

YOUR FREE READER'S COMPANION

The Four Silences Field Kit

A companion to The Silent Treatment · by Dr. Marianne Reeve

A free printable companion to The Silent Treatment

By Dr. Marianne Reeve · bookcompanion.co

What's in this kit

The book does the explaining. This is the part you print.

Five sheets. None of them are meant to be read cover to cover — they are meant to be somewhere you can reach them on the evening it starts again, which is the evening nobody reads anything carefully.

1. The Four Silences card — one page, the whole framework. Put it where you can get at it privately.
2. The episode log — six columns. This is the sheet that answers the ten questions for you, because it records the episodes while they are happening instead of asking you to remember them afterwards.
3. The first twenty-four hours — the plan from chapter twenty-one, condensed to a single page.
4. Pocket scripts — nine sets of exact words. Fold it twice; it fits a wallet or a phone case.
5. The line — the short checklist that separates a difficult pattern from something that has a name in law.

A note on the log, because it is the sheet people skip. Everything in the book depends on telling the four silences apart, and the single most common reason a reader cannot tell is that they are trying to answer questions about a specific episode using a memory that has already blurred it into the last five years. Three or four logged episodes settle it, usually without effort. It is a boring sheet and it does most of the work.

Nothing here is a substitute for the book, and none of it will do anything on its own. What it does is put the framework within arm's reach on the day you need it, which is not the day you sit down to read.

1. The Four Silences card

Cut along the outside edge and keep it somewhere private — a book you are reading, a work bag, the back of a drawer. Not the fridge, unless you are content for it to be found and discussed.

What gives each one away

	The Punishment	The Shutdown	The Retreat	The Inherited Script
Starts	after the argument, once things had settled	during the argument, at its hottest	when things have been good, with no argument at all	after almost anything, mildly
Their body	composed, cool, unbothered	braced, flushed, gripping, rigid	ordinary, but turned away	ordinary
In front of other people	switches off cleanly, and back on afterwards	cannot switch off	eases a little, socially	unchanged; nobody notices but you
If you press	holds, and lengthens	collapses further, or snaps and regrets it	moves back one step for each step you take	looks genuinely confused
How it ends	when you apologize or concede	on its own, within hours, often with remorse	on its own after days, without anything from you	on its own, life simply resumes, never referred to
Is there a demand	yes, and you could name it	no	no	no

What to do, and what makes it worse

	Do	Do not
The Punishment	State once, calmly, what you are available for. Then live your evening. Keep your own record.	Apologize to end it. Chase, explain, or negotiate. Every one of those pays for the next one.
The Shutdown	Lower the temperature. Offer a time to return to it. Leave the room without leaving the relationship.	Name the behaviour, follow them, or demand they speak. They physically cannot, and you are proving the room is unsafe.
The Retreat	Stay warm and stop reaching. Carry on with your own week. Be there when they come back.	Pursue, ask what is wrong repeatedly, or issue an ultimatum. Pressure is what they are avoiding.
The Inherited Script	Ask about their family after arguments. Make one small, specific request.	Assume malice. There is often none, and treating it as malice creates the thing you are afraid of.

The three shortcuts

- Question three is close to conclusive on its own. If the silence switches off cleanly in front of other people and back on afterwards, it is punishment, whatever else the pattern looks like.
- If there was no conflict and things had been good, read for retreat first, even if the other signals are mixed.
- If you cannot tell at all, do the script response: the calm conversation, the question about their family, one small specific request. It costs almost nothing under any of the four diagnoses, and the reply you get is the most informative test you have left.

2. The episode log

Print several. Fill in a row while it is happening, or the same evening — not a week later.

The point is not the writing. It is that after three or four rows the pattern answers the ten questions without you having to reconstruct anything, and you stop arguing with yourself about whether you are imagining it.

Date	Started: during / after / nothing	How long	Switched off for other people?	How it ended	What I did
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How to read your own log, after four or five rows

- The same duration every time — about three days, about a week — points to punishment or script rather than shutdown. Flooding does not keep to a schedule.
- Column four is the one to look at first. A yes, twice, is close to settled.
- If it always ends when you concede something, look at what was being asked for. That is the demand, and its presence is what separates punishment from the other three.
- If the endings changed over the years — it used to end on its own, and now it ends when you give way — that is drift, and it is the single most important thing this sheet can show you. Patterns move in that direction, not the other one, once someone has noticed what the silence achieves.
- If you find yourself hiding this sheet with real fear rather than ordinary privacy, that is worth more than every other row on it. Go to the fifth sheet.

3. The first twenty-four hours

Condensed from the book. The order matters more than the detail.

The first hour

Do not send the long message. You will want to, and it is the single most expensive thing you can do in this hour, because it hands over the one thing the silence is short of: your reaction.

Eat something. Whatever else is true, your blood sugar is about to make your judgement worse.

Write down what happened, factually, while it is fresh — what was said, in what order, and when the silence started. Not what it meant. What happened. This is the row in your log.

