

When Someone Doesn't Text Back and Your Mind Fills in the Blanks

09/08/2026



You send a text.

No response.

At first, you don't think much of it. Then a little time passes and you check your phone again.

Still nothing.

And that's about when your mind decides to get involved.

Did I say something wrong?

Are they upset with me?

Why are they ignoring me?

Maybe you reread what you sent. Maybe you start thinking about your last conversation.

And if you happen to see that they've been active on social media? Well, now your mind really has something to work with.

It's amazing how quickly we can go from not knowing something to feeling pretty sure we know exactly what's happening.

And it isn't just texting.

Your boss sends, Can we talk tomorrow?

A friend seems a little off.

Your partner is quieter than usual.

Someone walks by without saying hello.

There's a gap in the information, and our minds are really good at filling it.

What do you know, and what did your I-System add?

Your friend hasn't responded to your text.

That's what you know.

She's upset with me.

That's what your I-System (Depressor) added.

Your boss wants to talk tomorrow.

That's what you know.

I'm in trouble.

That's what your I-System (Depressor) added.

That distinction sounds simple, but it can be surprisingly hard to see when you're in the middle of it.

Especially when there's a Requirement underneath it.

In Mind-Body Bridging® (MBB), Requirements are the shoulds and musts we carry around about ourselves, other people, and the way things are supposed to be.

In this situation, they might sound like:

People I care about should respond to me.

My partner should tell me when something is wrong.

People shouldn't be upset with me.

I need to know where I stand.

We all have Requirements. The interesting part is what happens when life doesn't follow them.

When the "should" doesn't happen

Maybe your Requirement is:

People I care about should respond to me.

Then they don't.

Now your I-System (Depressor) starts working.

They're ignoring me.

I did something wrong.

Something's wrong.

Your body might respond too. Your stomach tightens. You feel restless. It's hard to focus.

And then you start trying to do something about that uncomfortable feeling.

Maybe you check your phone again.

And again.

You reread the message.

You check whether they're online.

You send another text.

Or maybe you decide you're irritated and won't answer when they finally respond.

In MBB, we call some of these attempts to get our Requirement met or make the uncomfortable feeling go away Fixers.

Fixers make sense. We're uncomfortable, so naturally we want to do something about it. But sometimes the things we do to fix the feeling actually keep us stuck in it.

Checking your phone for the tenth time still doesn't tell you why they haven't responded.

Map what's happening

One of the basic tools in MBB is mapping.

Instead of immediately reacting to what's happening, you slow down enough to see the pattern.

What's my Requirement?

They should text me back.

What thoughts are showing up?

They're mad at me. I did something wrong.

What's happening in my body?

Tight chest. Restless. Can't concentrate.

What am I doing to try to fix it?

Checking my phone. Rereading the message. Looking for reassurance.

You don't have to judge any of it.

You're just noticing.

And sometimes seeing the pattern is enough to create a little space between what's happening and what you do next.

Then come back to what's actually happening

This is where Coming to Your Senses can help.

Notice a sound around you.

Feel your feet against the floor.

Notice the temperature of the air against your skin.

Look at what's around you.

You don't have to force yourself to calm down or convince yourself that everything is fine.

You're simply noticing what's actually happening right now.

Right now, you don't know why they haven't responded.

That's different from knowing something is wrong.

As some of the I-System activity settles, you may find that you have more flexibility in how you respond. MBB calls this Natural Functioning.

Maybe you decide to check in later.

Maybe there's a conversation you really do need to have.

Maybe you put your phone down and go on with your afternoon.

Or maybe the text finally comes:

"Sorry! Crazy day."

And you realize your I-System spent three hours responding to a conversation that never happened.

Want to learn more?

If uncertainty regularly sends you into overthinking, reassurance-seeking, stress, or conflict, MBB can help you start recognizing the Requirements and Fixers underneath those reactions.

The MBB Clinic at Utah State University's I-System Institute offers [Utah residents up to 10 free individual sessions](#) with a trained practitioner.

You can also join one of our [free four-week Building Resilience Through Mind-Body Bridging workshops](#), where you'll learn the basic MBB tools and practice using them in everyday life.

Whether you'd rather work one-on-one or learn alongside others, both are opportunities to start noticing your own patterns and discover what helps you return to Natural Functioning.