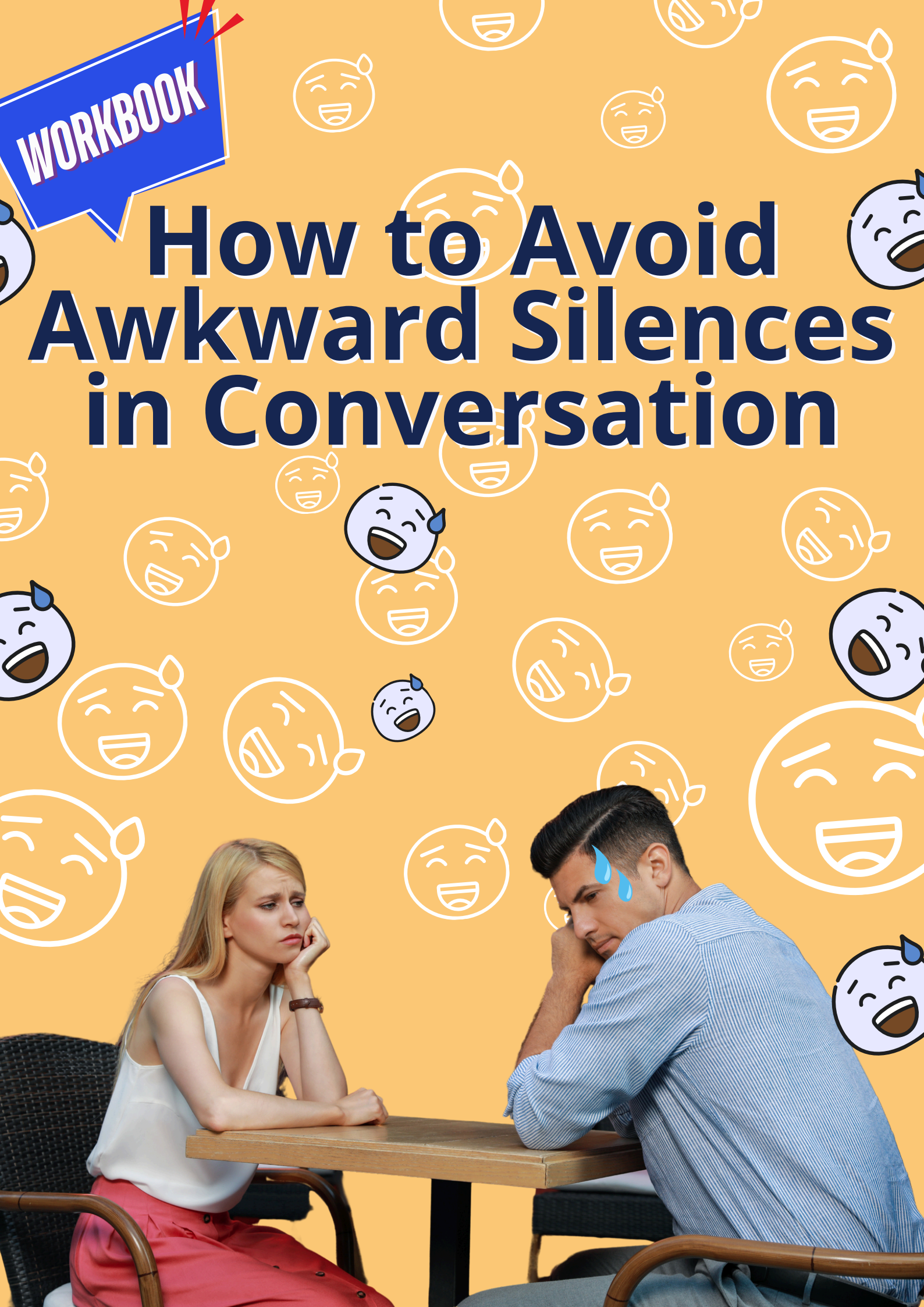



**WORKBOOK**

# How to Avoid Awkward Silences in Conversation




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# How to Keep the Conversation Flowing







## Step 1. Ask the Right Questions: Open-Ended & Closed-Ended Questions

**Closed-ended questions:** Are those that can be answered with just one word, usually 'yes' or 'no', or a short fact.

### Examples:

- "Have you seen that movie?"  
(Answer: "Yes.")
- "Are you from around here?"  
(Answer: "No.")