Hours two to six

Say your one line, once. There is a version for each of the four on the scripts sheet. Then stop.

Do the ordinary thing you would have done anyway. Not as a tactic, not to be seen doing it. Because an evening spent waiting is an evening you do not get back, and because a life that visibly carries on is the only thing that reliably changes the arithmetic of a punishing silence.

Tell one person, if you have one. Not to build a case. Because isolation is what makes this hurt as much as it does, and one text to a friend interrupts it.

The evening

Sleep in your own bed, on your own side, without negotiating for it.

If they come back, take it. Do not open with the account of everything that was wrong with the last six hours, however accurate it is. That conversation has a better version, and it is on day three or four, not tonight.

The next morning

If it has lifted on its own, overnight, with something like remorse — you were almost certainly looking at a shutdown, and the repair conversation is now available to you. Use it.

If it is still running, note it in the log and go about your day. Twenty-four hours is early. Nothing about the silence is decided at twenty-four hours, and acting as though it is will cost you.

One thing not to do at any point in the first day: audit yourself for the thing you must have done to cause this. You will find something — everybody can, given a bad enough evening — and it will be the wrong answer to the wrong question.

4. Pocket scripts

Fold this sheet in half twice. The point of a script is not that these words are magic; it is that having a sentence ready is what stops you sending the paragraph you will regret.

The opening line, by silence

- Punishment: "I'm not going to keep asking. When you want to talk, I'm here." Then nothing else, that evening.
- Shutdown: "You don't have to talk now. I'm going to make tea. Come and find me when you're ready."
- Retreat: "You've gone quiet and that's all right. I'm not going anywhere." Then carry on with your week.
- Script: "In my family people said things out loud, even when it was awkward. I know that's not how it was in yours. Can we try it my way once and see?"

The third day

"I've noticed we've been three days without talking. I don't want to relitigate the argument. I want to agree what we do the next time one of us needs to walk away — how long, and who comes back."

The repair conversation, when it is offered

"I'm glad you're back. Two things and then I'll leave it: what happened for you in that moment, and what would help next time?"

If you are asked why you have stopped chasing

"I've stopped because chasing made it worse for both of us, not because I've stopped caring."

To a child who has noticed

"You're right, we're not talking much today. It's not about you, and it isn't your job to fix it. We'll sort it out." And then, later, when it is sorted: tell them it is sorted. Children register the silence far more accurately than the repair, unless the repair is said out loud.

What never to say to a child

Never make them the messenger, never ask them what the other parent said, and never explain which of you is right. All three make them responsible for a thing they cannot influence.

At work

"I've noticed I'm not getting responses on X. I'll assume the plan stands unless I hear otherwise by Thursday, and I'll copy in Y so we've got a record." Neutral, dated, written down. Work silences are managed with paper trails, not conversations.

To a parent who freezes you out

"I'm not going to argue about who started it. I'd like to see you on Sunday. If Sunday doesn't work, tell me a day that does." Repeat, unchanged, as often as required.

5. The line

Most of what is in this kit describes a difficult pattern between two people who are both, in their own bad way, trying. Some of it is not that. This sheet is the short version of chapter twenty-six.

The silence stops being a communication problem and becomes something else when it is doing one of these things.

- It is used together with money, keys, phones, or the car — you are quiet with, and short of, at the same time.
- Where you go and who you see has narrowed, and the narrowing followed the silences.
- The rules change without notice, and you find yourself working out in advance what will be safe to say.
- Other people are told a version of events, during the silence, that you have no chance to answer.
- Your children are being enlisted — as messengers, as witnesses, as the ones who have to keep the peace.
- You have caught yourself calculating what would happen if this sheet were found.

If you recognized more than one of those, the framework in the first sheet is not the tool you need today. Coercive control is a pattern, not an incident, and it is recognised as such in law in a number of countries — including England and Wales, under section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015.

What to do with that

Tell one person outside the house. Not a document, not a plan — one person, out loud, in ordinary words. It is the single step that most reliably comes first, and the one that isolation is designed to prevent.

Keep the log. Dates and durations, in a place they cannot be read. A pattern written down at the time is worth more than the best-remembered account of it afterwards.

Contact a specialist service before you make any decision about the relationship. In the UK, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline runs on 0808 2000 247, free, twenty-four hours. In the US, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233. Both handle exactly this — the quiet version, with no shouting in it — and neither will tell you what to do.

If you are reading this sheet and thinking that it is a bit much, that your situation is nothing like that — that is the ordinary reaction, and it is right far more often than it is wrong. Read it once, put it away, and know where it is.

One last thing

There is a sentence in the book that is worth repeating on its own, because it is the whole reason any of this works.

You are not trying to win the silence. You are trying to stop guessing.

Guessing is what costs you the evening, the sleep, and eventually the sense that you know your own mind. The four silences are not a way to be right about someone. They are a way to know which of four rooms you are standing in, so that you can stop trying every door at once.

Print the log. That is the one that matters.

— Marianne

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