

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy

Tuesday, 05 March 2019 10:48 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 March 2019 05:25



Please, Please Help Me.

Dear Aunt Bossy,

□□□□□□□□□□ *I am a life coach.□□ People pay me well to coach them to be happier and more successful.□□ I love what I do and, when a friend asks for help, I always try, without charging them.*

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ *I am frequently asked by someone to give advice, review work, help with introductions, etc and I do. Sometimes it involves putting together a plan for my friend to move forward with specific actions. I am thrilled when the work pays off.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *However, more and more frequently I am asked for advice and help from “friends” and acquaintances who just fade away after I have shared my time and energy.□ No thanks, no update, no nothing.□ And they have no compunction about getting in touch the next time they need help.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *It isn’t that I expect them to heap me with praise or cling to me, but it bothers me. I don’t want to stop helping people, but it is my profession and I don’t have time to waste.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *What do you suggest?*

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□□□□□□□□□□ *Eleanor*

Dear Eleanor,

Been there. Done that. Been horribly annoyed.

The worst thing about this scenario is that it makes you hesitate to help others without getting paid.

I learned years ago to just say no when a friend asked to borrow money. (I'm still out about five thousand dollars.) When someone asks, I merely reply, "I'd love to help you out, but I no longer lend money to friends, and I have to be strict about it."

When it comes to free coaching, I haven't sent anyone away yet, but am ready to do that. I'll just say I'd love to help but don't have the time to spare.

In a few instances, where I think it will make a difference, I will let the person know I'm not happy with the way they have responded in the past. If their behavior leads me to believe they don't accept criticism, I just disappear. No point in wasting my time and their time.

A couple of tricks I've learned so that I can still help without being taken advantage of are simple. If someone asks me to write something for them, I have them write it up in their own words and then I edit it. Much faster than starting from scratch. Same goes for a recommendation or testimonial. I ask them to write it and I'll send it. Amazing how often they don't even bother.

If someone wants you to help them lay out a more complicated plan for moving forward, have them send you a detailed and proposed plan to use as a starting point.

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We are very fortunate that we both have careers we love enough to do for free. However, that generosity of spirit should only be shared with those who appreciate it. We have to husband our energy to make a difference where we can and still feel good about helping.

Best, Aunt Bossy

Who Do You Think You Are?

□□□□□□□□□□ *How can one criticize or fight back against someone who is condescending without becoming condescending?*

□□□□□□□□□□ *Maggie*

Dear Maggie,

Why bother? When a person is condescending, it is a major indication of insecurity and possibly jealousy or envy. Moving on and not engaging is probably the most effective way to deal with it.

We do have to be careful not to find condescension where there is none. It is very much a matter of tone. Sometimes giving advice or correcting someone is perceived as condescending by the receiver when that was not the intention of the giver.

If you have to deal with a person who is regularly condescending, the easiest thing to do is go into what I call "Cheerful and stupid mode." Act like you don't get it, and just keep going. Reacting any other way gives the condescending person exactly what they want, which is to annoy you or make you "wrong."

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The times I have not resisted the urge to put the condescending person in his or her place, I have regretted the effort it took, and the bruise it put upon my soul.

No easy answer here.

Best, Aunt Bossy