

Fill in the gaps with the words from the box:

buck goading downer shield
off the ground on board fallout
patronising bereft winding



Every week Philippa Perry, a psychotherapist and a writer, addresses a personal problem sent in by a reader.

My sisters fell out, but our parents won't get involved

The question: I'm the eldest of three sisters; but my younger two sisters have fallen out, and haven't spoken for more than 18 months. It's a real 1) _____ at family events, because we used to enjoy all getting together, and now it's one or the other of them and their families but not both.

The trigger for the 2) _____ was, I guess, something to do with money and whether our parents had advantaged one with financial gifts more than the other; but I can't help feeling there's more to it than that, and this argument has its roots deep in their/our childhood. I think our parents should take the initiative and talk to them both about it, but they seem determined to distance themselves from it, saying my sisters are adults (clearly true – they're both in their 40s) and that the row has nothing to do with them. It seems to me that it has everything to do with them – but I can't force them to take it 3) _____ and talk to my sisters.

Meanwhile, I feel slightly 4) _____: I have a good relationship with both of my sisters, and we used to do things together that I miss. It's also annoying me that my parents are passing the 5) _____, when I think they could make a real difference here. How can I help to patch things up between my sisters?

How can I get my team leader to tackle this troublemaker?

The question: My new team does not function well. We have a very negative individual who is constantly 6) _____ and provoking other team members who are trying to get a key project 7) _____. In a one-on-one meeting I questioned the motives of the individual concerned, and he said he liked 8) _____ up a particular member of the team because it was "fun".

He is also very 9) _____ and I have been on the end of his "you don't understand" comments on more than one occasion. This has caused great resentment. My role is predominantly technical but I constantly find myself trying to get each party to communicate.

This should be the job of the team leader; however, he is never around and constantly managing upwards. While I understand he is probably trying to 10) _____ the team from upper management intervention, he has neglected the collaboration and teamwork ethos that is critical for this project to succeed. I believe he lacks the soft skills to have the difficult conversations, but he has an amazing skill to "slopey" shoulder it off on to his much younger team members. What should I do before the walls come caving in and we end up not delivering on our initial promises?