

Wellness

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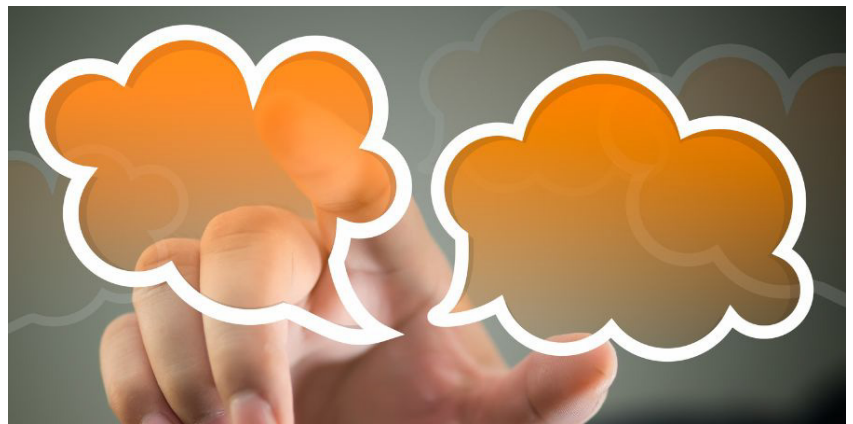
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The 'Swivel Method' Is Your Secret Weapon For Family Holiday Gatherings

The holiday season is upon us, and with it comes the joy of family gatherings and festive parties. However, these occasions can also be a breeding ground for awkward conversations. Whether it's prying personal questions or polarizing topics, navigating these discussions can be challenging. That's where the 'Swivel Method' comes in. This technique, also known as pivoting or sidestepping, can help you gracefully redirect the conversation and avoid uncomfortable moments. We'll explore how to master the art of the 'Swivel Method' and ensure smooth and enjoyable holiday conversations.



Understanding the Importance of Good Conversational Skills

Before we delve into the 'Swivel Method,' it's essential to understand why good conversational skills are crucial, especially during holiday parties. Diane Gottsman, a national etiquette expert, emphasizes that building relationships and strong communication skills require thought and effort. Holiday gatherings provide an opportunity to hone and practice these skills, allowing us to connect with others on a deeper level.

The Basics of the 'Swivel Method'

The 'Swivel Method' is a simple yet effective technique for gracefully changing the subject during awkward conversations. Similar to the concept of swiveling on a pivot point, this technique involves acknowledging the current topic, showing empathy, and smoothly transitioning to a new subject. According to Rebecca Nellis, executive director at the Cancer and Careers National Conference, the formula for the 'Swivel Method' is elastic. It involves acknowledging the other person's statement, using "and" or "while" statements, or implying a connection before introducing a new topic.

Applying the 'Swivel Method' During Holiday Banter

Jeanne Martinet, the author of "The Art of Mingling," suggests applying the 'Swivel Method' during dicey holiday banter, which she refers to as "sidestepping." For instance, if someone asks about your job search when you'd rather not discuss it, you can respond by acknowledging the question and then swiftly changing the subject. Martinet provides an example: "It's coming along, but right now, I am searching for some of those delicious-looking crab puffs I saw going by on a tray a minute ago! Have you had any?" By following up with a related question about their favorite holiday food, you reinforce the swivel and smoothly transition the conversation.

Navigating Controversial Topics

Holiday conversations can often veer into controversial territory, such as discussions about politics or sensitive issues like the COVID-19 vaccine. In such situations, it's best to steer the conversation in a more broad and less contentious direction. Jeanne Martinet suggests diverting the discussion by expressing your lack of information on the specific topic and shifting the focus to something positive or unrelated. For example, if someone brings up a COVID vaccine conspiracy theory, you can respond by saying, "I haven't really seen any info on that, but speaking of health, can you believe how well Aunt Maria looks tonight? You would never believe she was 85 years old. It's amazing." By redirecting the conversation to a more neutral topic, you can avoid potential conflicts.

Practicing the 'Swivel Method'

Nick Leighton, an etiquette expert and host of the weekly etiquette podcast "Were You Raised By Wolves?," suggests using work office parties as an opportunity to practice the 'Swivel Method.' For instance, if someone asks about your bonus, you can pivot by reminding them that it's a party and asking about their exciting holiday plans. It's important to remember that most people have good intentions and may not realize that their questions are too personal. Starting from the assumption that they are genuinely curious can help maintain a positive and friendly atmosphere.

Avoiding Being the "Swivel Target"

While the 'Swivel Method' can help you navigate uncomfortable conversations, it's also essential to consider whether you might be unintentionally asking prying questions that require others to swivel away. Debra Fine, the author of "The Fine Art of Small Talk," suggests adopting a mantra at dinner parties: Don't ask a question you do not know the answer to. This approach helps break the ice without risking awkwardness and encourages a comfortable back-and-forth exchange. Fine recommends using open-ended questions that allow others to share updates about their lives, such as asking about college searches or catching up on their work.

The Power of Small Talk

Small talk often gets a bad rap, but it serves an essential purpose in building relationships. Fine emphasizes that small talk is the appetizer for any relationship, providing an opportunity to learn about and from others. While we may long for commonality, the true goal should be to understand and connect with others on a deeper level. Fine suggests that having ice breakers and conversation starters helps avoid any conversation killers and encourages meaningful interactions.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Conversational Skills

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted our social interactions, leading to increased isolation and reliance on online communication. As a result, our conversational skills may have become a bit rusty. Debra Fine acknowledges that spending less time with others and more time online has made us all a little less polished and polite. However, it's essential to prioritize the comfort of others in conversations and approach them with genuine curiosity and interest.

