.
- C** The direct fix. Better than staying and snapping.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Questions cost energy to answer, and when you're overloaded the cost goes up steeply. "Not now" is not refusing to communicate. It's protecting the ability to.

You said something in anger and it's still sitting there

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Afterwards. Calmer.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You meant it at the time. You don't now.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Leave it and hope it fades.
- ☐ **B** Apologise for how you said it.
- ☐ **C** Apologise and explain what was underneath it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes it does fade. Often it sits there for both of you.
- B** Clean and quick, and it doesn't require you to pretend you didn't mean any of it.
- C** Stronger when the thing underneath is real: "I was already at the end of it before you came in."
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You can apologise for how you said something without taking back what you said. Those are separable, and saying so is usually more honest than a full retraction nobody believes.

You're upset and somebody asks what's wrong



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Not ready to talk.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've asked, kindly, at the worst moment.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "nothing."
- ☐ **B** Say "I don't want to talk about it yet."
- ☐ **C** Tell them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends the question. It can also make them think they've done something.
- B** Better, because "yet" does a lot of work. It tells them the door isn't shut and stops them worrying it was them.
- C** Right when you want to and with the right person. Never obligatory.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Trying to explain something while you're still in the middle of it often makes it worse — you end up crying about the explanation. Later is a real answer.

You need help and asking feels worse than struggling

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Stuck. Have been for a while.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You know who to ask. You can't make yourself do it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep going alone.
- ☐ **B** Ask in writing rather than out loud.
- ☐ **C** Ask for something small instead of the whole thing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes works. Often the problem grows while you're not asking.
- B** A message, a note, an email — the same request, minus the hardest part. Plenty of adults prefer it too.
- C** "Can you just check this bit?" is much easier to say than "I can't do any of it," and it usually opens the whole conversation anyway.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Asking for help is a skill people are explicitly taught in workplaces, because it's difficult for almost everyone. It isn't a thing you should already be able to do.

You're bored and it would be rude to say so



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somewhere you have to stay.

WHAT
HAPPENS

There's a long time left.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Sit it out.
- ☐ **B** Find something small to do with your hands.
- ☐ **C** Ask if there's anything you can help with.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works, badly, for short periods.
- B** Fidgeting, doodling and having something in your hands genuinely helps people stay in a room. It's not rudeness, and most adults would rather that than you leaving.
- C** Turns waiting into a task, which passes much faster.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Needing to move or occupy your hands isn't a lack of interest. For a lot of people it's what makes listening possible.

You're excited and everyone else is calm



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somewhere your enthusiasm is louder than the room.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You can feel yourself being more than everybody else.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Turn it down.
- ☐ **B** Let it out and accept the looks.
- ☐ **C** Save it for somebody who'll match it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes appropriate — a library, a funeral, a test. Doing it everywhere is exhausting and it's the thing that leads to burnout.
- B** Costs you nothing with people who like you. Costs something in rooms where you're being judged.
- C** Practical. Knowing exactly who your full-volume people are is worth more than being liked by everyone at half volume.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being visibly happy about something is not a social error. Most people are quietly envious of anyone who can still do it.

MY FULL-VOLUME
PEOPLE

You've been accused of something you didn't do

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

In front of somebody who's already decided.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They think it was you. It wasn't.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Deny it once, clearly, and stop.
- ☐ **B** Keep explaining until they believe you.
- ☐ **C** Say nothing.
- ☐ **D** Ask for the chance to explain later.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually the best. One clear denial is more convincing than five, because repeated defending sounds like defending.
- B** Rarely works in the moment and often makes you look worse to somebody who's already annoyed.
- C** Reads as agreement to most adults, which is unfair but real.
- D** Strong. "I didn't do it, and I'd like to talk about it when you're not busy" is hard to argue with.
- E** Yours: _____

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being wrongly accused is one of the worst feelings there is and it does happen. If it happens repeatedly in the same place, write down what happened each time, with the date. A pattern in writing is taken far more seriously than a feeling in a corridor.

Something changed and you can't get past it

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Hours later. Still on it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The plan changed this morning and you're still stuck there.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Push through and hope it passes.
- ☐ **B** Tell somebody you're stuck on it.
- ☐ **C** Do something familiar for a while.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes it does pass. Often it comes out later as something else.
- B** Naming it out loud — "I'm still stuck on the thing this morning" — often loosens it, and stops the people around you guessing.
- C** Familiar things settle the system. This isn't avoidance, it's recovery.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Getting stuck on an unexpected change isn't stubbornness. The plan you had was doing a job — it was holding the shape of the day — and losing it means rebuilding the whole day from scratch.

You feel nothing and you're supposed to feel something



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A moment everyone else finds moving.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You're not feeling it and you're aware you should be.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Act along with the room.
- ☐ **B** Be still and say nothing.
- ☐ **C** Say later that you didn't feel much.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Gets you through. Tiring, and it teaches you to distrust your own reactions.
- B** Almost always sufficient. Nobody checks.
- C** Safe with the right person, and often a relief to say.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Feelings sometimes arrive late — hours or days after the event. Not feeling something at the moment you're supposed to is common and says nothing about how much you care.

You're tired of pretending you're fine



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A stretch of days where holding it together has taken everything.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You're worn out from the effort of seeming okay.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep going.
- ☐ **B** Tell one person how tired you are.
- ☐ **C** Drop the effort somewhere safe — home, one friend, one room.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** There's a limit to how long anyone can do this, and hitting it is not a personal failure.
- B** One person is enough. It doesn't have to be a big conversation — "I'm finding everything hard at the moment" is a whole sentence.
- C** Having one place where you don't perform is what makes the rest survivable.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Constant masking is exhausting and it's linked to poorer mental health, which is exactly why this book keeps offering you the option of not doing it. If the tiredness has been going on for weeks, that's worth telling an adult about — a parent, a GP, a teacher you trust. Not because something's wrong with you, but because carrying it alone is the hard way to do it.

ONE PERSON I
COULD SAY THIS
TO

You want to go home and you've only just arrived

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A party, a gathering, an event.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've been here ten minutes and you're done.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay the whole time.
- ☐ **B** Find a quiet corner for ten minutes, then decide.
- ☐ **C** Leave.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes it improves after twenty minutes, once the arriving part is over. Arriving is often the worst bit.
- B** A short break outside or in another room resets a lot of people, and then the event is manageable.
- C** Legitimate. Leaving early is much better than staying until something goes wrong.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Agreeing an exit before you go — a time, a signal, a lift home — makes it far more likely you'll enjoy the first hour. Knowing you can leave is often what lets you stay.

You made a mistake in front of people



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Everyone saw.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You got it wrong, out loud.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Acknowledge it briefly and carry on.
- ☐ **B** Apologise several times.
- ☐ **C** Say nothing and continue.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The version everybody respects. “Ah, no — it’s this” and moving on is what confident people do, and it’s a habit rather than a feeling.
- B** Extends it. Repeated apologising keeps the mistake in the room long after everybody else had let it go.
- C** Fine. Most mistakes are noticed by fewer people than you think.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People judge you far more on how long you dwell on a mistake than on the mistake itself.

You've been waiting too long

WHERE
YOU ARE

A queue, a waiting room, a delay.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's gone well past what you were told.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep waiting.
- ☐ **B** Ask how much longer.
- ☐ **C** Ask if you can wait somewhere quieter.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine until it isn't. Unknown waiting is much harder than known waiting.
- B** Asking converts an unknown wait into a known one, which is the thing that makes it bearable.
- C** Reasonable and often granted, especially in a hospital or a clinic. They'd rather move you than have you leave.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Not knowing how long is usually harder than the waiting itself. One question changes the whole experience.

You don't want to be touched today, and usually you don't mind



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

With people who know you well.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Today it's too much, and they don't know that.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Put up with it.
- ☐ **B** Say "not today."
- ☐ **C** Keep your distance and hope they read it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs more than it looks like it does.
- B** Two words, and people who love you will take it fine. Adding "it's not you" removes the only awkward part.
- C** Sometimes read correctly, often not, and then you have to explain anyway.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

What you can tolerate changes day to day, and that's normal. Consent isn't a permanent setting — a yes yesterday isn't a yes today, and that's true for everyone.

Somebody says “calm down”

WHERE
YOU ARE

Already upset. Now more so.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The two words have made it worse.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Try to.
- ☐ **B** Say “that’s not helping.”
- ☐ **C** Ask for what would help instead.
- ☐ **D** Leave the conversation.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Rarely possible on instruction.
- B** True, and most people stop when told. Some escalate.
- C** The most useful: “give me five minutes and then we’ll talk” tells them what to do instead of nothing.
- D** Always allowed.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

“Calm down” almost never calms anybody down. People say it because they’re uncomfortable, not because it works. Telling them what does work is doing them a favour as well as you.

WHAT ACTUALLY
HELPS ME

You're the last one picked

WHERE
YOU ARE

Standing there while the teams fill up.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's down to you and one other person, then just you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing, join the team.
- ☐ **B** Make a joke about it.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult afterwards that picking teams doesn't work for you.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Gets you through the minute.
- B** Takes the sting out publicly, and some people find that easier than pretending nothing happened.
- C** The one that changes anything. Most teachers have other ways of making teams and use picking out of habit — being told it's landing badly is usually enough.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being picked last is about who somebody thinks will win them the game. It isn't a measurement of whether people like you, though it feels exactly like one.

It went well and you don't know what to do with that



WHERE
YOU ARE

After something you'd been dreading.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It was fine. You're oddly flat about it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Move straight on to the next thing.
- ☐ **B** Tell somebody it went well.
- ☐ **C** Write down what made it work.
- ☐ **D** _____

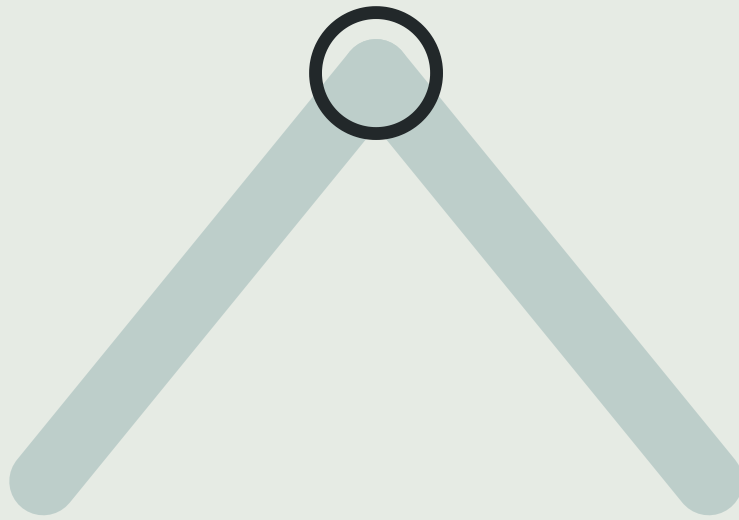
WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Common, and it means you get no credit for it, including from yourself.
- B** Worth doing. The people who watched you dread it will want to know.
- C** The most useful of the three, because next time you'll have the reason rather than just the memory of it going okay.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Things going well is data. It's easy to remember every time something went badly and forget the fifty times it didn't — writing the good ones down is how you correct that.

WHAT MADE IT
WORK THIS TIME



PART SEVEN

Disagreeing

SCENARIOS 7.1 – 7.20

Someone disagrees with you



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A conversation that was going fine.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They say you're wrong. You're fairly sure you're not.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Drop it. Let them think what they like.
- ☐ **B** Explain again, more clearly.
- ☐ **C** Ask what makes them think that.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs nothing and keeps the peace. Right for small things. Wrong for things that matter to you, because dropping everything eventually feels like never being heard.
- B** The natural move if you know you're right. It rarely works, because people don't change their minds while being explained at. Repeating it a third time reliably makes things worse.
- C** Slower, and much more likely to actually get somewhere. It often turns out you're disagreeing about different things — or that they know something you don't.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Two people can disagree and both stay friends. That's the normal case, not the failure case. Being wrong about something isn't shameful and doesn't cost you the relationship — most people can't even remember who won.

