

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy
Wednesday, 18 December 2013 07:06



Medical Manners

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I have a friend in the hospital and am unsure what I should do to help. I don't know if she is in good enough shape for me to visit or if she even wants visitors. I also don't know what would be a good thing to take when/if I do visit.

Nervous Nancy

Dear NN,

If she can talk, call her and ask. If you call the hospital and she doesn't answer, ask for the nurses' station and ask if it is a good idea for you to keep trying to reach her. If you don't get a clear answer, then, and only then, ask a member of her family. Family members have their own agendas and frequently become insane in this circumstance, so try to go around them unless you know them well.

Now what? If your friend is not conscious but can receive visitors, go and touch her and talk to her. Leave a small gift such as a box of soap with a nice smell. Open it and leave it near her

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bed.

If she is conscious, call and ask what she would like or what she needs. Ask if there is a food she misses or craves, and bring that. Ask if she has comfortable bedclothes, and make sure she does. Find out if she wants to read, and what. Magazines are a good choice because when a person is ill sometimes the attention span suffers.

Other nice touches for a hospital room: Silk or cashmere or microfiber scarf or shawl, lavender spray for the linens and pillow, music or DVDs if she has the means to play them, good headphones, fabulous socks or slippers.

Be certain that when you are in her room you are considerate of a roommate and the staff. If the roommate appears to be unattended to by friends, see what you might bring her next time.

Whatever you do, visit if it is possible. This can be difficult if the illness is severe, but it means so much to the patient. If you put the visit off and get to the point where you are embarrassed at not having gone sooner, go.

One last thing, you can ask if she has or needs an advocate helping her sort out her care, but otherwise don't talk medicine or question the doctors or hospital. Your friend probably gets enough of that. If she doesn't she will let you know.

Good luck. You are a good friend to care.

Better and/or Worse

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Dear Aunt Bossy,

What the heck is "better or worse" supposed to mean in the wedding vows???

I have been trying to make the worse better for years and am getting nowhere.

I love my wife, and she is a good person, but she has so many obnoxious habits that she refuses to address. I have pointed them out and have told her how much they upset the quality of my life, but she just becomes furious.

For example, she wipes her dirty hands on the furniture, she drops food all over the floor when she cooks and just ignores it, she leaves the bathroom dirty in disgusting ways, she is a dreadful driver and won't do anything to improve, and on and on.

These are all small things, but added up, they are large. It translates into "I don't care about you" in my mind, and makes me feel very lonely, like I am in this partnership alone.

I mention each of these habits once in a while, but don't want to become a nagging husband. What can I do? She won't go to counseling because she doesn't think there is a problem except for the fact that I criticize her "constantly."

Lonely and Depressed

Dear L and D,

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My heart goes out to you. You have a big problem.

I don't get a sense of the better part of your marriage. If there is one, you can focus on that, and just say to yourself "I married a wonderful mess" whenever you see the results of her sloppy behavior. You can think of her as "differently abled" in the spouse department. I once had a cat who specialized in leaving kitchen cabinet doors open. I hated it, but after he died, whenever I saw an open kitchen cabinet door I smiled with an ache in my heart.

You might try a new method in communicating with her and ask her what you can do to help eliminate the things that repulse you. You must be specific about what they are and be open to helping.

You can get a dog or cat to help with the kitchen floor and bring some love and comfort into your life.

You can drape something beautiful and washable over the furniture she uses as a napkin.

I would also suggest you get a therapist to help you deal with your loneliness and depression before it makes you ill.

And, for joy's sake, get out of the house and do stuff you like with people you like. Just be sure they aren't people who might tempt you to make an emotional decision based on your unhappiness and their availability. If you get to the point where you feel you have no option but to connect with someone on a more intimate level, you should get a divorce lawyer to add to your list of contacts, sooner rather than later.

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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