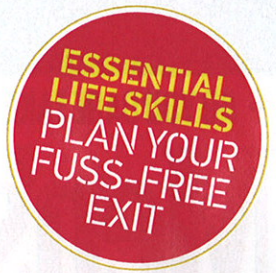


KNOW HOW TO CUT YOUR TIES



Breaking up gets messy, so *MH* has found a team of five uniquely qualified advisers to help you walk away with maximum dignity and minimal fallout

1

MAKE IT QUICK

Like a work project way past deadline, splitting up can be a painfully drawn-out affair. "It's built into the human psyche that for a decision to be 'right' we have to agonise over it," says business strategist Graham Allcott. It's far better to cut the pain short. "Work meetings are a good model," he says. You want to be in and out, so mentally set the agenda before you see her: what you plan to say, how you want to leave things. "Decide what contributed to 80% of your decision to break up - work commitments, compatibility, whatever - and only address that. It's less for you, and her, to deal with."

EXPERT EXIT STRATEGY

Set an 'implementation deadline'. Arrange a place you have to be after you've broken it to her. This way, you will just say what has to be said, instead of spending hours going over things.

2

ANAESTHETISE HER ANGER

If you suspect your girl's a screamer (the bad kind), anger management specialist David Woolfson says location and timing are key. "In the morning, we're less stressed and tired so it's harder to feel aggressive," he says. "A café that neither of you have visited before is ideal. Homes are full of inflammatory memories, and a public place means there are social boundaries that help keep things quiet." If she still blows, acknowledge her anger. Tell her that you know why she's angry - even that you're angry with yourself for not making the relationship work. "Never tell her to calm down. Infuriated people need someone to take control, but not to take their power away." And, as with any cornered animal, don't touch her. "This conveys intimacy. It delivers mixed messages and can stoke further rage."

EXPERT EXIT STRATEGY

Ask a question. "Rage activates our uncivilised brain, so to calm someone, force them to use their rational brain by asking questions." Try something specific about the relationship such as, 'Why do you think we could never agree on holiday destinations?'

3

SOFTEN THE BLOW

You may not be delivering news about a catastrophic earthquake, but careful language and a newsreader's tone can make the break-up quick and painless. "Give the headline first, then the facts," says broadcaster Samira Ahmed. Tell her that you're breaking up, with a pause before and after you say it, so she can absorb the information. Then follow up with the why, and keep things simple: 'We argue all the time. I'm unhappy'. Be succinct. "Limit yourself to one idea per sentence, not 'We're breaking up and I'm moving out on Friday,'" Ahmed suggests. "Avoid sentimentality or drama because you assume that's what's required. Remember, it's about getting the information across."

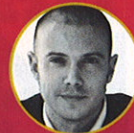
EXPERT EXIT STRATEGY

Take a breath. "Exhale before you speak. Then, when you open your mouth to talk, take in just enough air to deliver your line." This newsreader's trick will keep your voice clear and your tone level.

THE BREAK-UP SQUAD

1. GRAHAM ALLCOTT

The director of website thinkproductive.co.uk helps businesses tackle difficult projects, fast



2. DAVID WOOLFSON

An anger management specialist at angerplanet.co.uk. Defusing explosive outbursts is his speciality



3. SAMIRA AHMED

The BBC broadcast journalist can coach you in how to use your voice to soften the blow



4. DR BETHANY DICK

Works at The Royal Cornwall Hospital. She knows how to deliver bad news kindly



5. KATIE KHAN

Need to keep your online rep intact? The social media manager for abundant.co.uk can help



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MODEL: DAROIE LINCOLN AT MOT, MODELS | TIES: PAUL SMITH (NOT AS SOLD) | LINGERIE: DAMARIS.CO.UK AND MYLA.MYLA.COM