AND

"I still think I'm right, but let's leave it" is a real, allowed ending. You don't have to be convinced to stop arguing.

You know a fact is wrong and it's an adult who said it

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A classroom or a room with other people in it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've stated something you know isn't true.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go.
- ☐ **B** Say it privately afterwards.
- ☐ **C** Say it now, as a question: "I thought it was X — have I got that wrong?"
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs nothing unless the wrong fact matters for the work.
- B** Nearly always the best route. Adults correct much more easily without an audience, and most are grateful.
- C** The question form is what makes it survivable in public. "Have I got that wrong?" gives them a way to check without losing face.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

How a correction is delivered matters more to most adults than whether it's right. That's not fair, and knowing it is still useful.

The group has chosen something you don't want to do



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Outvoted.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's decided and you're not keen.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Go along with it.
- ☐ **B** Say you'll join for part of it.
- ☐ **C** Sit this one out.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** What most people do most of the time, and it's what keeps groups working.
- B** Underused. Coming for half is a real option and nobody usually objects.
- C** Fine occasionally. Every time starts to separate you from the group.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being outvoted isn't being overruled personally. Somebody has to be in the minority every time a group decides anything.

Somebody keeps arguing after you've stopped



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

You've dropped it. They haven't.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They want an ending you're not giving them.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Re-engage.
- ☐ **B** Repeat one closing line and nothing else.
- ☐ **C** Leave.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Restarts it, usually from further back.
- B** "I've said what I think" repeated calmly is the strongest tool here. It gives them nothing new to argue with.
- C** Always available. Walking away from an argument is not losing it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Some people don't stop arguing until they get a reaction rather than an answer. Once you notice which kind of argument you're in, the goal changes from winning to ending.

You realise mid-argument that you're wrong



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Halfway through, and you've just seen it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've been arguing for something you no longer believe.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Finish the argument anyway.
- ☐ **B** Say "actually, you're right."
- ☐ **C** Go quiet and drop it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The most common choice and the most expensive one. It costs you the point and their trust in the next argument.
- B** Three words, and it ends things instantly. People remember somebody who does this, in a good way — it's rare.
- C** Ends the argument without resolving it, and they may not realise you'd changed your mind.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Changing your mind when you get better information is the whole point of arguing. Nobody has ever thought less of somebody for saying "actually, you're right."

Somebody says something unfair about a person who isn't there



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group conversation.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's about somebody you know, and it isn't true.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay out of it.
- ☐ **B** Say "that's not how I've found them."
- ☐ **C** Change the subject.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easiest, and it lets it stand.
- B** Mild, effective, and hard to argue with because it's just your experience. It usually stops the run without starting a row.
- C** Quietly ends it without anybody being challenged, which suits some groups better.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

How people talk about somebody who isn't in the room tells you how they'll talk about you when you're not.

You're asked to pick a side

WHERE
YOU ARE

Two people, both looking at you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

"You agree with me, don't you?"

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Pick.
- ☐ **B** Say what you think about the issue, not about them.
- ☐ **C** Say you're not picking.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fast, and it usually costs something with the other person.
- B** The skilful version. Answering the actual question — "I think the second one's more likely" — isn't the same as choosing a person.
- C** Honest and sometimes unpopular with both.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"Whose side are you on" is a question about loyalty pretending to be a question about facts. Answering the fact version is usually the way out.

Somebody changes the rules mid-game



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Playing. Losing, or winning.

WHAT
HAPPENS

A new rule has appeared and it suits them.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it.
- ☐ **B** Say “we didn’t say that at the start.”
- ☐ **C** Stop playing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Keeps the game going and lets it happen again.
- B** Fair and factual, and it works better than accusing them of cheating.
- C** Available, and it does end the game for everyone, which some groups will hold against you.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Agreeing the rules out loud before starting prevents almost all of this. It takes thirty seconds and feels overly formal for about ten of them.

You disagree with a friend in front of other people



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. Your friend has said something you don't agree with.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You could let it go or say so.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Agree publicly, discuss privately.
- ☐ **B** Disagree there and then.
- ☐ **C** Say nothing either way.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Protects them in public, which most friends value highly.
- B** Fine between friends who do this normally. It stings more with an audience, whatever the friendship.
- C** Neutral and costs nothing.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The audience changes the size of a disagreement. The same words are twice as big with five people watching.

Somebody won't take no for an answer



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

You've said no. They're still going.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Every no gets a new reason why you should say yes.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Give in.
- ☐ **B** Repeat the same no, unchanged, as many times as needed.
- ☐ **C** Explain why.
- ☐ **D** Leave, or tell an adult.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Teaches them that pushing works, and they will push again.
- B** The technique that works. Say the same short sentence every time — “no thanks” — without new information. Nothing to argue with means nothing to argue.
- C** Reasons get argued with. Every reason you give is a door you've opened.
- D** Right when it's about something that matters, or when it doesn't stop.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You do not owe anyone a reason for a no. “No” is complete. Adding “because” invites a negotiation you never agreed to.

Two friends disagree and both ask you



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being briefed by both sides.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They each want confirmation that they're right.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Tell each what they want to hear.
- ☐ **B** Say the same thing to both.
- ☐ **C** Refuse to discuss it with either.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works until they compare notes, which they will, and then you've lost both.
- B** The rule that keeps you out of trouble: never say anything to one you wouldn't say to the other.
- C** Clean, and it can feel cold to somebody who wanted support.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Anything you say about one friend to another should be assumed to be heard by both. That's not cynicism, it's just what happens.

You've been given feedback you don't agree with



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A teacher, a coach, a manager.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've told you what to improve and you think they've misread it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it and change nothing.
- ☐ **B** Ask for an example.
- ☐ **C** Explain why you disagree.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The default, and it wastes the feedback either way.
- B** The best question in the room. "Can you give me an example?" either produces something concrete you can work with, or reveals there wasn't one.
- C** Fair, and it lands much better after B than before it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Vague feedback is usually a sign the person hasn't thought it through, not a sign they're hiding something. Asking for the example does the thinking for both of you.

Somebody corrects you in public



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

In front of others. They've said you're wrong.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You might be. You might not.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it and move on.
- ☐ **B** Say "I'll check" and check.
- ☐ **C** Argue it now.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends it in two seconds and costs almost nothing.
- B** The strongest, because it's neither surrender nor a fight, and it makes you the reasonable one.
- C** Occasionally necessary. Usually it turns a small correction into a scene people remember longer than the fact.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being corrected in public feels much bigger to you than to anyone watching. They'll have forgotten by lunchtime.

You want to correct somebody in public



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

They've said something wrong and people are listening.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You know the right answer.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say it.
- ☐ **B** Ask it as a question.
- ☐ **C** Tell them afterwards.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Right when it matters — safety, someone being blamed unfairly, a fact the whole room needs.
- B** Softens it enormously and gets the same result.
- C** Kindest, and right for anything that doesn't matter in the next five minutes.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The question to ask yourself first is whether being right about this changes anything. Sometimes it does, and then you should say it. Often it doesn't.

The argument has gone on too long

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Both tired. Neither backing down.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It stopped being about the thing a while ago.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep going until somebody wins.
- ☐ **B** Say “we’re not getting anywhere — can we leave it?”
- ☐ **C** Concede to end it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Long arguments rarely produce winners. They produce two tired people who both feel worse.
- B** Naming the state of the argument rather than its content is what breaks the loop.
- C** Ends it, and if you don’t mean it you’ll both know, and it’ll come back.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most long arguments have stopped being about the original topic within about five minutes. What’s being argued about after that is usually who’s being listened to.

Somebody brings up something from months ago

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Mid-disagreement about something else entirely.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've reached back for an old one.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Defend the old thing.
- ☐ **B** Say "let's do one at a time."
- ☐ **C** Accept that it clearly still matters to them and deal with it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** You're now having two arguments, and the first one gets lost.
- B** Keeps it manageable, and it's fair to both of you.
- C** Sometimes the right call. If something from months ago is still being raised, it was never actually finished.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Old things coming up usually means an earlier apology didn't land, not that the person is keeping score for fun.

You lost the argument and you still think you're right



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Afterwards.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's settled and you're not satisfied.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go.
- ☐ **B** Come back to it another day with better evidence.
- ☐ **C** Bring it up again now.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes the answer, especially if nothing turns on it.
- B** The version that works. Same point, different day, more evidence — that's a new conversation rather than a continuation.
- C** Restarts a finished argument, which nearly always goes worse than the first one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Losing an argument isn't the same as being wrong. Arguments are won by whoever is more persuasive on the day, which is a different skill from being correct.

Somebody agrees with you just to end it



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

They've caved. It didn't feel real.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You got the agreement and not the agreement.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Take the win.
- ☐ **B** Say "you don't actually agree, do you?"
- ☐ **C** Leave it and check another day.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine for small things. For anything that needs them to actually do something, a fake yes will fail later.
- B** Direct, and it can feel like being pushed further, which is why it works better said gently.
- C** Often best. Time reveals whether it was real.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People agree to end conversations all the time. If what you needed was agreement rather than the end of the conversation, you haven't got it yet.

The disagreement is about something that actually matters



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Not a small one. A real one.

WHAT
HAPPENS

This isn't about a game or a fact. It's about how somebody's being treated.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep the peace.
- ☐ **B** Say what you think once, clearly.
- ☐ **C** Say it and keep saying it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Cheapest now, and it's the one people regret.
- B** Usually enough. One clear statement of where you stand does more than a long argument.
- C** Right when somebody's being harmed and nothing's changing. Persistence is the whole tool at that point.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most disagreements aren't worth much and a few are worth a lot. Knowing which is which is the actual skill — and the test is usually whether somebody is being hurt by the outcome.

You need to apologise and you don't think you were wrong

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somebody's upset. You still think your position was fair.

WHAT
HAPPENS

An apology is expected.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Apologise fully.
- ☐ **B** Apologise for the effect, not the position: "I'm sorry that upset you — I didn't mean it to."
- ☐ **C** Don't apologise.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends it, and it's a lie if you don't mean it, which tends to show.
- B** Honest and usually sufficient. You can be sorry about the outcome without agreeing you were wrong.
- C** Sometimes right, and it costs something. Be sure it's worth what it costs.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"I'm sorry that happened" and "I was wrong" are different sentences doing different jobs. Most situations only need the first one.



PART EIGHT

Mistakes, Awkwardness and Repair

SCENARIOS 8.1 – 8.20

You accidentally embarrass someone



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A group. You said the thing out loud.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You mentioned something they hadn't told anyone — their result, their news, the thing about their family. You watch their face change.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Carry on as if nothing happened.
- ☐ **B** Apologise immediately, in front of everyone.
- ☐ **C** Change the subject now, and find them privately afterwards.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The moment passes fastest this way, which sometimes matters. But they know you saw their face, and not addressing it later usually reads as not caring.
- B** Well meant, and often makes it worse — a public apology keeps everyone's attention on the thing you wish they'd forget, and now they have to react in front of people too.
- C** Nearly always the best. Moving the conversation on takes the spotlight off them, which is the actual kindness. Then the private "I'm sorry, that was mine to not say" is where the repair happens.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The order is *rescue first, apologise second*. Getting attention off the person is more urgent than clearing your own conscience — and doing it in that order is what most people mean by tact.

ALSO

*Write the sentence you'd use, so you have it ready

You said something and immediately knew it was wrong



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

The words are out.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You heard them land as you said them.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Correct it straight away.
- ☐ **B** Carry on and hope.
- ☐ **C** Come back to it later.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Immediate is cheapest. “Sorry — that came out wrong” takes three seconds and closes it.
- B** Sometimes it wasn’t as bad as it felt. Sometimes it was, and it’s still there tomorrow.
- C** Works, and it’s a bigger conversation than it would have been at the time.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Repairs get more expensive the longer you leave them. A three-second fix becomes a five-minute conversation becomes a difficult week.

