

Awkward question comebacks

Sometimes, we get blindsided by a friend, a nosy relative or someone we don't know very well with a personal or inappropriate question. Here's a few ways to handle them. Practice comebacks on a regular basis with someone you trust so your responses come quickly and naturally when you need them.

BUYING TIME

Often, you just need a moment to compose yourself and process a question before responding. You might also sense that a single question is going to lead to a full-on conversation, so you need to get ready for it.

You can buy some time by being busy. If you're on the phone, computer or in the middle of another conversation don't let another person interrupt you, just take the opportunity to say:

- I'm sorry, I just need to finish this first.
 - I'll be right with you.
 - Just a minute, I'm in the middle of something, I'll come find you.
 - Sorry, I need to focus here for a second.
 - I'm sorry, I can't do two things at once without my brain melting, give me a minute.
- If you've not in the middle of something you can still buy time by saying, "Not now,. I'll talk to you later."

Sometimes, it might be a question you **SHOULD** know, but you can't think of the answer. Like...Where is that report? What's that guy's name? What do you think of the strategy? Why haven't you responded to...

Be honest. You can respond with:

- I'm sorry, I know I should know that, can you give me a second to think about it?
- Good question, let me find out.
- I've completely forgotten, give me a minute/hour/till the end of the week...
- I haven't had a chance to think about it. What do you think?

DEFLECTION

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- I don't really want to discuss that at the moment, but how are you doing?
- I'm not sure this is the right time/place to talk about that, what about (then change the subject.)
- I know I've talked about it in the past, but I'm not really in the right place to go through it at the moment.
- I'm feeling a bit stressed about (what they just asked) so I prefer not to talk about it today. Maybe later.

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TURN THE TABLE

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- When you don't want to get into a subject at all, you don't just want to deflect or delay, you want to avoid it altogether. You can try...
- I don't know about that, but here's something interesting (and move right on with something else).
- I'm not sure what I think/how I feel, but here's something I do know (and get yourself back on safe ground).

Many people ask questions as a way of sharing their own opinion. Take advantage of it. For example, if a relative asks you why you're not going to uni when you know they believe that higher education is the only way to get a job, you can say,

"I get that you're a bit worried about my future, you must have loved uni when you were there. What was it like?" and let them talk about their own experience to take the pressure off you.

Or if a friend asks, "What do you think of the new girl?" and you're afraid it'll turn into gossip you can answer with a more generic statement.

"I like that we're all so different, what do you think we'll all end up doing when we leave school?"

You can also avoid answering questions by referencing celebrities or something currently in the news.

If asked, "Are you seeing anyone?"

You could answer, "Never mind me, did you see Kim and Kanye broke up again?"

But in the end, honesty is sometimes the best policy and you can just flat out say:

- I don't feel comfortable discussing it.
- I'd rather not get into [this topic] at this event.
- It's a really long story, and this isn't the right time to share it.
- Sorry, but it's a bit too personal.
- I'd rather not say.

Remember, don't get into over explaining things. It's OK to have boundaries .
AND don't forget to practice by role playing with someone you trust to help build your confidence.