

Awkward Conversations

Written by L.A. Plume
Tuesday, 10 May 2011 16:23



Dear L.A.Plume,

A friend of ours needs work, and I have plenty for him to do around my house. The problem is that he refuses to set a price for his time, and at the end of a job he tells me to pay him what I think it is worth. I can estimate what a professional would charge for the job but my friend takes lengthy and frequent cigarette breaks, breaks to chat, time out for lunch, etc. He also comments that other people don't pay him adequately for his work. He is excellent at what he does but I just don't know how/what to pay him in a way that is fair for both of us. I would appreciate any suggestions, as the friendship is important.

M

Dear M,

Simply tell him that you want him to do the work for you but that you need him to set a price before he starts. If he can't do that, don't have him do the work.

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L.A.Plume

Dear L.A.Plume,

I have a friend who has been through a set of unfortunate circumstances recently and I feel badly for her, but she insists on harping about them every time I see her. There is nothing I can do to help her and, quite frankly, I'm tired of listening to her complain endlessly. How can I politely steer the conversation in another, more positive, direction?

Sandee

Dear Sandee,

I had a friend who loved to tell stories over and over again. Once, when I gently reminded her that I'd heard that story before, she looked at me and said, "As my friend, it's your job to listen to what I need to tell you." I have remembered that for decades and think it has some merit. But her stories, back in the day, were about her boyfriend and were cheerful stories. It is tiresome to listen to someone complain, especially when there is nothing we can do to help but listen. Give yourself a time frame, maybe five minutes, and then tell her you're sorry she's going through a difficult time but you would now like to hear her good news. Perhaps you can get her to refocus on what's going well in her life; it should certainly give her the hint that enough is enough.

L.A.Plume

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Dear Ms. Plume,

I just came back from a trip to Beaufort where I was visiting friends and staying in their lovely home. I enjoyed myself and they've invited me back again, but here's the problem: on the last day, when I went to the bathroom, I thought I saw something jump in the toilet. Upon closer inspection - and I'm not telling how - I found a tree frog in my toilet! We don't have tree frogs where I live and I must admit it freaked me out a bit. I didn't quite know how to tell my hosts, so I said nothing, but now I'm a bit squeamish about staying there again because I don't know what other creatures may be hiding in the house. What should I do?

Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

The only thing I can say is that it's a good thing it wasn't me with a snake in the toilet because I would have had a heart attack! And it's a good thing, also, that you weren't in Central America, because lots of the cute little frogs there are poisonous. I don't believe that frogs in the toilet are a common occurrence here, but your story does give new meaning to the old adage: look before you leap; or look before you sit and the frog leaps.

L.A.Plume

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