BOWLING GREEN DAILY NEWS

How to tell someone they should just shut-up…

Posted: Sunday, September 20, 2026

It goes without saying – so I'll say it – a lot of people desperately need to shut-up these days.

Yes, I know. This is America. We have the First Amendment. Everyone has a right to say anything they want.

Well almost everyone and almost anything. You still can't yell "Fire!" is a crowded bingo parlor when there's no fire and I wouldn't threaten bodily harm to the lieutenant governor. But you get the general idea.

No, I'm referring to the ones who, regardless of their inalienable right to keep expressing themselves, really should consider closing their pie holes. Let me go out on a limb here and say you probably work with several of these folks.

You know who I'm talking about. The geniuses who make claims without providing any evidence. The brainiacs who are always spouting some inane whataboutism that has nothing to do with the point being made. The self-proclaimed masterminds who know more than anyone about everything.

Oh, and the egalitarian pseudo-intellectuals who think all opinions should carry the same weight.

Again, I'm sure you know many of these insufferable human beings. They are everywhere. At the office. On the shop floor. In aisle six. Some may even reside under your own roof.

The problem is you can't always be direct when telling someone to put a sock in it. Especially when doing so might lead to an unanticipated trip to the ER, an involuntary summons from HR, or otherwise jeopardize the domestic tranquility you currently enjoy.

And the fact you're right is often irrelevant. You can be as right as rain and still find yourself living under an overpass.

Over the years, I've found several creative ways to tell someone they need to cut the spigot; ways that minimize the odds of any adverse consequences. So when you're overcome with the urge to tell someone to just shut-up, consider the following alternatives instead.

"That's a great idea, maybe we'll consider it sometime down the road."

I've used this one in numerous meetings over the years. Giving someone hope that their idiotic epiphany could somehow eventually see the light of day is often enough to get a clueless colleague to shut-up, at least for a while. If they do mention it again, remind them we already decided against it. Confusion works, too.

"I'm not sure everyone would be onboard with this."

Of course they're not going to be supportive of whatever you're proposing. No sane person would. This one works particularly well with people who see life as a popularity context. Telling them their brilliant flash of inspiration might not go over is often very effective with those who crave the approval of others.

"You might want to think that through a bit more."

What we're hoping for here is that you'll return to earth from whatever planet you're obviously on and come to the same realization we had when you first opened your mouth. There's nothing wrong with at least trying to prevent someone from making a fool of themselves.

"I know. This is the third time you've told me this."

They obviously haven't, but if you can create just enough doubt in their minds that they might have, this is often enough to get them to stop talking - at least for a while. This one seems to be especially effective with insecure, paranoid individuals, although you likely don't know any of those either.

My personal favorite?

"Hold that thought."

What I actually mean is "Don't just hold it. Squeeze it. Suffocate it. Bury it in the backyard. Anything but bring it up again." Again, you want to give them some hope even when hell would have to freeze over before we'd seriously consider it.

By the way, it you've had any of these phrases directed toward you, you might want to consider the possibility that the person who said them to you was, in fact, telling you to shut-up.

But I can't say for sure. And you didn't hear it from me.



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