You forgot something important to somebody else

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being reminded, usually by their face.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Their birthday, their news, the thing they told you last week.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Pretend you didn't forget.
- ☐ **B** Admit it and apologise.
- ☐ **C** Admit it and do something about it now.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually transparent, and being caught pretending is worse than the forgetting.
- B** Enough for most things. Short, plain, no long explanation about how busy you've been.
- C** The strongest. Doing the thing late is much better than not doing it, and most people are more pleased than annoyed.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People forgive forgetting far more easily than they forgive not caring. Making it right afterwards is what marks the difference between the two.

WORTH DOING

if you forget dates a lot, put them in a phone with an alert two days before. That's not cheating — it's what everybody organised is already doing.

You broke something of theirs

WHERE
YOU ARE

Holding the pieces.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It was an accident. It's still broken.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Tell them straight away.
- ☐ **B** Fix or replace it first, then tell them.
- ☐ **C** Say nothing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Nearly always right. Told immediately, an accident is an accident.
- B** Well meant, and it can go wrong — they may have wanted the original, or a say in the replacement.
- C** The worst option, because being found out later turns an accident into a lie, and that's what people actually get angry about.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People are rarely as angry about a broken object as you expect. They get angry about being kept in the dark.

You were late and it mattered

WHERE
YOU ARE

Arriving. They've been waiting.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're annoyed, or trying not to be.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Apologise briefly and get on with it.
- ☐ **B** Explain in full why.
- ☐ **C** Play it down.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Best. "Sorry, that's my fault" is complete, and getting on with the thing is the actual repair.
- B** Long explanations sound like excuses even when they're true, and they make the lateness bigger than it was.
- C** Reads as not caring that they waited.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Whether the reason was your fault or not matters much less than whether you acknowledge their wait. Most annoyance is about the waiting, not the cause.

You misread a message and replied to the wrong thing



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Looking at your reply, and then at theirs.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You answered a question they didn't ask.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Send a correction.
- ☐ **B** Send the right answer without mentioning it.
- ☐ **C** Leave it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** "Sorry, misread that —" and then the answer. Takes one line and ends it.
- B** Fine, and can be confusing if they're still on the first thing.
- C** Leaves them wondering, and they may reply to your wrong answer, which compounds it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Misreading messages is the single most common source of small conflict there is, because text has no tone, no face and no pause. Assume misreading before assuming anything else.

You called somebody the wrong name



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

In front of them.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You used somebody else's name, or an old one.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Correct it immediately and move on.
- ☐ **B** Apologise properly.
- ☐ **C** Carry on and hope they didn't notice.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Right for a simple slip. Quick correction, no dwelling.
- B** Right if it's a name that matters — a name somebody has changed, for instance. Then it's not a slip, it's a thing, and a short proper apology and getting it right afterwards is what counts.
- C** They noticed.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

With a name somebody has chosen for themselves, the repair isn't the apology — it's using the right one from then on, without commentary.

You laughed and shouldn't have



NEEDS NERVE

See also 4.10, which covers the version where it's a serious moment rather than a person.

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somebody's just had something go wrong for them.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You laughed before you thought.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say sorry to them directly.
- ☐ **B** Say nothing.
- ☐ **C** Explain that it was a reflex.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Best, and it should be quick — “sorry, that was horrible of me” is enough.
- B** They'll remember it and you won't get a chance to explain.
- C** True and useful for some people, and it works better after the apology than instead of it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Sequence matters — apologise first, explain second.
Explaining first makes the apology sound conditional.

You said you'd do something and you didn't



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

They've noticed.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You meant to. You didn't.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Apologise and do it now.
- ☐ **B** Apologise and give a new deadline.
- ☐ **C** Explain why it didn't happen.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The fastest repair there is.
- B** Nearly as good, and a specific new time is what makes it credible. "I'll do it tonight" beats "I'll do it soon."
- C** Reasons help once. Used every time they stop counting.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Trust is rebuilt by the next thing you do, not by the apology. One kept promise repairs more than three good explanations.

You got caught in a lie

WHERE
YOU ARE

Found out.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They know, and they're waiting.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Admit it fully.
- ☐ **B** Admit part of it.
- ☐ **C** Deny it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The only one that ends it. It's horrible for about a minute and then it's over.
- B** Drags it out, because the rest tends to come out anyway and each stage costs more than the last.
- C** Turns one lie into two, and the second is always harder to recover from.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most lies are told to avoid a small consequence, and end up producing a bigger one. Admitting it early is the cheapest exit available at every stage.

You embarrassed yourself and nobody's mentioned it



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

The next day.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's all you can think about. Nobody's said anything.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing and carry on.
- ☐ **B** Bring it up as a joke.
- ☐ **C** Ask somebody whether it was as bad as you think.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually correct. The silence is almost always because nobody's thinking about it.
- B** Reminds people. Sometimes worth it for your own relief.
- C** One trusted person can give you a reality check, and their answer is usually "what thing?"
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Other people are thinking about their own version of this. The amount of attention you imagine being paid to your worst moment is far higher than the amount actually paid.

You interrupted somebody without meaning to



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

You both started talking.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've cut across them.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "sorry, go on."
- ☐ **B** Carry on with your point.
- ☐ **C** Both stop and wait.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Standard and works every time. Three words.
- B** Fine in fast-moving conversations, less so one-to-one.
- C** The classic deadlock where you both restart at once, twice.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Accidental overlap happens constantly because nobody can see when somebody else is about to speak. It's a timing problem, not a rudeness problem.

You told a secret without realising it was one



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

After it's out.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nobody told you it was private. It clearly was.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Tell the person before they hear it from somebody else.
- ☐ **B** Say nothing and hope.
- ☐ **C** Ask whoever you told to keep it quiet.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Much better. Hearing it from you is far less damaging than hearing it from a third person.
- B** Usually delays the problem and makes it worse.
- C** Worth doing as well as A, not instead of it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

If you're ever unsure whether something's private, the question is "is it okay if I mention this?" — asked before, not after. Most information about somebody's life defaults to private.

You've been avoiding somebody since it happened

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Two weeks in.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Every day you don't speak makes speaking harder.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep avoiding.
- ☐ **B** Say something small — a hello, a normal question.
- ☐ **C** Address the thing directly.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The gap widens. Avoidance is comfortable daily and expensive over a month.
- B** Often enough on its own. A lot of these repair themselves the moment somebody acts normally.
- C** Right when it was serious, and better done in person or on the phone than by message.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The other person is frequently avoiding you for exactly the same reason and assuming you're the angry one. Somebody has to go first.

The apology you gave didn't work



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

You said sorry. They're still upset.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It didn't land.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Apologise again.
- ☐ **B** Ask what would help.
- ☐ **C** Give it time.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Repeating the same apology rarely changes anything and can feel like pressure to forgive.
- B** The useful one. Sometimes the answer is a specific thing you hadn't thought of, and sometimes it's just time.
- C** Frequently right. Apologies aren't switches, and forgiveness has its own timetable.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

An apology isn't a transaction that obliges the other person to be fine. You can do it perfectly and still have to wait.

They apologised and you're not ready to accept it

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being offered a resolution you don't feel yet.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They've said sorry and are waiting for "it's fine."

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say it's fine.
- ☐ **B** Say "thank you — I need a bit longer."
- ☐ **C** Say nothing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Ends the moment and leaves the feeling, which usually comes back.
- B** Honest, and it acknowledges their effort without pretending. Most people can accept this.
- C** Leaves them not knowing where they stand, which they'll fill in with something worse than the truth.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You're allowed to take time. Being pressured to forgive on somebody else's schedule is its own small unfairness.

You have to go back into a room you walked out of

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Outside the door.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You left, loudly or quietly, and now you have to return.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Walk back in and say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Say something short to the adult on the way in.
- ☐ **C** Ask somebody to come in with you.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually completely fine. Rooms carry on and most people barely register it.
- B** “Sorry, I needed a minute” covers everything and prevents the conversation later.
- C** Makes it much easier and there’s no age at which this stops being reasonable.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Going back in is harder than leaving. That’s why the walking-out feels like the problem when the returning is the actual difficulty — and it’s worth agreeing with an adult in advance how the going-back-in works.

You have to face somebody the next day



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

The morning after.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You'll see them in an hour and you've been dreading it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Act completely normally.
- ☐ **B** Say one line about it early and then move on.
- ☐ **C** Avoid them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works more often than expected. Normality is a strong signal that things are fine.
- B** Getting it out of the way in the first minute means the rest of the day isn't spent waiting for it.
- C** Extends it by a day. Then another.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The dread is almost always worse than the actual meeting.
The first thirty seconds are the whole of it.

You did the right thing and it went wrong anyway

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Afterwards, being blamed or feeling responsible.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You made a good decision and the outcome was bad.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Decide you were wrong.
- ☐ **B** Separate the decision from the outcome.
- ☐ **C** Ask somebody you trust what they'd have done.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easiest, and it teaches you the wrong lesson for next time.
- B** The right frame. Good decisions can have bad outcomes — that's how anything involving other people works.
- C** Useful, and it should be somebody who'll be honest rather than kind.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Judging a decision by its outcome is one of the most common mistakes people make. The question is whether it was sensible with what you knew at the time.

It was weeks ago and it's still in your head

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Lying awake with it again.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone else has forgotten. You haven't.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

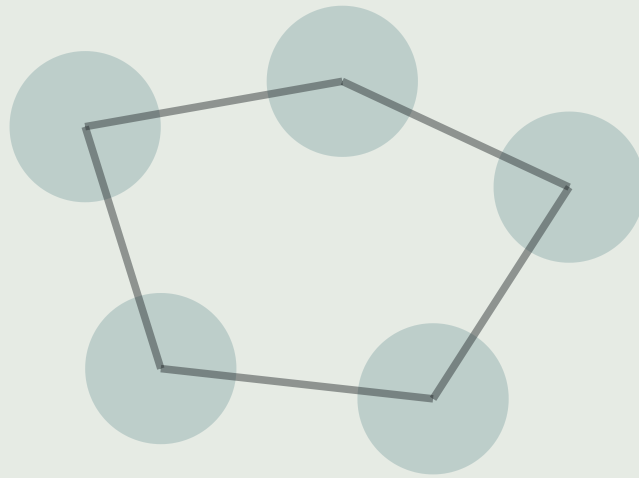
- ☐ **A** Wait for it to fade.
- ☐ **B** Tell somebody about it.
- ☐ **C** Write down what actually happened, plainly.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Most of them do fade eventually. Some don't without help.
- B** Saying it out loud usually shrinks it. It's often much smaller once it's outside your head.
- C** Writing the facts without the feelings attached is a good test — the written version is nearly always less bad than the remembered one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Replaying old social moments at night is extremely common and it isn't a sign that the moment mattered. If it's happening most nights and stopping you sleeping, that's worth mentioning to an adult you trust — there are practical things that help, and you shouldn't have to work them out alone.



PART NINE

Friends and Friendship Trouble

SCENARIOS 9.1 – 9.20

You want to make a friend and don't know how to start



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A room with somebody in it you'd like to know.

WHAT
HAPPENS

There's no obvious opening and no obvious reason to speak to them.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait and hope something comes up.
- ☐ **B** Ask them something small and practical — about the work, the room, the thing you're both doing.
- ☐ **C** Say you like something of theirs.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes works, slowly. It relies on somebody else doing the starting.
- B** The reliable route. Friendships almost never begin with a big conversation; they begin with several small useless ones about nothing.
- C** A specific compliment about a bag, a book, a badge gives them something to answer.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Friendship is mostly repetition. Being in the same place as somebody, regularly, doing small talk, is how nearly all of them start. It isn't one brilliant conversation — it's about six boring ones.

A friend has stopped replying

WHERE
YOU ARE

Looking at a message from four days ago.

WHAT
HAPPENS

No answer, and no explanation.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait.
- ☐ **B** Send one more, light and low-pressure.
- ☐ **C** Ask directly if something's wrong.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Most people come back on their own. Silence is usually about their week, not about you.
- B** One follow-up is normal. Three in a row changes how it reads, and puts them under pressure to explain.
- C** Fair after a longer gap, and it's better in person than by message.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People go quiet for reasons that have nothing to do with anybody — being busy, being low, forgetting they opened it. Not replying is rarely a decision.

