

BREAKING BAD

IN THE ERA OF GHOSTING, TRY THESE EXPERT-APPROVED TIPS FOR REJECTING WITH INTEGRITY BY LAILA ELISE

Delivering unfavorable information to anyone, be it a friend, partner, professional colleague, or even total stranger, can be intimidating. No one (barring, say, a sociopath) enjoys taking on the bearer-of-bad-news role. The current trend of “ghosting” is proof that, in many cases, people would rather avoid than face difficult conversations. Most of us are guilty of this in some form: the long list of unqualified job applicants that never got a follow-up, or the “forgotten” text after a mediocre first date. Sometimes, it feels easiest simply to ignore the situation instead of going through the trouble of hurting a person’s feelings. At the extreme end, people even remain in unhappy relationships rather than letting the other person down, leading them further down a path of bitterness and passive aggression. Any of this sound familiar? Here are a few tips from relationship experts for how to deliver rejection with empathy.

Timing and location is key.

Andy Molinsky, Ph.D., author of *Adaptation*, said putting proper thought into a difficult conversation is paramount, as breaking bad news is never something you want to “wing,” no matter how good you are on your feet in social scenarios. If a physical conversation is warranted, consider a location where you both will feel comfortable, and time the situation accordingly. It’s also imperative to remind yourself of the reasons why you are cutting ties and be prepared for the person on the receiving end to put up

at least a few rebuttals.

Be direct.

In short, sugar-coating and beating around the bush might make you feel better in the moment, but it will cause uncertainty and hinder your message. Being direct does not lend itself to cruelty, but removing the fluff and quickly getting to the point is often the best approach, pointed out Loren Soeiro, Ph. D., author of *I Hear You*. That way, there’ll be no confusion about your goals for the conversation. Dr. Soeiro said that a brief explanation is *always* better than none at all, even if it’s merely a text message to someone you’ve only known for a short time.

Be firm, and don’t leave things unfinished.

There’s a growing dating trend to leave the door slightly open, versus total closure. This approach may seem like it provides you with more options down the road, but experts point out it’s unfair to the other party. Dr. Soeiro stated that clearly closing a relationship is best for both parties, not just the receiver of the blow. As uncomfortable as it may feel, disclosing your true feelings can lower your blood pressure and reduce your subjective experience with stress. While ghosting might be easier for your conscience in the short term, your long-term health and well-being urges you to bite the bullet and have the talk; chances are, experts say, you’ll feel some immediate relief as well. **1**