

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy

Tuesday, 06 February 2018 15:09 - Last Updated Wednesday, 07 February 2018 07:08



Bejeweled, Bejangled and Bewildered

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I love jewelry and have a collection of very nice pieces, mostly artistic and semi-precious. My granddaughter is an artist and we seem to enjoy the same genre of art. Beginning when she was 14, and was visiting, I always invited her upstairs to "play with the jewelry" and told her to take a piece with her.

She did that, but wrote rather unenthusiastic thank you notes and never wore the jewelry when I saw her. She is now in college, and is 21.

Here is my problem: if she doesn't like the jewelry, I would like to have it back since I love it. Is it all right for me to ask her? Her mother, my daughter in law, is not a fan, so I can't consult with her.

Please advise,

Tiffany

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Dear Tiffany,

How frustrating for you to share something you love and have carefully chosen only to be treated with such a lack of appreciation, much less decent manners.

If you have a good relationship with your son, you could start by asking him. However, (don't sue me, I'm generalizing) most men don't know from jewelry and don't like to get involved in women's affairs, so to speak.

You obviously can't ask the mother, from whom this little acorn seems to have fallen.

I would bite the bullet and ask your granddaughter herself. Here is what you can say. "Susie (only call her that if that is her name; otherwise, substitute), you know how much I love my jewelry and how happy I was to share it with you. However, sometimes I feel like I forced it on you, and it really isn't your thing. I just want you to know that if you don't like it, or don't wear it, you can give it back to me and my feelings won't be hurt at all. I realize we each have our own taste. I would just hate to think of my little treasures sitting in a drawer gathering dust, if I could be happily wearing them."

I'm dying to know what happens, so keep in touch.

Love, Aunt Bossy

Dear Aunt Bossy,

My dearest friend has not been taught fine table manners. What can I do to advise her without

hurting her feelings?

Miss Priss

Dear MP,

Yikes! This is so touchy. Somehow it becomes a moral issue or a judgment on someone's worth. Tread carefully.

What I have done, which worked a little, is tell a story about someone else. For example, my nephew was visiting, and would pick up a whole piece of bread or roll and smear butter on it. Since he was my nephew and he knew he was practically raised by wolves and that I adore him, I felt comfortable telling him that he should break off a piece at a time and butter it. He recently told me that every time he eats bread or a roll in a restaurant, he thinks of me.

I will always be grateful to the man (a former teacher of a friend, who lived in a very elegant apartment in a very poor section, basically a slum, in Chicago in the 60's) who cooked dinner for a couple of us and immediately stopped us from eating our soup by moving the spoon toward us and instructed us to move the spoon away. I think of Brother Hargut every time I have soup. (He also took us to our first gay bar and helped me negotiate the ladies' room, by going in first and making all the drag queens leave.) Every college kid should meet someone as mannerly and tasteful and exotic as he was. On the other hand, these days "mannerly and tasteful" are probably old hat, and "exotic" is downright scary.

If you have some stories like this about someone you know, you can tell them as a hint to your friend. It might resonate. You can repeat mine, if you'd like.

How a person holds the utensils is a frequent roadblock. That is a skill learned so young that it is difficult to explain. I'd leave it alone, unless it is a young person who looks to you for advice.

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And, if you ever get exactly the right answer about what to do with your napkin when you leave the table mid-meal for biological reasons, let me know.

Bon Appetit!

Aunt Bossy