**Open-ended questions:** They often start with words like 'what,' 'how,' 'why,' or 'tell me about...' These questions invite the other person to share more details and opinions.

### Examples:

- "What did you think of that movie?"
- "How did you end up living in this city?"





## **Step 1. Ask the Right Questions: Open-Ended & Closed-Ended Questions**

**Open-ended questions** on the other hand, encourage longer responses and deeper conversations. They often start with words like 'what,' 'how,' 'why,' or 'tell me about...' These questions invite the other person to share more details and opinions.

### **Examples:**

- "What did you think of that movie?"
- "How did you end up living in this city?"



## **Practice 1- You will always be A, and the other person is B.**

A: Have you seen that movie? (closed question)

B: Yes.

A: Cool, what did you think of it/the ending/the part where....? (follow-up question)

B: OMG, that was my favorite part! I can't believe that happened....etc.





## **Practice: You will always be A, and the other person is B.**

A: Are you from around here?

B: No.

A: Interesting. How did you end up living in this city?

A: I took a job here./My family is from this area.







## **Step 2. React and Add Your Own Thoughts**

People love to talk about themselves, but they also don't want to feel like they are being interrogated. Most likely, the other person wants to learn about you as well. So if they aren't asking you questions themselves, don't feel bad or like they don't want to ask questions, they may be struggling to find the right words as well. Help them out by sharing more about yourself without them having to ask.





## **Practice: You will always be A, and the other person is B.**

A: This coffee shop always smells amazing, doesn't it?

B: Yes, I love their iced vanilla lattes, they are my go to drink!

A: Ooh, that sounds amazing, but I prefer a hot americano. The stronger the better for me!

A: It is such a beautiful day outside! What do you like to do on nice days like today?

B: I love to go hiking in this weather.

A: Oh wow, that sounds like fun. I've never been hiking around here, but I would like to. Where's a good place to go for a hike around here?



## **Step 3. 'Echo' to Encourage More Talking**

Echoing means repeating part of what the other person said to encourage them to explain more. It's useful because it shows that you are listening and that you are interested to hear more of what they have to say.







## **Practice: You will always be A, and the other person is B.**

B: I had a crazy day at work.

A: Oh wow, a crazy day? What happened?

A: Have you worked here long?

B: I've been here about 10 years.

A: Wow, 10 years? That is incredible. What do you like most about working here?



## Step 4. Bring Up a Related Topic

Sometimes, no matter how hard we try to keep a conversation going, the topic grows cold, and you can't think of much else to say or ask about it. If one topic dies out, it's okay, just smoothly transition into another related topic.

For example, if you are talking about traveling, you could transition into food.





**Practice: You will always be  
A, and the other person is B.  
Dialogue: From Travel to  
Food**

A: Have you ever traveled outside the country?

B: Yeah! I went to Italy last year. It was amazing.

A: Oh, that sounds incredible! What was your favorite part of the trip?

B: Definitely the food. The pasta and pizza were unbelievable.

A: I bet! Italian food is so good. Did you try anything unique?





**Practice: You will always be  
A, and the other person is B.  
Dialogue: From Travel to  
Food**

B: Yeah, I had this dish called "cacio e pepe."  
It's really simple but so delicious.

A: Oh, I've heard of that! I love trying new  
foods when I travel. Do you like cooking, too?

B: A little bit! I've tried making homemade  
pasta before, but it didn't turn out great.

A: That's still impressive! Cooking from  
scratch is tricky. What's your go-to meal to  
cook?

B: Probably stir-fry. It's quick and easy.

A: Nice choice! Do you prefer spicy food or  
more mild flavors?



## Step 5. Use 'Conversation Starters' When Stuck

If you ever feel like the conversation is starting to fizzle out and the silence is starting to creep in, you can try to restart the conversation with a general topic, such as:

- "Have you seen any good movies lately?"
- "What do you usually do for fun?"
- "If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?"



# How to Handle a Silence If It Happens





## **Even with all these tips, sometimes silence still happens—and that's okay! Here's what you can do:**

- ✓ **Stay calm** - A few seconds of silence is normal. Don't panic!
- ✓ **Smile** - This keeps things comfortable.
- ✓ **Comment on something around you** - For example, if you're at a café, say: 'This place has a cool vibe! Have you been here before?'
- ✓ **Use humor** - If it feels natural, you can even joke about the silence: 'Well, that was a dramatic pause'





*Kayla Patino*

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