Final Thoughts

The holiday season presents an opportunity to strengthen our conversational skills and navigate potentially awkward conversations with finesse. By mastering the 'Swivel Method,' we can gracefully change the subject, redirect discussions, and create a more enjoyable atmosphere for everyone involved. Remember, good conversation is about prioritizing the other person's comfort and showing genuine interest in their stories and experiences. So embrace the 'Swivel Method' this holiday season and make your gatherings more enjoyable and engaging for all.



WHIPPED FETA DIP: A HEALTHIER OPTION

INGREDIENTS

Ingredients

- ½ lemon
- 2 cups crumbled feta, from a block in water (8 ounces)
- ½ cup plain low-fat Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus optional more for garnish
- Crushed red pepper flakes, for garnish
- Fresh dill, for garnish
- Warmed pita bread cut into wedges, chips, or crudites, for dipping

LOWER CALORIE FETA DIP

This Whipped Feta Dip not only tastes delicious but also offers some nutritional benefits. The addition of Greek yogurt lightens the dip and boosts its protein content. With only 155 calories per serving, 7.5 grams of protein, and just 2.5 grams of carbs, it's a healthier alternative to traditional dips. To further reduce the calorie count, try serving it with fresh vegetables like carrot sticks, bell pepper strips, and cucumber slices instead of bread or chips. You can indulge in this flavorful dip without worrying about your waistline!

MAKE AHEAD TIPS

If you're hosting a party or want to get some preparations out of the way, you'll be pleased to know that you can make this easy Whipped Feta Dip in advance. It can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a week. To keep it fresh and flavorful, follow these tips:

- Before serving, add the garnishes like olive oil, red pepper flakes, lemon zest, and fresh dill.
- Store the dip in an airtight container in the refrigerator.
- When ready to serve, allow the dip to come to room temperature for the best flavor and texture.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1/4 cup, Calories: 155 kcal, Carbohydrates: 2.5 g, Protein: 7.5 g, Fat: 13 g, Saturated Fat: 6 g, Cholesterol: 36 mg, Sodium: 437 mg, Fiber: 0.5 g, Sugar: 0.5 g



INSTRUCTIONS



HOW TO MAKE IT

1. Zest the lemon and reserve the zest.
2. In the bowl of a food processor, combine the lemon juice with the feta, yogurt, and 2 tablespoons olive oil.
3. Process until smooth and airy. You may need to pause and scrape down the sides once or twice.
4. Serve at room temperature or chilled; it will keep in the fridge for up to 1 week.
5. To serve, garnish with another drizzle of olive oil, a sprinkle of red pepper flakes, lemon zest and fresh dill.

Whipped Feta Dip is a versatile and delicious appetizer that is quick and easy to prepare. With just a few ingredients, you can create a creamy and flavorful dip that pairs perfectly with pita bread, chips, or fresh veggies. The addition of Greek yogurt provides a protein boost while keeping the calorie count in check. Whether you're hosting a party or simply looking for a satisfying snack, this dip is sure to impress. Give it a try!

FEATURED EXERCISE

<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/fitness/a19934945/upper-body-workout-for-toned-arms/>Featured Exercise ► **Shoulder Rolls**

HOW TO DO IT:

Start standing on the mat with feet hip-width apart and hands in fists by sides. Keeping core engaged, begin lifting shoulders toward ears. Pull shoulder blades back while opening chest. Then, pull shoulders down, away from ears. Bring shoulders forward, then lift back up toward ears. That's one rep. Complete as many reps as possible in 30 seconds, then continue to the next move.

THE BENEFITS:

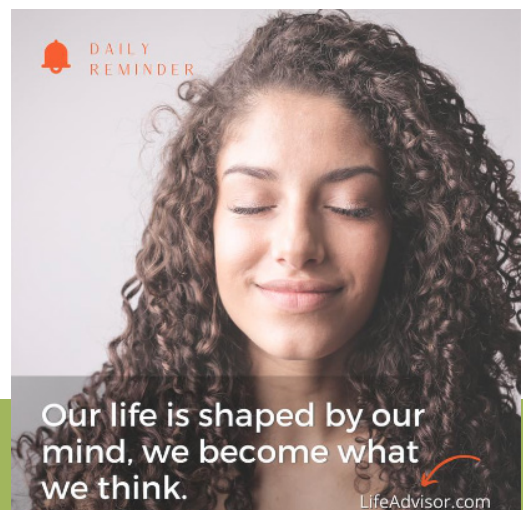
- **Relieves Neck Tension and Tightness**
Many individuals experience daily pain and tension in their necks, often wishing for a massage to alleviate the discomfort. Shoulder rolls can help by promoting the flow of nutrient- and oxygen-rich blood to the tight muscles in the neck. This increased blood flow helps to relieve pain and tension, providing much-needed relief.
- **Opens Chest and Improves Posture**
If you find yourself hunching forward, shoulder rolls can help you pull your shoulders back and open up your chest. This movement not only provides relief to the upper body but also helps improve posture. By practicing shoulder rolls, you are encouraged to maintain posturally correct positions, which can lead to the development of better overall posture.
- **Loosens Shoulders and Upper Back**
Individuals who regularly experience tightness in their shoulders and upper back will benefit from incorporating shoulder rolls into their stretching routine. Just a few sets of shoulder rolls can significantly improve the flexibility and looseness of these areas, leaving you feeling more relaxed and comfortable.

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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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