You've been left out of something specific

★★★
COSTS A LOT

See also 6.2, which is about the feeling. This one is about what you do with the friend.

WHERE
YOU ARE

With the friend who was there.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They went. You didn't know it was happening.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Mention it lightly: "looked good, that."
- ☐ **C** Ask directly why you weren't asked.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** It sits there and affects how you are with them without them knowing why.
- B** Usually gets an explanation without anybody having to be accused. Most explanations are boring and true.
- C** Direct, and it can put them on the defensive. Sometimes necessary if it keeps happening.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

One exclusion is usually logistics. A pattern of exclusions is information about the friendship. The difference between those two is worth waiting to find out.

Your friend has a new friend

WHERE
YOU ARE

Watching a pair become a three, or a two without you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're spending time with somebody else.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing and carry on.
- ☐ **B** Get to know the new person.
- ☐ **C** Say you've missed them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often fine. Most of these settle within a few weeks.
- B** The move that keeps the friendship. It also removes the competition, because there isn't one once you all know each other.
- C** Honest and effective. "I've not seen you much lately" is not needy; it's clear.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People can have more than one friend without any of them being replaced. It doesn't feel that way from inside, and it's still true.

Somebody calls you their friend and you're not sure they are



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being introduced as somebody's friend.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You'd have said you barely know them.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Go with it.
- ☐ **B** Correct it.
- ☐ **C** Decide it's fine either way.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs nothing and sometimes it becomes true.
- B** Publicly correcting somebody's description of a friendship is hurtful out of proportion to the point.
- C** Usually right. "Friend" is a loose word and people use it for anyone they're glad to see.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Nobody agrees on where acquaintance ends and friend begins. Two people can be at different points on that and both be right.

A friend only talks to you when nobody else is around



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

School, or a group setting.

WHAT
HAPPENS

In private you're close. In public they don't know you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it.
- ☐ **B** Say something to them privately.
- ☐ **C** Step back from the friendship.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** You keep the private friendship and carry the public cost of it.
- B** Worth saying once, plainly: "you don't talk to me in front of the others." Some people genuinely haven't noticed they're doing it.
- C** Reasonable if nothing changes after you've said it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Somebody who values you only where nobody can see is telling you something about what they're afraid of, not about your worth. That's still a bad deal for you.

You've been invited and you don't want to go



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Holding an invitation.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You like the person, and you don't want the event.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Go anyway.
- ☐ **B** Say no and suggest something else with them.
- ☐ **C** Say no with no alternative.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes the right call for somebody who matters to you.
- B** The best of both. "I can't do parties, but can we do something on Saturday?" declines the event and keeps the person.
- C** Fine, and if you do it repeatedly without offering anything else, invitations stop coming.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Turning down an event is not turning down a friendship, provided you say which one you're doing.

You want to be invited and you weren't



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Hearing about it beforehand.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's being planned in front of you and nobody's asked you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Ask if you can come.
- ☐ **C** Say it sounds good and see what happens.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Nothing changes.
- B** Asking to come is much more normal than it feels, and the answer is usually yes.
- C** The softer version, and it gives them an easy opening. It also lets them not take it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Plenty of people get invited to things because they asked. It isn't the humiliation it looks like from the outside.

A friend asks for something you don't want to give

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being asked for money, a favour, your work, your time.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You'd rather not, and they're a friend.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say yes.
- ☐ **B** Say no, once, without a long reason.
- ☐ **C** Offer something smaller instead.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine occasionally, and resentment builds if it's always.
- B** See 7.10 — short and unchanged is what works. "I'd rather not" is enough.
- C** Often the honest middle. Lending a bit rather than all of it, or helping for twenty minutes rather than the afternoon.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

A friendship that only survives if you always say yes isn't being tested by your no. It's being revealed by it.

A friendship has ended and nobody said so



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Months on. You just don't talk any more.

WHAT
HAPPENS

There was no argument. It stopped.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it.
- ☐ **B** Get in touch and see.
- ☐ **C** Ask what happened.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Common, and it's how most friendships end — by drifting, not by ending.
- B** Low cost. A message after months is usually welcomed, not resented.
- C** Often produces no real answer, because there frequently isn't one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most friendships have a length rather than an ending. It says nothing about whether it was a real one while it lasted.

You're always the one who messages first



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Scrolling back through a chat.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Every conversation was started by you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Carry on.
- ☐ **B** Stop for a while and see what happens.
- ☐ **C** Say it: "I feel like I'm always the one getting in touch."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Keeps the friendship going and quietly wears you down.
- B** Gives you information. Some friendships restart; some go quiet, and now you know.
- C** Direct. Some people are genuinely bad at initiating and are relieved to be told.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Some people never message first with anybody. It's a trait, not a verdict on you — but it's fair to check which one you're dealing with.

A friend copies everything you do



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Watching them take up your interest, your phrases, your style.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's flattering and it's irritating.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go.
- ☐ **B** Say something light about it.
- ☐ **C** Keep something for yourself.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Most copying fades within a few months.
- B** Works between friends, and it can hurt more than you intend.
- C** Practical. Having one thing that isn't shared is allowed.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Copying is usually admiration with no better way of expressing itself. It's how a lot of people say they want to be near you.

You've outgrown a friendship

WHERE
YOU ARE

With somebody you've known for years and have little left in common with.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You keep meeting out of habit.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Carry on as you are.
- ☐ **B** See them less, without announcing it.
- ☐ **C** Say it out loud.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine. Old friendships can run on history for a long time and still be worth having.
- B** How most of these resolve. Slow and kind, and nobody has to be told they've been dropped.
- C** Rarely necessary and usually painful. Announcing the end of a friendship is a big move for a small change.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Friendships are allowed to be part-time. Seeing somebody twice a year is a real friendship, not a failed one.

A friend is being unkind to somebody else



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Standing next to them while they do it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You like them and you don't like this.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Say something in the moment.
- ☐ **C** Say something to them privately after.
- ☐ **D** Check on the person afterwards.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Reads as agreement to everyone watching, including the person on the receiving end.
- B** Stops it fastest, and it's the version that costs you most socially.
- C** Often the most effective. People take criticism from a friend far better without an audience.
- D** See 4.15. Do this whatever else you choose.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being somebody's friend doesn't oblige you to back them when they're wrong. The strongest friendships are the ones where somebody can say "that was out of order."

You want to say sorry to somebody you fell out with

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Weeks later, wanting it fixed.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You don't know how to open it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Message them.
- ☐ **B** Say it in person.
- ☐ **C** Act normally and let it repair itself.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easier to send and easier to ignore. Good for opening the door: "can we talk?"
- B** Lands better for anything serious, because tone comes with it.
- C** Works for small fallings-out and leaves bigger ones unresolved underneath.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

A short apology beats a long one. "I'm sorry about what I said, I miss you" does more than three paragraphs explaining your reasoning.

Somebody wants to be closer friends than you do



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being messaged constantly, or sought out daily.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They want more of the friendship than you've got to give.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Match their energy.
- ☐ **B** Reply slower and less.
- ☐ **C** Be straight about how much you've got.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Unsustainable, and dropping it later feels to them like being rejected.
- B** What most people do. It's ambiguous, so it often takes a long time and hurts more.
- C** Kinder in the long run: "I'm rubbish at messaging, it isn't about you" is honest and protects the friendship at a size you can manage.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People have different capacities for contact, and neither the higher nor the lower one is the correct amount.

You've got one friend and they're away today



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A day with nobody to be with.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The person who makes the day workable isn't here.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Get through it alone.
- ☐ **B** Sit with a group you half-know.
- ☐ **C** Ask an adult if there's somewhere you can be at break.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Doable. Long, though, if the whole day depends on one person.
- B** Groups take people in more easily than expected, especially for one day.
- C** Most schools have a room, a club or a library available at break. Asking is the fastest way to find out, and it's a normal request.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Having one close friend rather than many isn't a deficiency — but a single point of failure is worth knowing about, and having one backup place to be makes the difference on days like this.

A friend's parent doesn't like you



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

At their house, or not invited to it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You can tell.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Be polite and keep it brief.
- ☐ **B** Meet your friend somewhere else instead.
- ☐ **C** Ask your friend about it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often enough. Adults change their minds about people, usually slowly and quietly.
- B** Practical, and it removes the problem entirely for most friendships.
- C** Sometimes gets a useful answer, and it puts your friend in an awkward position between you.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Adults' opinions of children are often based on very little — one bad first meeting, or something they've heard. It's rarely a considered judgement.

You have to work with somebody you fell out with

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Paired up with them.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Neither of you chose this.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Do the work, say nothing personal.
- ☐ **B** Clear the air first.
- ☐ **C** Ask to be moved.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works, and it's what most adults do at work every day.
- B** Thirty seconds — "let's just get this done, yeah?" — usually settles it and makes the hour easier.
- C** Reasonable if there's real hostility. Less so for an ordinary falling-out, and it can look like a bigger deal than it is.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being civil with somebody you don't like is a separate skill from liking them, and it's one of the most useful things you'll ever learn.

You made a friend and don't know how to keep one



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Two weeks into something new.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's going well and you're waiting for it to stop.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

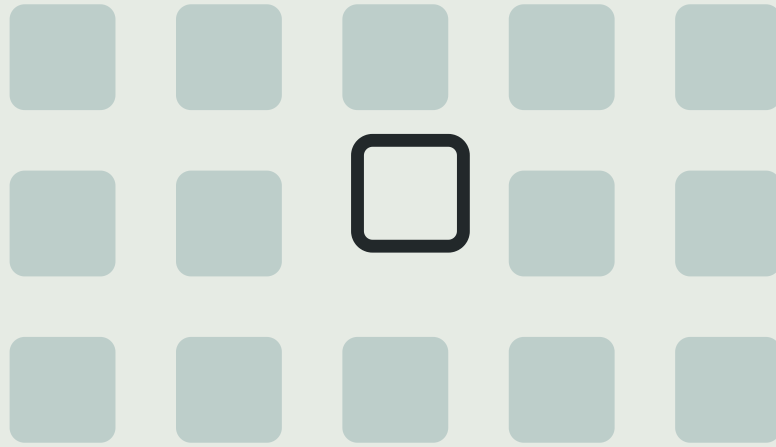
- ☐ **A** Carry on as you are.
- ☐ **B** Make a small regular thing of it.
- ☐ **C** Ask them directly what they want from it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often enough. Friendships largely maintain themselves through being in the same places.
- B** The practical answer. A regular fixture — same day, same thing — carries a friendship through the periods when neither of you is organising anything.
- C** Unusual and can be a lot to put on somebody early on.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Keeping a friendship is mostly turning up repeatedly. It isn't a performance you have to sustain, and there's no test at the end of the first month.



PART TEN

School, Groups and Busy Places

SCENARIOS 10.1 – 10.20

You have to pick a partner

WHERE
YOU ARE

A classroom. The instruction has just been given.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone's turning to somebody. You've got about four seconds.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait to be picked.
- ☐ **B** Turn to whoever's nearest and say "shall we?"
- ☐ **C** Ask the teacher to pair you.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The slowest and most uncomfortable route, and it often ends with being assigned anyway.
- B** Nearest person, two words, done. Speed matters more than choice here — almost nobody says no.
- C** Legitimate and quick. Some teachers prefer it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Everyone in the room is anxious about this, including the popular ones. Moving first is the whole advantage.

Nobody picks you

WHERE
YOU ARE

Left over.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The pairs have formed and you're not in one.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait for the teacher to sort it.
- ☐ **B** Join a pair and make it a three.
- ☐ **C** Ask to work alone.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** It gets sorted, and the waiting is the bad bit.
- B** Threes are usually allowed and nobody minds.
- C** Often granted, and it's a real preference rather than a consolation prize — plenty of people work better alone.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Pairing up is about who somebody spoke to first, not who they like most. It's decided in four seconds by proximity.

Group work and nobody's doing anything



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Four of you. Ten minutes gone.

