

The Silent Treatment And No Contact—What Are The Differences?

Many people aren't aware that the silent treatment & going no contact with someone are extremely different. On the surface, they may look alike since someone refuses to talk to someone else, but that is where the similarities end.

When someone initiates the silent treatment, the goal is to show their disapproval, punish & manipulate someone by making them feel confused, guilty or afraid for an undetermined amount of time. They often refuse to acknowledge the other person's existence in order to hurt them. It's often done impulsively, such as immediately following an argument or if someone refuses to be manipulated. The recipient of the silent treatment rarely even knows why he or she is getting it, because the person giving it won't talk about why they are so angry. The person receiving the silent treatment is supposed to go to the one giving it & ask that person what they did wrong, & how can they make things better. The person giving the silent treatment will do whatever they can to make the other person jump through hoops to gain their forgiveness.

No contact is much different. No contact isn't used as a punishment, but instead to protect oneself from an abusive person by removing that person from their life. It also provides time & space to heal from the abuse without interference from the abuser. It also is for a set period of time, & both parties in the relationship know that. Often, someone initiating no contact will write a letter to the person with whom they want to end the relationship stating reasons why they're ending it. This doesn't happen with the silent treatment. And, contrary to what many naïve people think, no contact is never a spur of the moment decision done in the heat of anger, especially when family is involved. A great deal of thought & prayer go into making such a drastic decision, over an extended period of time.

If you're in a relationship with the narcissist, no doubt you have experience with the silent treatment. I certainly do. My narcissistic mother did this to me a lot in my life. I remember one episode of her silent treatment in particular. I was 17, & she spent every day abusing me. One day when she came to pick me up from school, she wouldn't speak to me. I had no clue why. I kept trying to get her to talk to me & she remained silent. I finally asked her what was wrong & she said "If you don't know, I'm not going to tell you." I tried repeatedly to get her to tell me what was wrong & ask what I'd done—both normal reactions to the silent treatment. Finally she did speak to me again & by screaming in my face, accusing me of something I didn't even do. Thankfully as an adult, she stopped screaming at me & instead would just call me as if nothing happened.

All of those silent treatments did teach me how to deal with them though.

When someone is giving you the silent treatment, don't react. Don't go to that person & ask "What's wrong?" "Why are you mad at me?" If you do, your life is going to become miserable. The person giving you the silent treatment is going to insist on

you doing all sorts of things to please her, yet she won't be entirely pleased. Narcissists & passive aggressive people who use the silent treatment love to do that. They expect you to do what they ask, how they want it done, then when you do it, they say you didn't do it quite right or that isn't what they wanted you to do in the first place. And, if you do this once, this also tells the person that the silent treatment is a very effective weapon with you. They'll use it over & over again since it works so well.

Your best way to handle the silent treatment is not to handle it. Pretend not to notice it. Go on about your life & enjoy the break from the unnecessary drama & walking on eggshells. Think of the silent treatment as a vacation. I did with my mother & began looking forward to the silent treatments.