

EDENROOT PRESS

TWENTY-FIVE SCRIPTS

What To Say *When*

Word-for-word wording for the conversations you
keep putting off until next week.

BY

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Four rules that make them work

Every script here has the same shape. What to say, what to say if they push back, and the thing people reach for instead that quietly makes it worse.

01 Don't memorise them

Say these in your own words. A script delivered word for word sounds like a script, and people can hear it. Take the shape and the length, not the exact wording.

02 Shorter is stronger

Every extra sentence hands the other person something to argue with. If you find yourself explaining, you've already started negotiating.

03 Then stop talking

The silence after you've said your piece is doing the work. Most people fill it and undo everything they just said.

04 Pick your moment

None of this works at eleven at night in the middle of a row. Raise things when you're both fed, rested, and not about to walk out the door.

If a script feels too blunt, it's probably about right. Almost nobody has ever regretted being slightly clearer than they meant to be.

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SECTION ONE

Holding a Line

SCRIPTS 1 TO 5

Most boundaries fail at the sentence, not the decision. You knew what you wanted before you opened your mouth, and then you explained, and the explanation gave them something to argue with. These five are deliberately short for that reason.

01

When you want to say no and can feel the excuse forming

Most people over-explain a no because they're trying to make the other person comfortable with it. The explanation is exactly what invites the negotiation.

SAY THIS

"I can't do that, but thank you for thinking of me."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I know. And I still can't."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

I'd love to, but... You've just told them you want to. Now they only have to solve the but.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When someone turns up unannounced, again

The problem isn't this visit, it's the pattern. Handle it at the door and you'll be handling it forever. Raise it calmly afterwards and it usually stops.

SAY THIS

"I love seeing you. I do need a heads-up first, though. Can you text me before you come round?"

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not upset with you. I'm asking for a text."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Nothing at the time, then complaining about it to someone else. They can't fix something nobody's told them.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When a relative starts on your weight, your job, or when you're having children

You are not going to change their mind across a dinner table. The aim is to close the subject, not win it. Short and unbothered beats a well-argued defence.

SAY THIS

“That's not something I'm discussing. Anyway, how's the garden coming along?”

IF THEY PUSH BACK

“I know you mean well. Still not discussing it.”

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Why do you always bring this up? Now you're having two arguments instead of one.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When the work messages keep coming after hours

Nobody is going to hand your evenings back. The line has to be stated once, plainly, and then held by what you actually do rather than what you said.

SAY THIS

"I'm offline after six. I'll pick this up first thing."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"If it's genuinely urgent, call me. Otherwise I'll see it in the morning."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Saying it, then replying at eleven anyway. Every late reply quietly rewrites the rule.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you lent money and they've gone quiet about it

The longer it sits, the larger it grows in your head and the more awkward it feels to raise. It's a small conversation on day thirty and an enormous one on day three hundred.

SAY THIS

"I need to bring up the money I lent you in March. What works for paying it back?"

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I understand things are tight. What can you manage this month?"

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Hinting. Money's a bit tight at the moment is not a request, and they can miss it completely honestly.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

SECTION TWO

When It Goes Wrong

SCRIPTS 6 TO 10

Difficult conversations are usually decided in the first ten seconds. The opening line determines whether the other person listens or starts building a defence. These are for raising things, repairing things, and getting out of a row without doing more damage on the way.

02

When you need to raise something and don't know how to start

The opening line decides whether the other person listens or starts defending themselves. Name the topic and your intention before you say anything else.

SAY THIS

“There's something on my mind and I've been putting off saying it. I'm not looking for a fight. Is now alright, or shall we do it later?”

IF THEY PUSH BACK

“Then tell me when. I'd like to get it sorted this week.”

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

We need to talk. Four words that make anyone brace before you've said anything at all.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When it's escalating and neither of you is listening

Walking out without a word reads as abandonment and makes the next round worse. Leaving with a return time reads as self-control. Same action, completely different meaning.

SAY THIS

"I'm too wound up to do this well. I need twenty minutes, and then I want to finish it."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not walking away from you. I'm coming back at half seven."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Fine. Whatever. Followed by two days of silence.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you were wrong and want to actually repair it

An apology stops being an apology the moment you explain yourself. Name what you did, name the effect, stop. The reasons can come later, if they ask.

SAY THIS

"I was wrong to cancel on you like that. I can see it made you feel like an afterthought. I'm sorry."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"You don't have to be alright with it yet."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

I'm sorry you felt that way. That isn't an apology, and everybody can hear it.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When they tell you you're overreacting

This is how a conversation gets derailed. Once you're defending the size of your feeling, the original issue has been dropped entirely and nobody's coming back to it.

