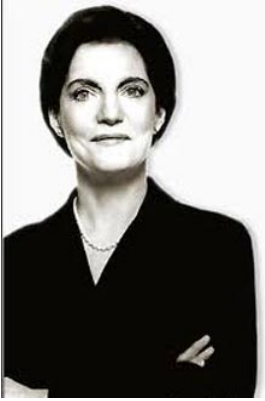


Meet Auntie Bossy

Written by Margaret Evans

Wednesday, 14 March 2012 08:54 - Last Updated Wednesday, 14 March 2012 09:36



(The Life Coach Your Mother Never Was)

Let her show you how Common Sense, Good Manners, and Discipline can get you out of the mess you're in.

FROM WHENCE SHE CAME

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Even as a child, deep in the bowels of St. Louis, Missouri, Susan Murphy's family referred to her as "Mother Superior" or "Reverend Mother" because she always thought she had a better answer and that she was inevitably correct. For good or for bad, it was true.

By the time Susan had parlayed her experience and life into teaching and coaching communication skills, her clients had nicknamed her "Bossy." At first she was a bit offended, but soon realized that "bossy" by another name was "devoted to putting oneself out there to assist others with hard earned knowledge and experience." Sometimes this is a bad thing, such as when she gives unsolicited advice to strangers about their life skills. Other times, it is invaluable and people seek her advice on everything from what to eat to how to ditch their spouses.

It has reached the point where Bossy's very aura screams "Free Advice!" Strangers approach her for directions, tips on which peach to pull from the produce display, and guidance in finding a bathroom. They all seem to think she works there, wherever *there* is. And she does.

Bossy leaves the house each morning determined to impact the world in the small ways that make an enormous difference. And, now, she is determined to reach out and give advice to anyone within reading distance of this fine paper.

TO PEE OR NOT TO PEE:

Dear Auntie Bossy, I am planning a trip to New York City and am worried about something embarrassing. We are staying in the Wall Street area but will be spending most of our time sightseeing uptown. How do I find a clean and safe bathroom in such a diverse city?

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Dear To Pee,

Ahh, how fortunate that my first question is one on which I am an expert. My husband and I spent six weeks in Mexico and Central America on our honeymoon 35 years ago, traveling by local bus and train. I quickly learned how to find a clean and private place to use, even if it involved finding the biggest tree to hide behind. New York, and any big city, is easier.

Avoid restaurants. It isn't fair to the regular customers. Ignore fast food places. Yes, they pride themselves on inspecting and cleaning, but, face facts, this is homeless central. You might luck out, but you don't need to take the chance.

Head for a hotel. Walk in like you own the place and take a quick glance around to locate the meeting and conference space, or the ballroom. If you don't see where to go, ask the front desk or concierge. There is always a restroom near these rooms.

Please leave it at least as clean as you found it. The best one is at the Waldorf Astoria, off the Park Avenue entrance. For the ladies room, turn right and walk up the steps. The stalls go up to the ceiling, so you have lots of privacy and you can change clothes and other things. Please tip the attendant and say hi so you will be welcomed next time.

The most wonderful public restroom in NY is located in Bryant Park on the 42nd Street side. It is beautiful, well maintained, attended and quick.

No matter where you go, be sure to carry a paper napkin or some toilet paper. Ya never know...

- Common Sense: Think ahead.

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- Good Manners: Don't announce your purpose.
- Discipline: Hold it until you find the right place.

AM I A CREEP?

Dear Bossy, I am a good looking, smart, talented guy who has always been able to support himself as a writer. My friends are diverse, smart, cultured and funny. I have everything but a woman. All my life, I've given women the willies. Sooner or later. Sometimes immediately; sometimes it takes a date or two. Apparently there's a disconnect between what I consider perfectly normal courting behavior... and how said behavior is perceived. I do have four cats, which some people think means I am extremely odd, and perhaps gay.

Dear Possible Creep,

Auntie Bossy doesn't even know the details, but, in her infinite wisdom, based on how old she is and how many bad dates she had, can get you on the road to success with the fairer sex.

First of all, I am assuming you don't move in for the finale without being given a neon light level signal. I am also assuming you aren't a braggart, that you don't mention your past failures with women, and that you never, ever say anything self-deprecating. From your picture I can see that you are indeed good-looking, well groomed and extremely well dressed . From your professional success, of which you shared proof, I can assume you are very bright, cultured, wry and interested in all sorts of things.

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So here is what you must do: Stop thinking about yourself. Yes, that is like ignoring the white elephant for all of us. For you it is like ignoring the white Mammoth. However, it is vital. Just shut your self-talk up. (You need to learn to meditate.)

It takes time to master shutting up the twelve-year-old critic who resides in our brains, but you can take action in the meantime. Start listening. Practice asking open-ended questions with your friends. Really open-ended. Ask for thoughts, overviews, and perceptions. Try not to lead and don't ask questions that can be answered with one word.

"Wow, I am having a great week. What happened in yours?" Most people will take the bait. Once your quarry starts talking, don't interrupt to ask questions or make comments or change the subject back to you. Probe (don't get excited, not that kind of probe!) "Really? Tell me more." "How so?" "For example?" "Sounds like fun." "Sounds tough." "Sounds like you have a tough job." Echo the words you'd like her to expand on ("surfing?") and occasionally echo back her key points. "It's exciting that you loved your trip to Hawaii so much. Where else do you want to travel?"

Do some detective work through Google, Facebook and friends. If you know for sure she likes classical music, you can open with, "Wow I heard a wonderful Bach cantata this week, what have you heard that you'd recommend?"

If you don't know what she likes, try "Music really makes my life hum. What do you listen to?"

The temptation will be to prove how smart you are by giving your opinion or interjecting your thoughts. Don't. You will never look smarter than when you are listening to her. Be sure to stay glued to her, smile, shake your head, and look interested. After a while, and before you want to get away, say, "This has been so much fun. Let me give you my number. Give me a ring if you'd like to catch a concert (or something she has indicated would interest her) sometime. I'd love to hear from you. Then leave, or if you are at a party, get away and don't go near her or look back. If she seeks you out, act delighted and get her talking some more.

These are all dance steps and you might have to incorporate some small talk to make them flow, but she should be doing 90% of the talking.

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Start practicing these skills when it doesn't matter, and practice with your friends and family. The sooner you take your spotlight off you, the sooner women will pursue you. Once that happens, you will relax and they will see how smart, cool and accomplished you are.

As for the cats, you don't want to hang with anyone who doesn't get that felines are more evolved than we are.

Invite me to the wedding.

- Common Sense: Remember Everyone Wants to be Acknowledged.
- Good Manners: Pay Attention to Others.
- Discipline: Take the Spotlight Off Your Amazing Self.

Auntie Bossy is Susan Murphy, an internationally known Communication Skills Coach who adores spending every winter and spring in Beaufort. Ask for advice @ Bossymurph@mac.com

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