WHAT
HAPPENS

No one has started.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait.
- ☐ **B** Suggest a split: "shall I do this bit, you do that?"
- ☐ **C** Do it all yourself.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Groups without a starter usually stay stopped.
- B** The person who suggests the split becomes the organiser, which is more work and a much better outcome.
- C** Gets it done and teaches the group they don't need to.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Groups stall because everyone's waiting for permission. Whoever speaks first gets to decide, and nobody usually argues.

You know the answer and can't make yourself say it



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Hand not up.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Somebody else says it and gets the credit.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go.
- ☐ **B** Tell the person next to you.
- ☐ **C** Write it down and show the teacher after.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Common, and over a year it means a teacher underestimates what you know.
- B** Low stakes, and it often ends with them saying it and you being credited anyway.
- C** The one that changes how you're assessed. Written work counts for far more than hands up.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Speaking in class and knowing the material are different skills, and only one of them is being assessed. Finding another route to show what you know is not a workaround, it's sensible.

You're asked to read out loud

WHERE
YOU ARE

Your turn is coming down the row.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You can see how far away it is.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Do it.
- ☐ **B** Ask to pass this time.
- ☐ **C** Read a shorter section.
- ☐ **D** Arrange it with the teacher in advance.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes fine, and the counting-ahead is often worse than the reading.
- B** Most teachers allow a pass without comment. Some don't, which is why D exists.
- C** A decent compromise that keeps you in the lesson.
- D** The permanent fix. A quiet arrangement — you read only when you volunteer — takes one conversation and removes months of dread.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Reading aloud is a completely separate skill from reading.
Struggling with one says nothing about the other.

There's a cover teacher and everything's different



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A lesson that isn't running the way it usually does.

WHAT
HAPPENS

New person, new rules, and none of your usual arrangements.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Get through the lesson.
- ☐ **B** Tell them at the start what your arrangement is.
- ☐ **C** Ask another adult you know.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Survivable and much harder if something goes wrong mid-lesson.
- B** Thirty seconds at the start prevents the whole problem. Cover teachers usually haven't been told anything.
- C** Useful when the cover teacher won't take your word for it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Arrangements that live in one teacher's head disappear when they're absent. If yours matter, they need to be written somewhere the cover teacher will see — and that's an adult's job to sort out.

The seating plan changed

WHERE
YOU ARE

A new place in the room.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Different neighbours, different light, different distance from the door.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Try it for a week.
- ☐ **B** Ask to move, with a reason.
- ☐ **C** Say nothing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fair, and it gives you something concrete to say afterwards if it isn't working.
- B** Reasons get seats. "I can't hear from there" or "the window makes it hard to focus" is much more effective than "I don't like it."
- C** You'll be there until the next change.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Where you sit affects how much you take in. It isn't a small preference and teachers generally know that.

A fire alarm goes off

WHERE
YOU ARE

Mid-lesson. The noise is enormous.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone's moving and you can't think.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Follow the person in front of you.
- ☐ **B** Put your hands over your ears and go.
- ☐ **C** Find the adult you know and stay near them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Works. Following is enough — you don't need to know the route.
- B** Completely allowed. Nobody is assessing how you leave the building.
- C** The best if you can. Having one person to stay with removes every other decision.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Alarms are painful for a lot of people and schools know it. Ask whether yours does planned drills and whether you can be told in advance — many will, and knowing turns an unbearable event into a manageable one.

Lunch hall, no seat, everyone watching

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE YOU ARE Holding a tray in a very loud room.

WHAT HAPPENS Nowhere obvious to sit.

- WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
- ☐ **A** Sit at the nearest space without asking.
 - ☐ **B** Ask a table if there's room.
 - ☐ **C** Eat somewhere else.
 - ☐ **D** _____

- WHERE EACH ONE LEADS
- A** Normal in a busy hall. Nobody expects to be asked.
 - B** Also normal, and the answer is nearly always yes.
 - C** Many schools have somewhere quieter — a library, a club, a room. Worth finding out rather than enduring the hall daily.
 - D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Nobody is watching you arrive. Everyone in a lunch hall is dealing with their own tray, their own seat and their own twenty minutes.

You need the toilet and have to ask



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Mid-lesson, in front of everyone.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Asking means saying it out loud.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait until the lesson ends.
- ☐ **B** Ask.
- ☐ **C** Arrange a card or signal with the teacher in advance.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Uncomfortable, and it means you take in nothing for the rest of the lesson.
- B** Nobody in the room cares. It happens every lesson to somebody.
- C** The best version of asking is the hard part. Toilet cards and silent signals are standard and cost the teacher nothing.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

A school shouldn't be making this hard. If a teacher regularly refuses, that's worth telling another adult about — it's a health matter, not a discipline one.

Somebody's copying your work



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Next to them.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're looking at your page.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let them.
- ☐ **B** Move your book.
- ☐ **C** Say "don't copy mine."
- ☐ **D** Tell the teacher.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easiest, and both of you can be in trouble if it's noticed.
- B** Silent, effective and requires no confrontation. Usually the best first move.
- C** Direct. Works, and can cost you socially with some people.
- D** Right if it's persistent or if you're being pressured into it.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being asked to let somebody copy puts the risk on you and the benefit on them. Declining is fair, not mean.



You've finished early

WHERE
YOU ARE

Done, with twenty minutes left.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone else is still working.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Sit quietly.
- ☐ **B** Check your work again.
- ☐ **C** Ask what to do next.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine, and twenty minutes of nothing is a long time.
- B** Usually finds something, and it's what teachers want you to do first.
- C** Most teachers have extension work and are pleased to be asked.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Finishing early with nothing to do is a common cause of getting into trouble. Asking for more is the cheapest way to avoid it.

The class is too loud to think

WHERE
YOU ARE

In it. Trying to work.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The noise has made the task impossible.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep trying.
- ☐ **B** Ask to work somewhere quieter.
- ☐ **C** Use ear defenders or headphones if allowed.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Produces very little and costs a lot.
- B** Often granted, especially with a specific ask: "can I work in the corridor for ten minutes?"
- C** The permanent solution where it's permitted, and worth getting formally agreed rather than asking each time.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Filtering background noise is something some brains do automatically and some don't. Needing quiet to work is a processing difference, and it's one of the most commonly granted adjustments there is.

You've been asked to do something you can't do



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Given a task that's beyond you today.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone else has started.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Attempt it badly.
- ☐ **B** Say which part you're stuck on.
- ☐ **C** Say you can't do it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes the attempt shows the teacher exactly where the gap is, which helps.
- B** Specific gets help. "I can do the first two but I don't understand the third" is a request a teacher can act on immediately.
- C** Honest, and it gives them nothing to work with, so expect to be asked B anyway.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"I can't do it" and "I can't do it yet, and here's the bit that's blocking me" get very different responses from the same adult.

A trip is coming and you don't know the plan

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A week before.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've got the date and nothing else.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait for the details.
- ☐ **B** Ask for the timings, the travel and where the toilets are.
- ☐ **C** Ask if you can have it in writing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Details often arrive on the morning, which is too late to be useful.
- B** Specific questions get specific answers. Ask for the ones that matter to you, not the general plan.
- C** The best version. A written timetable you can re-read is worth more than an explanation you have to remember.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Knowing the plan is what makes an unfamiliar day possible for a lot of people. Asking for it in advance is preparation, not anxiety.

Somebody in the group is being blamed unfairly



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

The whole group is in trouble and one person is carrying it.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You know it wasn't them.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Say what you saw.
- ☐ **C** Tell the adult afterwards, privately.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The unfair outcome stands.
- B** Direct and it can turn attention onto you, which is the honest cost of it.
- C** Often more effective. Adults can revisit a decision much more easily without an audience.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Telling an adult that somebody's been wrongly blamed isn't telling tales. Telling tales is getting somebody into trouble; this is the opposite.

You're new



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

First week somewhere.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Everyone else already knows each other.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait to be approached.
- ☐ **B** Ask somebody a practical question.
- ☐ **C** Attach yourself to one person or one group early.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often works in the first week, when people are curious. Gets harder after that.
- B** "Where's the maths block?" is an opening that doesn't require any confidence and always gets an answer.
- C** Practical, and it can lock you into the first group that took you, which may not be the right one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being new has a short window where everyone's interested and it's easy to talk to anyone. Using the first fortnight is worth more than the six months after it.

You have to hand something in late



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

At the desk with work that isn't finished.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's due now.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Hand in what you've got.
- ☐ **B** Say it's late and ask for an extension.
- ☐ **C** Say nothing and hope.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually better than nothing, and partial work is markable.
- B** Asking before the deadline works far better than explaining after it. Most people grant a day if asked.
- C** The version that turns a small problem into a bigger one.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Adults are much more forgiving of being told early than of finding out late. That holds at school and at work.

An assembly you can't cope with



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A hall, packed, with a long time to go.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The noise, the crowd or the sitting still is too much.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay and endure it.
- ☐ **B** Sit at the end of a row, near a door.
- ☐ **C** Ask in advance whether you have to attend.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs a lot and often ends badly for everyone.
- B** An aisle seat with an exit route is the single most useful adjustment available and it's easy to arrange.
- C** Many schools will excuse specific assemblies or offer an alternative. It's a normal request, made in advance rather than on the day.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being unable to sit through an assembly is not a behaviour problem, and the fix is nearly always structural — where you sit, whether you can leave, whether you have to be there at all.

Everyone else knows what's happening and you don't

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A corridor full of people going somewhere.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Something was announced and you missed it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Follow the crowd.
- ☐ **B** Ask one person.
- ☐ **C** Ask an adult.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually gets you to the right place and tells you nothing about why.
- B** Fastest. One person, one question, done.
- C** Better if it involves you specifically — a change to your timetable, a room move.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Verbal announcements get missed by a lot of people every single time. If it keeps happening, ask whether the information can reach you another way — that's a reasonable thing to request, not a special favour.



PART ELEVEN

Online and Messages

Written to stay useful whatever app you're using. The situations don't change when the platforms do.

SCENARIOS 11.1 – 11.20

A message could mean two things



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Reading it for the fourth time.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's either fine or it isn't, and there's no way to tell.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Assume the friendlier reading.
- ☐ **B** Ask what they meant.
- ☐ **C** Wait and reply later.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Right most of the time. Text strips out tone, and the friendlier reading is statistically the correct one.
- B** Direct and it works. "Not sure how you meant that" is fine to send.
- C** Time often makes the answer obvious, and it stops you replying to the worse version.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Nobody can read tone in text reliably — not you, not anyone. People who seem to be doing it are guessing with more confidence.

They've read it and not replied

WHERE
YOU ARE

Watching a read receipt.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Hours have passed.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait.
- ☐ **B** Send something else.
- ☐ **C** Turn off read receipts, for both of you.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Almost always the answer. Most replies arrive eventually.
- B** A second message before the first is answered adds pressure and rarely speeds anything up.
- C** Practical. If read receipts are causing you daily distress, switching them off removes the problem entirely.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People open messages while doing something else and forget them completely. Read-and-not-replied is usually a memory failure, not a decision.

You sent something and instantly regretted it



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Staring at your own message.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It came out wrong, or you shouldn't have sent it at all.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Delete it, if you can.
- ☐ **B** Send a follow-up correcting it.
- ☐ **C** Leave it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine if it's instant. Deleting hours later draws attention and they've usually seen it.
- B** Usually best: "that came out wrong — what I meant was —" takes one line.
- C** Sometimes it wasn't as bad as it feels at 11pm.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Anything written while angry, tired or upset should sit in the box for ten minutes before sending. That single habit prevents most of the situations in this part.

A group chat is moving too fast



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Two hundred messages behind.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You can't catch up and can't join in.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Scroll back and read everything.
- ☐ **B** Read the last twenty and move on.
- ☐ **C** Mute it.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Hours of your life. Group chats are mostly noise.
- B** What everybody else is doing. Nobody reads all of it.
- C** Muting keeps you in the group without the constant demand, and nobody can see that you've done it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Group chats aren't conversations you're expected to follow completely. Treating them as optional reading is normal, not rude.