SAY THIS

"Maybe I am. The thing I raised still happened, and I'd still like to talk about it."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"We can talk about how I said it afterwards. First, the thing itself."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

I am NOT overreacting. Volume proves their point for them.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you've raised it before and nothing has changed

Repeating yourself more loudly doesn't work. Naming the pattern does, because at this point the pattern is the actual problem, not the incident.

SAY THIS

"This is the third time I've brought this up. I'm honestly less bothered about the thing itself now, and more worried that raising things doesn't seem to change anything."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not keeping score. I'm telling you it's starting to feel pointless, and I don't want us to get there."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

A list of every previous time with dates. It turns into a trial, and people defend themselves in trials.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

SECTION THREE

Getting Closer

SCRIPTS 11 TO 14

Asking for more is harder than asking for less, because it means admitting you want something. These are for the moments where the honest version feels exposing and the vague version gets you nothing.

03

When you need something and don't want to start a row

A request aimed at the past is a complaint. A request aimed at the future is a request. Identical content, opposite direction, completely different reception.

SAY THIS

“Something that would really help me is knowing what time you'll be back. Would you be up for texting me?”

IF THEY PUSH BACK

“I'm not saying you've done something wrong. I'm asking for something.”

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

You never let me know. The sentence has already become about their character.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you miss them and they haven't noticed

People have wildly different thresholds for contact and neither one is wrong. The mistake is treating their lower need as a verdict on you.

SAY THIS

"I've noticed I've been missing you lately. Could we put something in the diary this month, just us?"

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not saying you're doing it wrong. I'm saying I'd like more of you."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

You clearly don't want to see me. You've now assigned them a motive they'll spend the whole conversation denying.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When something landed badly and they don't know

The instinct is to wait and see whether it happens again. It usually does, and by then you're carrying six weeks of it, which is why it comes out far harder than it needed to.

SAY THIS

“When you said that in front of everyone, it landed badly with me. I don't think you meant it to. I wanted you to know.”

IF THEY PUSH BACK

“I believe you didn't mean it. It still landed that way.”

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

It's fine. Then producing it three weeks later during an argument about something unrelated.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When someone's struggling and you're scared of saying the wrong thing

Almost nobody wants your solution in the first ten minutes. They want evidence you're still there. Saying less is nearly always the stronger move.

SAY THIS

“That sounds really hard. I'm not going to try and fix it. Do you want to talk, or do you want company?”

IF THEY PUSH BACK

“If they say they don't know: then I'll just sit here.”

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

At least... Every sentence that starts that way makes the other person feel unheard.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

SECTION FOUR

Difficult People

SCRIPTS 15 TO 18

Some conversations can't be won, only exited well. The aim here isn't to make the other person see it your way. It's to stop the exchange doing damage to you while it's happening.

04

When their version of events doesn't match yours

You will not get them to agree, and arguing about the past is a trap with no exit. Hold your own account without needing them to confirm it.

SAY THIS

"We remember it differently and I'm not going to argue about it. What I need going forward is a heads-up before you make plans for both of us."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not asking you to agree with me. I'm telling you what I need."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

That's not what happened, on repeat. You cannot win an argument about somebody else's memory.

IF THIS IS A PATTERN

If this happens constantly and you've started doubting your own recollection, that's worth talking through with someone outside the situation.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When they stop speaking to you to make a point

Chasing someone who is punishing you with silence teaches them that it works. State your availability once, then go and live your day.

SAY THIS

"I can see you're not ready to talk. I'll be here when you are. I'm not going to keep asking."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"There won't be one. That's rather the point. Then actually stop asking."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

A stream of messages escalating from concern to apology. That's the reward the silence was aiming for.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When it's one-sided and you've started to notice

Most people doing this aren't calculating. They've fallen into a pattern where you're the reliable one, and nobody has ever mentioned it out loud.

SAY THIS

"I want to say something slightly awkward. I've noticed I mostly hear from you when something's wrong. I'd like to see you when nothing is."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not annoyed with you. I'm asking for a different kind of friendship."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Saying nothing and slowly disappearing. If it's worth being annoyed about, it's worth one uncomfortable sentence.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When it's circular and you need out

You are allowed to end a conversation. Not as a threat and not as a slammed door, but as a plain statement that this one has stopped going anywhere.

SAY THIS

"We're going round in circles and I don't think either of us is getting anywhere. I'm going to stop here."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not storming off. I'm just done for tonight."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

You always do this, delivered on the way out the door. That isn't leaving, that's a parting shot.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

SECTION FIVE

Starting Over

SCRIPTS 19 TO 22

New people, first conversations, and the awkward middle where you like someone and neither of you will say so. None of this requires charisma. It requires being slightly more specific than feels comfortable.

05

When you want to speak to someone and your mind has gone blank

Openers don't need to be clever. They need to be easy to answer. The best ones are about the room you're both standing in, because you already have it in common.

SAY THIS

"How do you know the birthday girl? Or: is this your first one of these?"

