

A Foolproof Formula for Dealing with Nosy Friends and Strangers

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It's amazing how quickly a conversation can become awkward.

You sit down for a holiday dinner with your relatives, and they start asking when you're going to get married. You're chatting with someone while waiting in line at a coffee shop, and they suddenly want to know how much you make a year.

It's natural to want to head for the nearest exit or change the subject when you feel like someone is being too pushy.

At the same time, you want to avoid hurting their feelings unnecessarily. After all, they may not realize that they've touched on a sensitive subject or they may be trying to connect the only way that they know how.

It's easier to deal with nosy questions when you're prepared.

Try these ideas for responding to situations where someone brings up a subject you'd rather not discuss.

Dealing with Nosy Strangers

Intrusive questions from someone you just met may seem especially inappropriate, but they can be easier to handle. With so little invested in the relationship, you'll usually want to move on as quickly as possible.

Try these strategies:

- 1. Practice prevention.** Sometimes there are warning signals that serious snooping is about to break out. Ease out of a conversation if you feel like

someone is a little too excited about your activities. Check that you're not setting yourself up by revealing information that's likely to trigger unwanted curiosity.

2. **Rehearse your response.** Do you find yourself fumbling through the same situations repeatedly? **Work out a stock reply you can use.** For example, tell others that you have a policy against discussing your finances.
3. **Be brief.** You can offer reasons for your choices, but it's not obligatory. As a bonus, a short response can discourage additional prying.
4. **Leave the scene.** Move along if a situation is becoming uncomfortable. Excuse yourself to go talk with another party guest or make a phone call.

Dealing with Nosy People You Know

Extra tact may be required when family, friends, and coworkers get too personal. They may be trying to help, and they may have some legitimate interest in the information.

These techniques will help:

1. **Explore your feelings.** You can increase your self-knowledge by figuring out why certain subjects trigger intense feelings. Maybe you're dissatisfied with your romantic life or your fitness routine.
2. **Stick to the facts.** Resist the temptation to tell white lies. You can hold back details but making up stories could come back to haunt you.
3. **Express your discomfort.** Let others know if a particular topic is distressing for you. They may be willing to drop it or find a more constructive way to discuss

the matter.

4. **Talk it over.** It could be helpful to find out why your spouse or friend is bringing up an issue that bothers you. They may be concerned about your health or wondering if you're engaging in destructive activities. **Accepting feedback and letting others get to know you are part of cultivating close relationships.**
5. **Try humor.** For lighter stuff, you may just want to laugh it off. Make a deal with a coworker to rescue each other from a colleague who frequently oversteps your comfort zone.
6. **Ask for help.** Loved ones may sometimes be nosy because they're unsure what to do when they see you struggling. If you reach out first and tell them what they can do to help you, you may avoid clumsier efforts.

Knowing what to do when someone is meddling in your business can help you to protect your privacy. **Stick to your boundaries while you acknowledge that they may have positive intentions.** It's up to you how much information you want to share about your personal life.