You've been added to a chat you don't want to be in



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Added without being asked.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's constant and you don't want it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Stay and mute it.
- ☐ **B** Leave.
- ☐ **C** Say why you're leaving.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Keeps the peace and costs you nothing once muted. Usually the easiest answer.
- B** Visible in most apps, and people do notice, which is why A is popular.
- C** "Too many notifications for me — message me directly" removes any suggestion it's about them.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You never agreed to be in it. Leaving a chat somebody added you to without asking is not rejecting them.

Somebody's being unkind in a chat and everyone's watching

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

In the group, reading it happen.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nobody's saying anything.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Say something in the chat.
- ☐ **C** Message the person being targeted privately.
- ☐ **D** Screenshot it and tell an adult.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Silence in a group chat reads as agreement, and the person on the receiving end can see exactly who said nothing.
- B** One person objecting usually stops it, because it changes what the group looks like it thinks.
- C** Does the most for the person, and costs you nothing publicly. Do this whatever else you choose.
- D** Right when it's persistent or serious. Written evidence with dates is taken far more seriously than a report of it.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Online, unlike a corridor, there's a record. That works in your favour if you keep it — screenshots with the date visible are the single most useful thing to have.

A message with no punctuation and you can't read the tone



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Looking at a two-word reply.

WHAT
HAPPENS

“ok” — and you have no idea what it means.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Take it at face value.
- ☐ **B** Ask.
- ☐ **C** Wait for the next message.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Usually right. Short replies are usually just short.
- B** Fine, and asking about a two-word message can feel like a lot to the other person.
- C** Context arrives quickly and settles it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Full stops, capitals and message length vary enormously between people and mean nothing consistent. Somebody who writes “ok.” isn’t angrier than somebody who writes “ok” — they’re older.

Somebody asks for a photo

WHERE
YOU ARE

A message asking you to send a picture of yourself.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're pushing, or it's somebody you don't know well.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say no.
- ☐ **B** Ignore it.
- ☐ **C** Send something.
- ☐ **D** Tell an adult.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Complete and requires no reason. See 7.10 — repeat the same no, don't explain.
- B** Perfectly fine. You don't have to answer every message.
- C** Once a photo is sent, it's out of your control permanently, whatever anybody promises.
- D** Right whenever an adult, or anybody you don't know, asks a young person for photos. That is not a normal request and it isn't yours to handle alone.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

This is one of the places where the book stops offering neutral options. Anybody pressuring you for photos is doing something wrong, whoever they are and however friendly it's been. Telling an adult is the answer, and you are not in trouble for it.

You've been sent something you didn't want to see



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

It's already on your screen.

WHAT
HAPPENS

An image, a video, something distressing.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Delete it and say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Tell them not to send you things like that.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Understandable. It doesn't stop it happening again.
- B** Worth saying, once and plainly.
- C** The right call for anything illegal, sexual or seriously distressing. You have done nothing wrong by receiving it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Being sent something is not the same as asking for it, and no reasonable adult will treat it that way. The people who worry about being blamed are exactly the ones who should tell somebody.

A stranger messages you

WHERE
YOU ARE

A request or a message from somebody you don't know.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They seem friendly.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Ignore and block.
- ☐ **B** Reply and see who it is.
- ☐ **C** Check with somebody you know first.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Always available, always sufficient, no explanation owed.
- B** Sometimes it's a person from school you don't recognise. Often it isn't.
- C** Sensible. A mutual friend can confirm in one message whether they're real.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People who are pretending to be somebody else are very good at seeming ordinary at first. The warning sign isn't how they talk — it's them wanting to move to a private app, wanting it kept secret, or asking a lot about where you are.

Everyone's posted about something you weren't invited to



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Scrolling, and there it is.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Photos of the thing you didn't know about.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep scrolling.
- ☐ **B** Put the phone down.
- ☐ **C** Say something to one of them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** You'll look at all of them and feel worse.
- B** The practical answer. Nothing good comes from studying it.
- C** See 9.3. Better in person than in a comment.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Posts are the highlights of somebody's week, chosen deliberately. Comparing your ordinary day to somebody's edited one is a fixed, unfair contest.

Somebody screenshotted your message



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Finding out it's been shared.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Something private has gone further than you sent it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Ask them to delete it.
- ☐ **B** Say nothing.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult if it's serious.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Worth asking, and you can't make it happen.
- B** Sometimes the fastest way for it to blow over.
- C** Right if it's being spread, or if it's being used against you.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Assume anything you send can be screenshotted, because it can. That's not a reason to send nothing — it's a reason to know which things belong in a message and which belong in a conversation.

You need to reply and can't find the words



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A message that needs a real answer.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You've drafted five versions.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Send something short.
- ☐ **B** Keep working on it.
- ☐ **C** Say "I'll reply properly later."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Short is nearly always enough, and better than nothing arriving for three days.
- B** Perfect replies take hours and read the same as good ones.
- C** Useful for hard messages. It stops the silence being read as avoidance.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The other person is waiting to hear from you, not to be impressed. Length is not what they're measuring.

A voice note when you'd rather have text



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Four minutes of audio you have to find somewhere quiet to play.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You'd much rather read it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Listen to it.
- ☐ **B** Ask them to text instead.
- ☐ **C** Reply by text and hope they follow.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine occasionally, and it's a real cost if it's constant.
- B** Reasonable to ask once: "I can't really do voice notes — can you type it?" Most people can.
- C** People usually match the format you reply in, without either of you discussing it.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Voice notes are easier to send and harder to receive. Text is the opposite. Neither person is being difficult — you just have different halves of the same trade.

You've been left on delivered for three days



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

No reply, no read.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The message might not even have been seen.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Leave it.
- ☐ **B** Send one more.
- ☐ **C** Contact them another way.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Most people reappear.
- B** One is reasonable. "Just checking you got this" is neutral.
- C** Sensible if it matters or if you're worried about them.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Phones break, notifications get buried, people go away.
Undelivered is more often technical than personal.

Somebody's pretending to be somebody else



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

An account that doesn't add up.

WHAT
HAPPENS

The details are slightly wrong, or the photos don't match.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Block and move on.
- ☐ **B** Challenge them.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Effective and requires nothing from you.
- B** Gets you a denial and lets them know you're paying attention.
- C** Right if they've been in contact with you or with people you know. This is exactly what safeguarding adults are for.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You never have to prove somebody's fake before you block them. Suspicion is enough — you don't owe strangers the benefit of the doubt.

You want to leave a group chat

WHERE
YOU ARE

In a chat that's stopped being for you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Leaving is visible.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Mute and stay.
- ☐ **B** Leave without comment.
- ☐ **C** Say goodbye and leave.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The lowest-drama option and the one most people choose.
- B** Some people will ask why. Most won't.
- C** One line — “getting rid of some notifications, message me directly” — prevents any guessing.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Leaving a chat gets discussed for about a day. Staying in one that stresses you every evening costs much more than a day.

A friend posts something untrue about you

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Reading it, with other people reading it too.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's wrong and it's public.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Comment publicly.
- ☐ **B** Message them privately and ask them to take it down.
- ☐ **C** Ignore it.
- ☐ **D** Screenshot it and tell an adult.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Public argument, and it puts the post in front of more people.
- B** Nearly always the right first move. Most people take things down when asked directly.
- C** Works for something trivial that'll be gone tomorrow.
- D** Right if it's serious, if it doesn't come down, or if it's part of a pattern.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Responding publicly grows the audience for the thing you want fewer people to see. Private first, every time.

Somebody wants to keep chatting when you want to stop



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

Late, tired, still typing.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Every time you try to end it there's another message.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Keep going.
- ☐ **B** Say you're going, then stop replying.
- ☐ **C** Stop replying without saying anything.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** There's no natural end to a chat. It runs until somebody stops.
- B** The clean version. "Right, I'm off — talk tomorrow" and then actually going.
- C** Fine, and it leaves them wondering, which some people find hard.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You're allowed to end a conversation because you're tired. That's a complete reason and it doesn't need dressing up as something else.

You have to message an adult you don't know



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Writing to a teacher, a tutor, an office.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You don't know how formal to be.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Write it like a text.
- ☐ **B** Use a simple structure: who you are, what you need, thank you.
- ☐ **C** Ask somebody to check it first.
- ☐ **D** _____

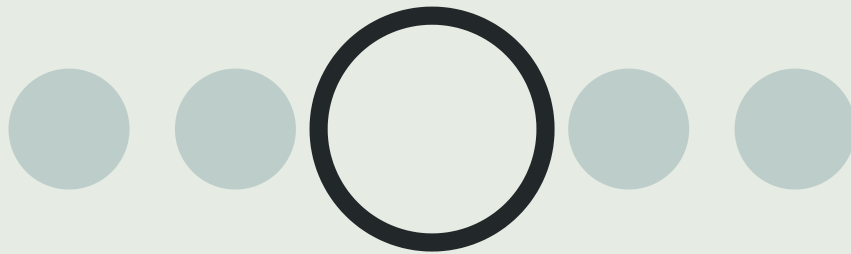
WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes fine, and it can read as abrupt to somebody who doesn't know you.
- B** Works every time. Three sentences: "Hello, I'm [name] in [class]. I wanted to ask about [thing]. Thank you."
- C** Reasonable for anything that matters, and it gets easier the more you send.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Formal messages are a template, not a talent. Once you have the three-sentence shape, every future one is filling in the blanks.

MY TEMPLATE



PART TWELVE

Adults, Strangers and Standing Up For Yourself

This part is different. In several of these the book takes a position — because some of these situations aren't yours to manage alone.

An adult asks you something you don't want to answer

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being asked about your family, your diagnosis, your home.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They seem to expect an answer.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Answer.
- ☐ **B** Give a short, partial answer.
- ☐ **C** Say "I'd rather not talk about that."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Fine if you want to. Being asked by an adult doesn't make it required.
- B** Useful middle ground. You can answer the shape of a question without the details.
- C** Complete, and most adults accept it immediately. One who doesn't is telling you something.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Information about you belongs to you. Being younger doesn't change that, and "I'd rather not say" is a sentence you're allowed to use with adults.

You need to tell an adult they've got it wrong



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A decision has been made about you, based on something inaccurate.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They think something happened that didn't.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Accept it.
- ☐ **B** Correct it calmly, once.
- ☐ **C** Put it in writing.
- ☐ **D** Ask another adult to help you say it.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The wrong version becomes the record.
- B** Often enough, especially straight away.
- C** The one that changes things. Written accounts get looked at again; verbal ones get remembered inaccurately.
- D** Entirely reasonable, and it's what advocates exist for.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Writing something down doesn't make it a formal complaint. A short factual note — what happened, when, who was there — is simply a clearer version of the same conversation.

A stranger starts talking to you



NEEDS NERVE

WHERE
YOU ARE

A bus stop, a shop, a queue.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Somebody you don't know has started a conversation.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Answer briefly and politely.
- ☐ **B** Give short answers and disengage.
- ☐ **C** Move away.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Most of these are harmless and last a minute.
- B** Short answers end most conversations on their own.
- C** Always allowed, no explanation, no politeness required.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You do not owe a stranger a conversation, and you never have to be polite at the cost of feeling unsafe. If it feels wrong, go — being rude to somebody who turns out to be harmless costs nothing.

Somebody keeps pushing after you've said no



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Having said no, more than once.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're still going.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Repeat the same no.
- ☐ **B** Leave.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The technique from 7.10 — same words, no new reasons.
- B** Removing yourself ends it immediately.
- C** Right if they have any power over you, or if it keeps happening.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Somebody who won't accept a no has told you something important about them. The problem is theirs — the way out is still yours to take.

You need to ask for an adjustment



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A classroom, a workplace, a club.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Something small would make a real difference and nobody's offered it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Manage without.
- ☐ **B** Ask, and say what it's for.
- ☐ **C** Ask an adult who knows you to ask on your behalf.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Costs you daily, invisibly.
- B** The pairing of *what* and *why* is what gets things agreed: "can I sit near the door, because I need to be able to step out if the noise gets too much?"
- C** Useful when you've asked and been refused, or when asking is the hard part.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Most adjustments are cheap, quick and already allowed. The barrier is almost always that nobody knew, not that somebody said no.

