



How to tell a friend they hurt your feelings

Cut out the card along the dashed line (6 by about 4 inches). Say one line, then stop and listen. Use your own words when they come.

Telling a friend they hurt you

1. Ask for time: "Something's on my mind about us."
2. One moment, one feeling: "When you..., it stung."
3. Leave room: "I don't think you meant it that way."
4. Say why: "I'm telling you because you matter to me."
5. Defensive? "This one thing hurt. That's all."
6. In person or on a call, not a long text.

All the lines, and when to use them

Do you have some time this week? Something's been on my mind about us, and I'd rather tell you than let it sit. (Setting up the conversation by text or in person. It signals that this matters without dropping the whole thing in a message.)

When you joked about my divorce at Mia's party, it stung. I don't think you meant it that way, but I've been thinking about it since. (A single hurtful comment. Name the moment, the feeling, and leave room for their intent.)

This is the third time plans fell through on the day. I'm not keeping score, but it's starting to make me feel like an afterthought. (A repeated pattern. Even unintended hurts create distance when they keep happening, and naming the pattern explains why a small thing feels big.)

I saw the photos from the lake weekend, and I was hurt not to be asked. Can you help me understand? (You were left out. Saying the hurt plainly, then asking, gives them a chance to explain before you assume the worst.)

I'm bringing this up because you matter to me. If I didn't care, I'd probably just drift. (Early in the conversation if they seem surprised or guarded. It frames the talk as an investment, not an attack.)

I'm not saying you're a bad friend. I'm saying this one thing hurt. (They get defensive or start listing everything they do for you. It narrows the conversation back to the single issue.)

I know I've been hard to reach lately too. I'm not pretending this is all on you. (When you also played a part. Owning your side makes it easier for them to own theirs.)

Thank you for hearing that. I feel a lot lighter having said it. (After they apologize or listen well. Closing warmly tells them the friendship is intact.)

I can see you don't see it the way I do. I still wanted you to know how it landed for me. (They do not agree it was hurtful. You can leave it there without needing them to confess.)

Phrases to avoid

"You always do this.": Always and never turn a specific hurt into a verdict on their character, and they will argue with the word "always" instead of hearing you.

"Everyone thinks so, not just me.": Bringing in an invisible group makes it feel like an ambush and leaves them wondering who has been talking about them.

Telling mutual friends before telling them: It can turn a private hurt into a social problem, and your friend will likely hear it secondhand first.

"It's fine." (followed by going quiet): Saying it is fine while pulling back is the passive route out of a friendship, and your friend never gets a chance to repair it.

"I guess I just matter less to you.": It asks them to argue you out of a conclusion instead of responding to what actually happened.

If you are afraid of your partner, scripts are not the answer: call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. In danger, call 911.