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"If it goes flat: well, I'll let you get on. Nice to meet you."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Standing there for forty minutes and then leaving. The bar is far lower than you think it is.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you like someone and you're both being polite about it

Adult friendships stall at the pleasant stage because both people are waiting for the other one to escalate. Somebody has to make a specific invitation, and specific is the operative word.

SAY THIS

"I always enjoy talking to you. Do you fancy a coffee sometime, properly?"

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"If you get a vague yes, sometime: brilliant. Are you free Thursday, or is next week easier?"

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

We should hang out sometime. Nobody in recorded history has ever hung out sometime.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you need to turn someone down

Softening it into ambiguity is not kinder. It leaves the other person hoping, and the hoping is the expensive part. Clear and warm beats vague and gentle.

SAY THIS

"I've really enjoyed meeting you, and I don't think we're a match. I wanted to tell you rather than go quiet on you."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm sure. Thank you for taking it so well."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

I'm just really busy at the moment. That sounds like a timing problem, so they'll be back in a month.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When it's moving faster than you're comfortable with

Speed gets read as enthusiasm on one side and pressure on the other. Saying so early is far easier than untangling it three months in.

SAY THIS

"I'm really enjoying this and I'd like to take it a bit slower. It isn't a lack of interest, it's just how I do this well."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'd rather tell you now than pull away and leave you guessing."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Saying nothing while gradually replying less. That's the part that actually hurts people.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

SECTION SIX

Ending Things

SCRIPTS 23 TO 25

The kindest ending is a clear one. Long explanations feel generous and are usually for the comfort of the person leaving. Short, definite, and no door left ajar.

06

When you've decided and now you have to say it

The kindest version is short, definite, and has no door left ajar. Long explanations feel generous and are almost always for the comfort of the person doing the leaving.

SAY THIS

"I've thought about this a great deal and I've decided to end things. I'm sorry. I know this is hard to hear."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I'm not going to change my mind. I don't want to give you false hope by pretending otherwise."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Maybe in the future. Unless you mean it, which you almost certainly don't.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you have to tell everybody, over and over

You don't owe anyone the story. Have one sentence ready so you aren't composing it fresh every time somebody asks, usually at the worst possible moment.

SAY THIS

"We've separated. It was the right decision. I'd rather not go into it, but thank you for asking."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"I know. I'm alright. Tell me what you've been up to."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

A different version for every person. It's exhausting, and it always finds its way back to you.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

When you need the contact to actually stop

This one only works if you say it once and then never reply again. A line you enforce inconsistently teaches the other person that trying works.

SAY THIS

"I'm asking you not to contact me again. I won't be replying after this."

IF THEY PUSH BACK

"There is none. That's the whole point. Block, mute, filter, whatever you need."

WHAT NOT TO REACH FOR

Replying once, just to explain. That resets the clock and undoes the sentence.

IF THIS IS A PATTERN

If contact continues after a clear request, keep a record of it and speak to someone about your options. You don't have to work that out on your own.

NOW WRITE IT HOW YOU'D ACTUALLY SAY IT

Say one of them this week

Reading these changes nothing. Saying one of them, badly, to an actual person is the entire point. Pick the conversation you've been carrying around longest and use the script that fits it, even if your voice does something odd halfway through.

Keep this somewhere you can find it quickly. Most people need it about eleven minutes before they need it.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

The Relationship Mastery Library

All fourteen books, going properly into everything these scripts only had room to open. Boundaries, trust, conflict, dating, difficult people, and starting again.

edenrootpress.com/the-sophie-hartman-relationship-mastery-library

ONE IMPORTANT NOTE

These scripts assume both people are safe and acting in good faith. If someone frightens you, controls what you do, or you find yourself managing their reactions to stay safe, that isn't a communication problem and no script will fix it. Please contact a domestic abuse organisation in your country. They will talk it through with you and nothing has to be decided in that conversation.

MORE FROM SOPHIE HARTMAN

The Relationship Toolkit

Eight workbooks, sent one at a time over twelve days. Each one is a single page you can actually finish, on the part of relationships that most advice skips: the doing.

The Relationship Patterns Check-Up

Find the pattern you keep repeating, in the words you would use rather than a therapist's.

The Boundary Builder

A boundary is not a speech. This is the shape of one that holds.

The Difficult Conversation Planner

What to decide before you open your mouth, so the conversation goes where you meant it to.

The Relationship Needs Map

What you actually need from people, separated from what you have learned to ask for.

The Red Flag / Green Flag Decoder

Not everything uncomfortable is a red flag. This tells the difference.

The Weekly Relationship Check-In

Ten minutes that prevent a great deal of resentment.

The Self-Trust Reset

For when you have stopped trusting your own judgement about people.

The 7-Day Relationship Reset

A week of small, specific actions. No grand gestures.

OPEN THE RELATIONSHIP TOOLKIT

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