THE ADJUSTMENT
I NEED, AND WHY

An adult says “you don’t look autistic,” or similar



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Having just told them, or having it come up.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They’ve said something dismissive, probably meaning it as a compliment.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go.
- ☐ **B** Say “it doesn’t have a look.”
- ☐ **C** Explain properly.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Reasonable. You are not obliged to educate everybody who says something ignorant.
- B** Five words, no lecture, and it does the job.
- C** Worth the effort with somebody who’ll be in your life, and it is work — decide whether they’re worth the work.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

People usually say this meaning to be kind, which is what makes it so annoying. It rests on the idea that being autistic is a bad thing you’ve managed to avoid looking like.

You've been punished for something that was a need, not a choice



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

In trouble for leaving the room, not making eye contact, not sitting still.

WHAT
HAPPENS

A support need has been treated as bad behaviour.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Take the punishment.
- ☐ **B** Explain what was actually happening.
- ☐ **C** Ask a parent or another adult to raise it.
- ☐ **D** Write down what happened, with the date.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** It happens again, and the record builds up wrongly.
- B** Sometimes enough, especially with an adult who knows you.
- C** Frequently necessary. Adults raising it with other adults carries weight it shouldn't need to, and does.
- D** Do this as well as anything else. Dates, what happened, who was there.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

This is one of the most common things that goes wrong for neurodivergent young people at school, and it's fixable — but almost always through a written record and an adult in your corner, rather than through the conversation in the moment.

Somebody tells you to make eye contact



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being told to look at somebody while they talk to you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It's uncomfortable, and it makes listening harder.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Do it.
- ☐ **B** Look near their face — their eyebrows, their mouth.
- ☐ **C** Say "I listen better if I'm not looking at you."
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Possible, and for many people it means taking in far less of what's being said.
- B** The practical workaround, and it satisfies almost everybody who asks.
- C** True, and worth saying to anybody you'll deal with regularly. Most adults, told this, stop asking.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Eye contact isn't listening — it's a signal that some people read as listening. For a lot of people, looking away is what makes the listening possible. You're allowed to say so.

You need to explain what helps you



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A new teacher, a new club, a new job.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They don't know anything about how you work.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait for them to notice.
- ☐ **B** Tell them two or three specific things.
- ☐ **C** Give them something written.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** They'll notice the difficulties before they notice the reasons.
- B** Specific beats general every time. "Written instructions" and "a heads-up before changes" are actionable; "I have difficulties" isn't.
- C** A one-page sheet you can hand over means you never have to give the speech again.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

The version of this that works is short and practical. Three things people can actually do beats a full explanation of how your brain works.

MY THREE
THINGS

Somebody talks to the adult with you instead of to you

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A shop, a clinic, a meeting about you.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're asking your parent questions you could answer.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it happen.
- ☐ **B** Answer anyway.
- ☐ **C** Ask your adult in advance to redirect them.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Easiest when you're tired, and it's how people get talked over for years.
- B** Answering directly usually resets it for the rest of the conversation.
- C** Effective. "Ask them, not me" from the adult you're with fixes it immediately.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

This happens to disabled people of every age constantly. It isn't about you being young, and noticing it is the first step to it stopping.

You have to see a doctor or a dentist



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A waiting room.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Unfamiliar people, unfamiliar touch, questions.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Get through it.
- ☐ **B** Tell them at the start what you need.
- ☐ **C** Write your questions down beforehand.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Often means you leave without having said the thing you went for.
- B** “Can you tell me what you’re doing before you do it” is a request most clinicians are glad to have.
- C** Worth doing. Under pressure, prepared questions come out and unprepared ones don’t.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You can ask for a longer appointment, a quieter time of day, or to wait somewhere other than the waiting room. These are ordinary requests that reception staff deal with regularly.

A shop assistant asks if you need help



EVERYDAY

WHERE
YOU ARE

Browsing.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Somebody's approached you.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say "just looking, thanks."
- ☐ **B** Ask for what you actually want.
- ☐ **C** Leave.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** The standard phrase and it ends the interaction completely.
- B** Faster than searching, and it's their job.
- C** Always available, and you'll have to come back if you needed the thing.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"Just looking, thanks" is a fixed formula that every shop worker hears fifty times a day. It requires nothing else from you.

You've been treated unfairly and nobody noticed

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

After the fact, with no witnesses.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It happened and nothing's going to come of it.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Let it go.
- ☐ **B** Tell one adult you trust.
- ☐ **C** Write it down with the date.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes right for a one-off.
- B** Being believed by one person matters more than most people expect, even when nothing changes.
- C** The thing that makes a pattern visible later. A single incident is deniable; six dated ones aren't.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Keep a note. Not to build a case, but because memory blurs and dates get argued over, and a record made at the time is worth more than a good memory.

You need to say no to an adult

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being asked to do something you don't want to do.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They're an adult and you're not.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Do it.
- ☐ **B** Say no, politely and clearly.
- ☐ **C** Say you need to check with somebody first.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Right for ordinary instructions — school work, house rules, a job.
- B** Right for anything that's a request rather than an instruction. "No thank you" works upwards as well as sideways.
- C** The safest response to anything that feels off. An adult with good intentions never objects to you checking with somebody.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

There's a difference between an instruction from somebody responsible for you and a request from an adult who wants something. The first you generally follow. The second you're allowed to refuse — and an adult who tells you that you can't check with somebody is the clearest warning sign there is.

Somebody's being unkind to you and calling it a joke



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

The third or fourth time.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Every time you object, you're told you can't take a joke.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Put up with it.
- ☐ **B** Say it isn't funny and that you want it to stop.
- ☐ **C** Keep a record of when it happens.
- ☐ **D** Tell an adult.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** It continues, and it usually escalates.
- B** Worth doing once, clearly. It also establishes that you asked, which matters later.
- C** Dates and details. This is what turns "they're picking on me" into something a school has to act on.
- D** Right. Repeated targeting of one person is bullying regardless of what it's called.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

"Can't you take a joke" is the standard line for making somebody accept unkind treatment. The test from 4.6 applies: a joke stops when you say it hurt. Anything that continues after that isn't one.

You feel unsafe and you're not sure you're allowed to say so

★★★
COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Somewhere that doesn't feel right.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Nothing has definitely happened. Something feels wrong.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait until you're sure.
- ☐ **B** Leave.
- ☐ **C** Tell an adult.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Waiting for certainty is how people end up staying too long.
- B** Always the right to take. You don't need a reason that would satisfy anyone else.
- C** Right, and it doesn't have to be a big report. "Something's been bothering me" is a fine way to start.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You don't have to be certain, or be able to explain why, or be right. Feeling unsafe is enough of a reason to leave and enough of a reason to tell somebody. Nobody sensible will be annoyed at you for a false alarm.

You need to report something about somebody else



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Knowing something an adult should know.

WHAT
HAPPENS

Telling feels like betraying somebody.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Tell an adult you trust.
- ☐ **C** Tell them anonymously if your school has a way.
- ☐ **D** Ask somebody to come with you.

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Leaves the person without help and leaves you carrying it.
- B** The main route. One adult, plainly told.
- C** Many schools have an anonymous reporting route. It works and it's a legitimate way to do this.
- D** Makes it much easier and is always allowed.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

See 5.17 — telling tales is trying to get somebody into trouble. Reporting is trying to get somebody out of it. Adults can tell the difference, and the people who report are almost never the ones who regret it.

An adult breaks a promise

WHERE
YOU ARE

The thing that was going to happen hasn't.

WHAT
HAPPENS

They said, and then didn't.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Say nothing.
- ☐ **B** Ask what happened.
- ☐ **C** Ask for a new commitment, with a date.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** It becomes the pattern.
- B** Sometimes there's a real reason, and hearing it helps.
- C** The practical move. A specific date is harder to let slip than a general intention.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Adults break promises to children more casually than to other adults, mostly because there's less comeback. Asking for a date politely, and asking again, is completely fair.

You have to ask for help in front of other people



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

A room where asking will be heard.

WHAT
HAPPENS

You need it and you don't want an audience.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

- ☐ **A** Wait until afterwards.
- ☐ **B** Ask quietly.
- ☐ **C** Use a signal agreed in advance.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Sometimes fine and sometimes too late to be useful.
- B** Most rooms are noisier than you think and nobody hears.
- C** The best version if this is a regular problem — a card, a page corner, a gesture. It takes one conversation to set up.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

Nobody in the room is tracking who asked for help. The audience you're imagining is thinking about their own work.

Somebody asks why you're like that



COSTS A LOT

WHERE
YOU ARE

Being asked to account for yourself.

WHAT
HAPPENS

It might be curiosity. It might not.

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

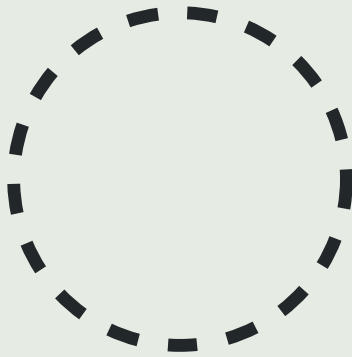
- ☐ **A** Say "like what?"
- ☐ **B** Give a short, true answer.
- ☐ **C** Say nothing.
- ☐ **D** _____

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

- A** Makes them be specific, which usually deflates it if it wasn't a real question.
- B** "I'm autistic" or "I don't like noise" — one line, no justification. Say it only if you want to.
- C** Complete. You don't have to explain yourself to anybody who asks.
- D** Yours.

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

You are not a question that needs answering. Explaining yourself is something you can choose to do because it's useful, and never something you owe.



PART THIRTEEN

Build Your Own

The ones that matter most to you are probably specific — a particular corridor, a particular person, a particular Tuesday.

BLANK TEMPLATES

Scenario



CIRCLE THE COST

WHERE
YOU ARE

WHAT
HAPPENS

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

☐	A	
☐	B	
☐	C	
☐	D	

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

A	
B	
C	
D	

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

WHAT I'LL
TRY

Scenario



CIRCLE THE COST

WHERE
YOU ARE

WHAT
HAPPENS

WHAT WOULD
YOU DO?

☐	A	
☐	B	
☐	C	
☐	D	

WHERE EACH
ONE LEADS

A	
B	
C	
D	

THE BIT NOBODY
TELLS YOU

WHAT I'LL
TRY

How to fill one in

Write the situation without the feelings first — just what happens, as a camera would see it. Then four things somebody could do, including the one you'd actually do and one you never would.

The hard part is the consequences, and it works best with two people. One writes the options, the other says where each one leads. Neither of you has to agree.

