

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy
Tuesday, 16 May 2017 12:42



Awkward Situations, great and small

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I am very awkward in many social situations, but the one that throws me the most is the death of a friend or acquaintance. I never know what to say or do, and I always feel superficial or banal.

It is also uncomfortable because it all goes back to me and how I feel, even if I am talking about the virtues of the person who passed away, and how much I miss them.

"There are no words" pretty much sums it up, but it is repeated by everyone.

*Help.
Awkward*

Dear Awkward,

Aunt Bossy

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First of all, welcome to the club. Most of us feel that way. Really, what can one do or say?

If you are a close friend, your first responsibility to the deceased is to take care of those close to him or her. Call, visit, find out if you can bring food.

Then, start running errands. (Ask first, but be assertive if you get a "no never mind.") Clean the house, weed the garden, nurture the plants, wash the windows, take the car for gas and a wash, iron, walk the dog, feed the cat. Anything to relieve those in agony of having to think about mundane stuff. Most importantly: sit and listen.

When the kitchen is full of casseroles, provide little luxuries for those mourning such an incredible loss. Really good soaps and bath gels, incense and essential oils.

Ask the bereaved what they need. It may be company. They may want to go for a walk or a ride, see a movie, take a bike ride.

One of the most important things is to follow up after the initial swarm of loving friends has to go back to the daily grind.

Next, take the gift of the departed and incorporate it into your own life. Think about what you loved, or even envied, about that person and do it or create it. Sail that boat, swim that river, walk that trail, balance on that board, look for the birds, dance the night away.

Remind yourself daily that it will be your turn someday, just like it is everyone's turn. Honor your friend by making the most of the life you have left.

Also, do not feel guilty if the first thing you thought is how glad you are it isn't you or your family. We really are hardwired for survival, and that is a natural first thought for humans.

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Oh, and if you can, pray. It helps everyone, here and there.

Be strong,
Aunt Bossy

P.S. I'm a firm believer that anything said with love is fine, but try not to say, "How old was he/she?" or "She/he is in a better place now." You can mention angels and heaven and the Rainbow Bridge and the joy of seeing long gone pets, but try to determine that the person to whom you are speaking believes in those things.

Dear Aunt Bossy,

I gave my daughter in law a blouse that was handmade by my mother. The DIL is a very nice person and she thanked me a lot. The only thing is that she has had it for years and never wears it. It is ok for me to ask for it back? I know she doesn't want to hurt my feelings, but it hurts my feelings that something that means so much to me isn't being used.

Worried Mother in Law

Dear WMiL,

Start out by asking your son and letting him know that you are not insulted, but it does hurt you for the blouse to go unused and unappreciated. If he says OK, just talk to your daughter in law. Be sweet and assure her that you do not take this personally, that you realize we all have our own taste. Explain how much the blouse means to you and that you want to make certain it has a good home.

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*And then never give that guttersnipe another present as long as you live!!*Â (I'm only kidding.)

Communication is a wondrous thing. If you open your heart and explain a situation, most people understand.

What size is the blouse? I could use a little update to my wardrobe.
A.B.