

Some Mouthy Issues

Written by L.A. Plume

Tuesday, 13 August 2013 15:24



Dear Ms. Plume,

I have an issue with a friend who talks incessantly and with her mouth full of food. I don't want to see that food once it leaves her plate - in her mouth, or spiltled out around her face. Is there any way to politely suggest she finish chewing and then continue the conversation? Whatever she has to say is not so earth-shattering that it can't wait. Help, please.

Ginny

Dear Ginny,

This happens to be one of my pet peeves, and I've never found a satisfactory way to deal with it. Now I mostly just look at the floor if someone talks to me while chewing. I don't look past them so they might think I'm near-sighted or cross-eyed; I look in a completely different direction so that it is quite apparent I'm looking away. It doesn't help – they chew and talk anyway. So I did some research on the internet, and guess what? It seems that no one out there likes looking at chewed food. Now, to be clear, I have heard about a group of people who do weird and kinky things with food, but I'm not referring to them in this column! I have looked through various copies of my etiquette books written by Emily Post, and her great-grandson, Peter Post, and find no reference to talking with food in your mouth; clearly, it is such a breach of etiquette they never even thought to address it. None of that helps us deal with it at the table though; maybe we could just find some eye-glasses with mirrored lenses and let those people watch themselves chew while they talk.

L.A.Plume

Dear L. A. Plume,

When is the child of a friend old enough that I don't have to keep sending him birthday cards? 18? 21? Ever?

Sandy

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Dear Sandy,

When he is old enough that his mother stops sending you thank you notes for him could be a good time. However, if he sends you birthday, or even Christmas, cards then you must keep up the tradition. Cards are always nice to find in the mailbox; way better than bills. If you want to stop sending them because you think he's all grown up and doesn't really appreciate them any more, then stop any time. If you harbor the thought that yours may be the only card he receives in the mail and waits for it all year long, then be sure to invest in some "forever" stamps and keep on sending.

L. A. Plume

Dear Ms. Plume,

A dear neighbor likes to visit and talks non-stop about things in which I have absolutely no interest. Her stories are like a freight train with a zillion cars, and when you're stopped on the other side of the tracks, you think you'll never get across. How can I tell her that I really, really don't want to hear about her daughter-in-law's son's teacher who has an aunt in Missouri that keeps cats in a barn that was built from pine transported there from Maine in 1838 by six draft horses and a wagon?

Going Deaf

Dear Going Deaf,

Really, six draft horses? I love draft horses – were they Clydesdales? I also love freight trains; when I was little I used to wave to the engineers. Am I avoiding the question? I think we must live in the same neighborhood, or your neighbor gets around, because I'm sure I know her! Have you tried humming out loud? Or suddenly remembering that you need to go find a button for your friend's mother's cashmere sweater that she bought at Bonwit Teller in 1968?

L. A. Plume

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