

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy
Tuesday, 15 December 2015 21:01



All Present and Accounted For

Dear Aunt Bossy,

When I was being raised, my mother would never have brought a gift to a party or dinner at another's house. She might have sent flowers the next day, or sent a bottle of champagne later, but that dear lady considered showing up with something to be tacky.

□□□□□□□□□□ *These days, it seems that one is expected to show up with something. Wine or liquor seems to make the most sense, but I see people bringing elaborately wrapped gifts. It reeks of "Pay to Play."*

□□□□□□□□□□ *I'm not talking about the custom of "pot luck" where everybody contributes and is the ultimate in graciousness and fellowship. I'm also not talking about the instance where you ask a hostess if you can bring something and she says "yes." I'm not even talking about the casual get-together of a cast of dozens, if not hundreds. These are completely different circumstances where contributing symbolizes friendship.*

□□□□□□□□□□ *What do you think about this? I am so torn between the fine manners of my dear departed mother, and the denizens of a much more showy society.*

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Stressed enough without this.

Dear SEWT,

I agree with your dear departed mother. However, things have changed.

For God's sake, we have a whole section of the population incapable of saying "you" without adding "guys." (The President and First Lady even do that.) We have people climbing aboard jets headed for the Continent with bare, hairy legs, unkempt nails and flip-flops.

We have assorted gum chewers, scratchers, rsvp ignorers, thank you note illiterates, and on and on. We have lots to dismay us.

Here is what I think you should do. If you have the time and inclination, pick up your favorite bottle of whatever to drink and take that. If not, don't worry about it.

If you do bring something, it isn't necessary to spend a fortune or get flashy because the host/s will be too busy to keep accounting and it is truly the thought that counts.

I have been guilty of showing up and unknowingly re-gifting wine. (Darling, if it was good enough for you to buy for me, it is good enough for me to share with you. I don't question the provenance of what I find in my liquor cabinet)

I will say the nicest "hostess" gift I ever received was at a very large reception where a friend showed up with a baked Brie and the recipe attached. We devoured it, and I will always remember who brought it and how good it was.

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Bottom Line: Do what you want.

Oh, there is one thing to avoid, although when our guest in France did it we found it quite charming: Try not to show up with a half empty bottle of wine just because your drive to the party was stressful.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, And a Stunning Winter Solstice.

Hairy Sickmas

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I am so sick of these people who insist upon saying "Merry Christmas" when they don't know what religion I am. It is so awful, and makes this holiday season even more stressful than it is already. The only religions I have any patience with are Buddhism and Hinduism, and I am infuriated when people try to impose their religion on me.

Spiritual, not Religious

Dear SNR,

Honey, Buddhism is not a place for an angry soul, and Hinduism has some great holidays and beliefs, but they aren't exactly models for getting along with people of different religious beliefs.

I suggest you pull out your yoga mat, turn on the meditation music, and get to Alpha state asap. Open your heart to all people, no matter (or in your case, in spite of) their religions.

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Just think of all there is to celebrate: Christmas, Hanukah, The Solstices, Eid, Devali, various Wiccan get togethers, and on and on. There is so much to notice and take joy in. Stop wasting your time resenting people who are only wishing you well.

The technique to handle this: Smile broadly and say, "And a Happy Whatever (fill in the blank) to you."

Peace be with you, darling.

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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