

## Dear L.A. Plume...

Written by L.A. Plume  
Wednesday, 21 July 2010 11:16

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*Dear L. A. Plume,*

*I attended a meeting the other evening, and a woman whom I'd never met sat down next to me. A complete stranger, she proceeded to point out people in the room and tell me about them. Some of the people I knew, and her "gossip" wasn't true. I was so completely taken aback by the situation that I just didn't know what to say, so I said nothing. What I really wanted to say was that people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones... that her reputation is similar to a French lace curtain – in other words, has lots of holes in it. It's a small town, and even though I had never actually met this woman, her own reputation had preceded her. Should I have said anything?*

*Bunny*

Dear Bunny,

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Thinking of the right thing to say on the spot is a rare, and heady, occurrence. After the fact, we have plenty of time to conjure up the killer repartee, but it's days too late to deliver it. If you had told her you didn't believe what she was saying was true, it's entirely possible that she'd have doubled her efforts to convince you. The best thing you could have said was that you didn't care to hear that kind of talk about other people. If that didn't work, you could have sweetly asked her a question relating to what you knew about her; i.e. was her uncle still wearing the ankle bracelet the state so kindly gave him? Would she like to see a photo of you with her husband's mistress at the beach? Had she decided to get a new dog to replace the one she ran over in the driveway? But all that does is bring you down to that person's level, which isn't likely to be a very happy place.

L. A. Plume

*Dear Ms Plume,*

*I am an "on time," if not early, person. I have a friend who is chronically late when we are meeting, by at least twenty minutes. I value my own time as well as others'. I have asked her to please be on time, tried pretending we are meeting earlier, all to no avail. She just breezes in, late, with a smile and a "Sorry!" What can I do?*

*Joan*

Dear Joan,

When researching the psychology of lateness, I found this information written by Michael J. Formica, who runs the blog, *"Enlightened Living; Mindfulness practice in everyday life"* for *Psychology Today*  
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*"A person who is chronically late is superficially motivated by the misplaced notion that s/he,*

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*his/her needs and his/her interests are somehow more important than the people to whom s/he is responsible. What actually underlies this sentiment is a subtle and much more pernicious sense of just the opposite.*

*The chronically tardy, in large measure, have a perception that others do not feel them to be important, so they operate in a way so as to impose themselves on a situation - exerting control to feel in control - while in reality they are silently validating their own sense of unworthiness, whether consciously or unconsciously."*

What can you do? With the above in mind, the best answer is to be understanding, and perhaps arrive a bit late yourself.

L. A. Plume

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