

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy

Tuesday, 12 January 2016 19:15 - Last Updated Wednesday, 13 January 2016 06:03



Multilevel Marauder

Dear Aunt Bossy,

My brother has recently started selling a bunch of shakes, vitamins and fitness advice. It worked for him and he is obsessive about it.

□□□□□□□□□□ *The problem is that he isn't happy to just share his success with us. He insists that we must both use and sell his products. When we tell him we aren't interested, he starts asking all these questions trying to "help" us determine our life goals.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *After we all agree that we want to be healthier and slimmer, he pushes some more. If we tell him we don't have the time or money, he becomes very smug and condescending and sometimes overtly insulting. We see how much time he spends on this and how he hustles his friends and family, and we don't want any part of it.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *What should I do? I think eating healthy, well-balanced meals and getting some exercise is the key to healthy living. I also do not believe that shakes, with lots of sugar-like stuff and an endless list of ingredients, are all that good for you. I agree with the Mayo clinic that a healthy body's kidneys and liver do a fine job detoxing by themselves, if you avoid foods full of*

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artificial ingredients.

□□□□□□□□□□ *What can we do? It has become difficult to see him because he comes on so strong. He also seems so angry all the time.*

□ *Already healthy Harriet*

Dear AhH,

These kinds of evangelical sales approaches border on bullying. We have all been on the other end of it.

When I participated in an EST program (a self-help seminar that was very popular in the 70's) the emphasis on "selling" (no money coming your way, though) was overwhelming. The promoters insinuated that you were severely lacking if you did not want to bring your friends or sign up for another program. They would corner attendees and pummel us with smug observations about how we weren't cool or sophisticated or evolved enough to recognize the value.

I benefited greatly from some aspects of the program, but hated the egomaniacal control freak evangelism of it all, so I had no intention of returning.

The calls were relentless. Finally, when I told a gal that I travelled constantly on my job and didn't have the time, she responded with a nasty tone "No one has the time. You choose not to have it." A light went off in my head. I was ready for the next call.

The next caller, as expected, tried to pin me down for a commitment and testily asked me to take a look at what was between me and signing up for another seminar. I told her that the original seminar was so life changing, so on target, that as a result, all my dreams were

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coming true. I said my life had become so fabulous, that I had so many new friends, so many exciting trips to take and so much more money, that I thought I would just focus on my life at the moment. Lying has never been so much fun.

She wasn't happy to hear that, and got off the phone pronto. No more calls.

So, what can you do? Your only choice is to tell your brother that you do not want to participate, your reasons don't matter, and that you wish him well, but you do not want to hear about it at all. You can also say that you appreciate that he is only trying to help, but you are fine living the way you do.

The promoters of these kinds of products are heavily influenced by very sophisticated organizations that constantly push them, so be prepared for resistance and just repeat the simple statement that you appreciate his concern, but you are not interested.

These sales methods depend upon a constant influx of new customers because so many people drop out. The pressure is intense. Many of the distributors become zealots and telling them you don't want to participate becomes akin to dissing their religious or political beliefs. You have to do it anyway or be forever irritated by the never-ending pitch.

Good luck and stay healthy on your own terms.

Please, please me.

Dear Aunt Bossy,

□ I try to be nice. I go out of my way for people, but don't act like a martyr about it. It makes me feel good and I wish everyone would do the same.

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□□□□□□□□□□ *My sister accuses me of being a “people pleaser,” like pleasing people is a weak and bad thing. She is the opposite, and to call her a rhymes-with-witch, would be putting it mildly.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *Am I wrong?*

Polly

Dear Polly,

I am assuming your middle name is not Anna.

Only insecure people think that pleasing others is weak. Pleasing others is one of life's greatest pleasures and I have tried to make it my hobby, which means pleasing even people I will never see again. I can't tell you how happy this has made me and how much fun it is.

The only time pleasing others is a negative is when it becomes unbalanced. You must feel like you are getting joy out of your actions to make pleasing a good thing. This doesn't mean that you should never do things that inconvenience you in order to please others, but means that you should get a kick out of it or do it because it is the right thing.

For example, when I park, I make an effort to park in such a way that other drivers will have as much room as possible. Sometimes that means I have to squeeze out my side, but it never means that I have to crawl over to the passenger side to get out. It often means that I have to walk a few steps further, but so what.

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I leave public bathrooms cleaner than I find them. Talk about people pleasing! That is because I strongly believe we should all do that.

I do get a bit neurotic about pleasing on airplanes when I am at the window seat. I am loath to inconvenience the people sitting next to me if I have to get out to grab something from the overhead or go to the facilities. I'm working on overcoming that reluctance because it is silly and there is no reason to suffer unnecessarily.

Bottom line here is common sense and balance. The minute you feel like you or anyone else is taking advantage of you, change that.

When your sister brings it up, just tell her you get pleasure out of making people happy, including her. That will shut her up.

Please away!

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

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