The full scenario index

PART 1 — PEOPLE AND SPACE

1.1 Someone sits next to you · **1.2** Someone stands very close behind you in a queue · **1.3** Someone hugs you without asking · **1.4** You need to get past someone · **1.5** You sit down, then realise it was someone's seat · **1.6** Someone keeps looking at you · **1.7** Someone picks up your things · **1.8** There's one seat left and it's next to a stranger · **1.9** Someone sits in your usual spot · **1.10** Someone walks with you when you wanted to walk alone · **1.11** An animal comes over to you · **1.12** Someone keeps bumping into you on a busy bus · **1.13** You're in a lift with one other person · **1.14** Someone's perfume or aftershave is overwhelming · **1.15** Someone's bag is on the seat you need · **1.16** You have to share a table with strangers · **1.17** Someone takes a photo and you're in it · **1.18** Someone stands behind you while you're working · **1.19** The room's too loud and you can't leave yet · **1.20** Someone offers you their seat and you don't need it

PART 2 — STARTING, JOINING AND LEAVING CONVERSATIONS

2.1 Someone interrupts you · **2.2** You want to join a conversation that's already going · **2.3** You want to leave a conversation that won't end · **2.4** Someone asks "how are you?" and you don't know how much to say · **2.5** You run out of things to say · **2.6** Someone says your name and you didn't hear the rest · **2.7** Two people are talking at once and you can't follow either · **2.8** You've told them this story before · **2.9** Someone changes the subject and you weren't finished · **2.10** You need to talk to someone who's busy · **2.11** Someone asks you a question in front of a group · **2.12** You want to talk about your interest and you're not sure they do · **2.13** They keep saying "mm" and looking away · **2.14** You said something and nobody responded · **2.15** Someone talks to you while you've got headphones on · **2.16** You have to make a phone call · **2.17** You need to say hello to someone you half-know · **2.18** You can't remember their name · **2.19** Someone waves and you're not sure it was at you · **2.20** There's a gap in the conversation and nobody's filling it

PART 3 — WHEN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND

3.1 You don't understand what someone means · **3.2** Someone hints instead of asking · **3.3** You've been asked to do something and don't know where to start · **3.4** Someone says "you know what I mean" and you don't · **3.5** The instructions were spoken and you've lost half of them · **3.6** Someone says "it's fine" and you can't tell if it is · **3.7** You've asked twice already · **3.8** Someone uses a word you don't know · **3.9** You're not sure if it was a question or a statement · **3.10** You've misread the situation and just realised · **3.11** Someone answers a different question to the one you asked · **3.12** You don't know if you're invited · **3.13** The rules of the game keep changing · **3.14** Someone says "whenever you're ready" and you don't know when that is · **3.15** You can't tell if they're annoyed · **3.16** Someone says "we should meet up" and nothing happens · **3.17** You've been given a choice and you don't know which is the real option · **3.18** Their tone doesn't match their words · **3.19** You've been told off and you don't know what for · **3.20** The plan changed and nobody told you

PART 4 — JOKES, TEASING AND SARCASM

4.1 Someone makes a joke you don't understand · **4.2** You take something literally and everyone laughs · **4.3** Someone's being sarcastic and you answered seriously · **4.4** You make a joke and nobody laughs · **4.5** The joke is about you and you can't tell if it's friendly · **4.6** Someone says "I'm only joking" after something unkind · **4.7** Everyone's laughing and you missed why · **4.8** Someone imitates the way you talk or move · **4.9** A joke goes on too long · **4.10** You laughed at the wrong moment · **4.11** Someone tells a joke about a group you belong to · **4.12** You're being wound up on purpose · **4.13** Someone shares a private joke in front of you · **4.14** You explained a joke and it died · **4.15** Someone teases a friend of yours · **4.16** The teacher makes a joke and you don't know if you can laugh · **4.17** You said something rude by accident and everyone thought it was a joke · **4.18** A joke lands badly and the room goes quiet · **4.19** Someone laughs and you don't know if it's at you · **4.20** You're expected to have a comeback

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PART 5 — WHEN SOMEONE ELSE HAS FEELINGS

5.1 Your friend is upset · **5.2** Someone is angry with you · **5.3** Someone's angry with somebody else, near you · **5.4** A friend tells you something serious · **5.5** Someone cries in front of you · **5.6** Someone's disappointed and trying to hide it · **5.7** Two friends have fallen out and you're in the middle · **5.8** Someone's pet or family member has died · **5.9** Somebody's nervous and you're not · **5.10** A friend's excited about something you don't care about · **5.11** Somebody says they're fine and clearly isn't · **5.12** Somebody keeps talking about the same problem · **5.13** A friend's being left out · **5.14** Somebody apologises to you · **5.15** Somebody thanks you and it feels like too much · **5.16** A friend asks you to keep a secret · **5.17** A friend tells you something you think an adult needs to know · **5.18** Somebody's jealous of you · **5.19** An adult in your house is upset · **5.20** Somebody gives you a compliment

PART 6 — WHEN YOU HAVE FEELINGS

6.1 You're about to lose it and you're not somewhere private · **6.2** You've been left out · **6.3** You're the only one who doesn't want to do it · **6.4** You're overloaded and somebody keeps asking questions · **6.5** You said something in anger and it's still sitting there · **6.6** You're upset and somebody asks what's wrong · **6.7** You need help and asking feels worse than struggling · **6.8** You're bored and it would be rude to say so · **6.9** You're excited and everyone else is calm · **6.10** You've been accused of something you didn't do · **6.11** Something changed and you can't get past it · **6.12** You feel nothing and you're supposed to feel something · **6.13** You're tired of pretending you're fine · **6.14** You want to go home and you've only just arrived · **6.15** You made a mistake in front of people · **6.16** You've been waiting too long · **6.17** You don't want to be touched today, and usually you don't mind · **6.18** Somebody says "calm down" · **6.19** You're the last one picked · **6.20** It went well and you don't know what to do with that

PART 7 — DISAGREEING

7.1 Someone disagrees with you · **7.2** You know a fact is wrong and it's an adult who said it · **7.3** The group has chosen something you don't want to do · **7.4** Somebody keeps arguing after you've stopped · **7.5** You realise mid-argument that you're wrong · **7.6** Somebody says something unfair about a person who isn't there · **7.7** You're asked to pick a side · **7.8** Somebody changes the rules mid-game · **7.9** You disagree with a friend in front of other people · **7.10** Somebody won't take no for an answer · **7.11** Two friends disagree and both ask you · **7.12** You've been given feedback you don't agree with · **7.13** Somebody corrects you in public · **7.14** You want to correct somebody in public · **7.15** The argument has gone on too long · **7.16** Somebody brings up something from months ago · **7.17** You lost the argument and you still think you're right · **7.18** Somebody agrees with you just to end it · **7.19** The disagreement is about something that actually matters · **7.20** You need to apologise and you don't think you were wrong

PART 8 — MISTAKES, AWKWARDNESS AND REPAIR

8.1 You accidentally embarrass someone · **8.2** You said something and immediately knew it was wrong · **8.3** You forgot something important to somebody else · **8.4** You broke something of theirs · **8.5** You were late and it mattered · **8.6** You misread a message and replied to the wrong thing · **8.7** You called somebody the wrong name · **8.8** You laughed and shouldn't have · **8.9** You said you'd do something and you didn't · **8.10** You got caught in a lie · **8.11** You embarrassed yourself and nobody's mentioned it · **8.12** You interrupted somebody without meaning to · **8.13** You told a secret without realising it was one · **8.14** You've been avoiding somebody since it happened · **8.15** The apology you gave didn't work · **8.16** They apologised and you're not ready to accept it · **8.17** You have to go back into a room you walked out of · **8.18** You have to face somebody the next day · **8.19** You did the right thing and it went wrong anyway · **8.20** It was weeks ago and it's still in your head

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PART 9 — FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP TROUBLE

9.1 You want to make a friend and don't know how to start · **9.2** A friend has stopped replying · **9.3** You've been left out of something specific · **9.4** Your friend has a new friend · **9.5** Somebody calls you their friend and you're not sure they are · **9.6** A friend only talks to you when nobody else is around · **9.7** You've been invited and you don't want to go · **9.8** You want to be invited and you weren't · **9.9** A friend asks for something you don't want to give · **9.10** A friendship has ended and nobody said so · **9.11** You're always the one who messages first · **9.12** A friend copies everything you do · **9.13** You've outgrown a friendship · **9.14** A friend is being unkind to somebody else · **9.15** You want to say sorry to somebody you fell out with · **9.16** Somebody wants to be closer friends than you do · **9.17** You've got one friend and they're away today · **9.18** A friend's parent doesn't like you · **9.19** You have to work with somebody you fell out with · **9.20** You made a friend and don't know how to keep one

PART 10 — SCHOOL, GROUPS AND BUSY PLACES

10.1 You have to pick a partner · **10.2** Nobody picks you · **10.3** Group work and nobody's doing anything · **10.4** You know the answer and can't make yourself say it · **10.5** You're asked to read out loud · **10.6** There's a cover teacher and everything's different · **10.7** The seating plan changed · **10.8** A fire alarm goes off · **10.9** Lunch hall, no seat, everyone watching · **10.10** You need the toilet and have to ask · **10.11** Somebody's copying your work · **10.12** You've finished early · **10.13** The class is too loud to think · **10.14** You've been asked to do something you can't do · **10.15** A trip is coming and you don't know the plan · **10.16** Somebody in the group is being blamed unfairly · **10.17** You're new · **10.18** You have to hand something in late · **10.19** An assembly you can't cope with · **10.20** Everyone else knows what's happening and you don't

PART 11 — ONLINE AND MESSAGES

11.1 A message could mean two things · **11.2** They've read it and not replied · **11.3** You sent something and instantly regretted it · **11.4** A group chat is moving too fast · **11.5** You've been added to a chat you don't want to be in · **11.6** Somebody's being unkind in a chat and everyone's watching · **11.7** A message with no punctuation and you can't read the tone · **11.8** Somebody asks for a photo · **11.9** You've been sent something you didn't want to see · **11.10** A stranger messages you · **11.11** Everyone's posted about something you weren't invited to · **11.12** Somebody screenshotted your message · **11.13** You need to reply and can't find the words · **11.14** A voice note when you'd rather have text · **11.15** You've been left on delivered for three days · **11.16** Somebody's pretending to be somebody else · **11.17** You want to leave a group chat · **11.18** A friend posts something untrue about you · **11.19** Somebody wants to keep chatting when you want to stop · **11.20** You have to message an adult you don't know

PART 12 — ADULTS, STRANGERS AND STANDING UP FOR YOURSELF

12.1 An adult asks you something you don't want to answer · **12.2** You need to tell an adult they've got it wrong · **12.3** A stranger starts talking to you · **12.4** Somebody keeps pushing after you've said no · **12.5** You need to ask for an adjustment · **12.6** An adult says "you don't look autistic," or similar · **12.7** You've been punished for something that was a need, not a choice · **12.8** Somebody tells you to make eye contact · **12.9** You need to explain what helps you · **12.10** Somebody talks to the adult with you instead of to you · **12.11** You have to see a doctor or a dentist · **12.12** A shop assistant asks if you need help · **12.13** You've been treated unfairly and nobody noticed · **12.14** You need to say no to an adult · **12.15** Somebody's being unkind to you and calling it a joke · **12.16** You feel unsafe and you're not sure you're allowed to say so · **12.17** You need to report something about somebody else · **12.18** An adult breaks a promise · **12.19** You have to ask for help in front of other people · **12.20** Somebody asks why you're like that

A parent, teacher, TA, key worker, therapist or support worker

A parent, teacher, TA, key worker, therapist or support worker.

What this book is not

It isn't a social skills programme, and it isn't assessment. There's no baseline, no target behaviour and no correct answer to mark against. If you use it that way it will teach the child to guess what you want, which is the opposite of the point.

The one rule

Never tell them their answer was wrong.

If a child picks the option you'd never choose, ask what they think happens next. That's the whole method. The consequences do the teaching; you don't have to.

Where a choice would put them at risk, that's a different conversation, and it belongs outside the workbook — not as a correction to their answer.

How to run a session

Fifteen minutes is a session. One or two scenarios. Stop while it's still going well.

Read it together, out loud, if that helps. Plenty of children will do this better as a conversation than as writing. Writing nothing down is fine.

Let them refuse a scenario. No explanation needed. Note which ones get refused — that information is often more useful than the ones they complete.

Box D is the important one. A child who consistently writes their own option is doing exactly what this book is for. A child who never uses box D might be trying to pass a test they think you've set.

Answers will change. The same scenario answered differently in March and in October isn't inconsistency. Social decisions depend on how much you've got left that day, and that's a real and rational variable.

Where it fits with EHCP outcomes

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the material maps most naturally to Section F provision around social communication and interaction, emotional regulation, and self-advocacy. It works as evidence of engagement rather than as an assessment instrument — completed pages, refused scenarios and box D answers all show something about how a child is reasoning. It is not a standardised measure and shouldn't be presented as one.

The masking point, said plainly

If you only take one thing from this: a child who learns to behave “correctly” at the cost of never being themselves is not making progress. Camouflaging has been associated with poorer mental health outcomes in autistic people (Cage & Troxell-Whitman, 2019). This workbook deliberately offers withdrawal, silence and refusal as legitimate options, because they are. Some days the right answer is to go home.

My tracker

Not a score. Just a place to notice things.

[illegible]

Things I now have words for

A page for the sentences that worked. In your own wording, not the book's.

My people

Who I can go to, and for what.

PERSON

WHAT I'D GO TO THEM FOR

The Social Situations Workbook

Pawsteps

Nothing in this book is clinical advice or a substitute for support from a qualified professional.

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