

On Being Gracious

Written by L.A. Plume

Tuesday, 28 February 2012 14:58



Dear L. A. Plume,

Many of us are transplants to the South, as am I. I often hear of a distant friend's passing away in a different state. Signing the online guest book is not enough of a gesture of sympathy, but I don't want to send flowers, as I think that would be too much. What should I do?

Cindy

Dear Cindy,

Sending a sympathy card is always an appropriate and thoughtful gesture.

L. A. Plume

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Dear Ms. Plume,

I was recently impressed by a friend's good manners when he dropped me off by the door to the restaurant when it was raining and then backed down the alley to pick me up so the car door would be on my side. How can we get the word out so that more men will understand that women appreciate not getting wet in the rain, like to have doors opened for them, etc. His behavior seems to be the exception rather than the rule and I would like to see more of it.

Diana

Dear Diana,

I think you just did, and I heartily agree! Thank you.

L. A. Plume

Dear Ms. Plume,

We have a friend who has stopped coming out with us in the evening because his financial resources no longer allow him the freedom to spend money on luxuries such as cocktails. How do we discreetly pay for his drinks when he does come out with us? I don't want him to feel like a charity case but I do miss his companionship.

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Pete

Dear Pete,

It is easy enough to pay for drinks by simply telling the bartender or waiter that you would like to discreetly have the check. The bigger question may be how your friend will feel about having his drinks paid for this way because he certainly will eventually notice. Depending upon how you think he feels about his situation, the better course of action may be to simply tell him that you miss his company and would be happy to buy him a few drinks until he can get his feet back on the ground, and then he can buy you a drink in return.

Once upon a time in my travels, I met two men who were on vacation in South America and told me this story. When they were in college, Bud had a bit more money than Spencer, and Spencer spent his money before the month was out so Bud was always making up the shortfall and paying for Spencer's beer. Spencer promised Bud that when they were grown up and had real jobs that he would take Bud on vacation every year in repayment for this beer money. As it turned out, Spencer became a lawyer, did well financially, and kept his promise to Bud.

Supporting our friends is what is important. Whether or not he can ever repay you, you must give him some dignity in allowing him the opportunity if it should arise.

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