

Aunt Bossy: The Life Coach Your Mother Never Was

Written by Susan Murphy

Sunday, 28 July 2013 13:10 - Last Updated Tuesday, 30 July 2013 10:30

Slave Driver



Dear Aunt Bossy,

I am a bit older and have enough money to hire a cleaning woman twice a month. The only problem is that I feel obligated to clean the toilets and anything really crummy before she comes, and then I have to leave the house because I feel so guilty. I pay her \$25 an hour cash, so I don't think I underpay her. She is a recent immigrant and doesn't speak English so her job options are limited.

My husband thinks I am a baby about this. What do you think?

Sarah V.

Oh, Ms. Sarah,

Aunt Bossy understands. She does the same. However, we have to remember that we are

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providing a job that this woman needs, and she is making the equivalent of about \$32. 50, and you probably feed her.

The trick is to plan a fun day out of the house for yourself, and leave the house looking forward to returning to a clean and spotless environment. She will naturally be happier working without you around, so it is a win-win.

As for your employment practices: You are paying her a decent salary. She wouldn't be here if it were not a better deal for her than what she had in the country she came from with great difficulty. She is certainly better off than she would be working in a factory or a fast food place.

I know you will probably not stop feeling guilty because I haven't, but it is a stupid feeling and is not based on fact. Ignore it and get out there and have a fun day.

By the way, the secret to a good cleaning person is finding someone who **LIKES** to clean. Lots of people do, but there are a lot of people who don't. They are the ones who wreck your furniture legs and break your china. Get rid of them immediately.

If a person is doing that job because they do not think they have any other possibilities that pay that well, you will end up with a resentful and passive aggressive spirit in your house. I fired a woman once (I lied and told her my husband wanted me to do it myself. She lives down the way and I didn't want a community incident) and she cheerfully told me she was about to quit because she had finally been able to qualify for disability. Yikes.

Short Order

Dear Aunt Bossy,

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I work in a fine restaurant in New York City. Our food is exquisite. Our very sensitive and talented chefs delicately balance the tastes and textures. If we are serving string beans with a touch of bourbon-laced vinaigrette to accompany a fish dish, there is a reason for that.

The problem is that customers come in and want to mix and match and substitute ingredients. I do believe the customer is almost always right, but this is not a short order coffee shop where we can easily substitute cole slaw for the fries. We have a finely organized preparation plan and to stop that to fill special orders would bring the whole thing to a stop.

This is further complicated by the fact that the chefs are difficult and get extremely upset with me if I bring something back or try to get something changed.

What shall I do?

Dear SO,

This is a tough one because I am a fanatic about the customer being served. However I do understand that sometimes the customer needs to be led to what is good for him or her.

I would suggest that you tell them something like, "If you don't want the broccoli with that dish, I would suggest you switch to this other dish." The tastes are finely balanced to enrich each other and you will really enjoy that." If that doesn't work, I'd ask the manager to handle it. Same with any dishes that the customer wants to send back. Let the manager do it.

The last thing a server needs is an enemy in the kitchen and since the celebrity status of chefs has gone over the top, you have to tread lightly. It isn't fair, but then so little in life is. If you like

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your job and are happy with your pay, work around the obstacles.

Next time maybe Aunt Bossy will have a question about the inordinate celebrity worship and sense of entitlement that this question has brought to mind, both on the client and the chef side.

Aunt 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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