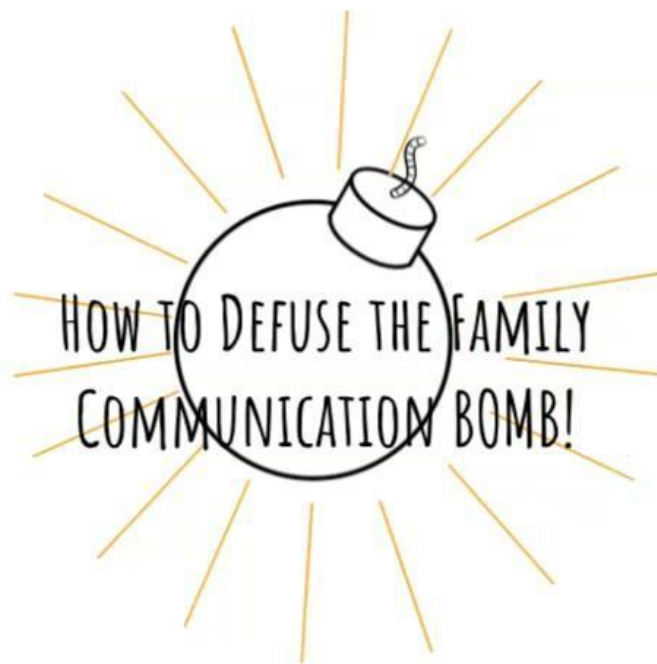


How to Defuse the Family Communication Bomb



Have you ever had a conversation with a family member and regretted what you said and how you behaved? Are you concerned that those conversations will continually erode the communication and relationship until they become callused like soft skin being repeatedly rubbed the wrong way?

To restore healthy communication between family members, understand that when a person says something about you or a situation that involves you, the progression of how you respond is typically this:

1. You interpret what you hear, which creates a narrative within yourself.
2. You determine how that makes you feel, which creates emotions.
3. You react to your emotions with possible consequences from your reply.

The key to better communication is understanding your own feelings and impressions with what you think is being said versus what the other person thinks is being said.

Instead of responding in a rash manner, consider responding in this manner when you are engaged in a highly emotional conversation that stirs strong negative feelings within you:

1. **Pause**....and **ask yourself** what is it that you really want for this relationship. Would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do what I think they did or mean to do what they did?
2. **Ask clarifying questions** to understand what they mean or the intentions of the other person.
3. **Clarify your intentions** with the other person.

4. **Respond** to the situation, but always recognizing your role in the relationship, while keeping in mind that you are the family leader and that the other family members may follow the pattern you are communicating to them.

Improved family communication is possible...and it begins with you!