

Goodness Gracious

Holiday Etiquette Can Make Everyone Happier

By: Priscilla Lister

Etiquette might be the kindest gift to offer family and friends during the holidays.

"What good manners does, is make people happy and please them," said Letitia Baldrige, former chief of staff for Jacqueline Kennedy and social secretary to the White House during John F. Kennedy's White years and an authority on manners who has written 15 books on etiquette.

"Etiquette is really a way to reach out to people and do delightful things for them – give them a special party that's intimate and fun and warm, give presents that show you've thought about the person," she said during an interview from her Washington, D.C., home. "It's a time to call up all your friends you haven't spoken to, classmates you haven't seen since graduation, and friends who have been sick. It's a time when we really stop and think about our friends and family and show a little love and attention."

And when we shower our friends and family with appropriate behavior, we avoid such holiday mishaps as hurt feelings or unmet expectations. Remember these etiquette tips to help you negotiate the holidays gracefully and graciously.

NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Have you ever given a gift to someone whose response is, "I already have one of these?"

"Children are not born knowing how to politely respond to gifts, and in their childlike honesty can say some pretty rude things," says Elizabeth Pantley, author of "Kid Cooperation" and "Perfect Parenting" (New Harbinger Publications) and a columnist on the Web site, www.canadianparents.com. "The easiest way to prevent this is through teaching."

Pantley recommends parents have training sessions with their children before the gift-giving situation occurs. Review the possible situations, such as what they would say if they already have the item, or if they don't like it, or even if they do like it. "It's amazing what wonderful results occur with a bit of practice," she says.

If you receive a gift you don't like, Baldrige advised, "don't tell the donor you don't like it; thank them sincerely. Some may call it lying, but I call it social niceness," she said.

KINDNESS IS KEY

Peggy Post, a fourth-generation family member of the Emily Post Institute who writes an etiquette column for several magazines, addressed the issue of guest who eat and run: "How long should guests stay after a holiday meal? Last year my cousin and her family practically ran out the door as soon as we'd finished eating," said the questioner.

"Normally, guest should remain at least an hour after completing a meal," replied Post. The rule isn't set in stone, she added, especially around the holidays. But at least a reason should have been given for the early exit.

As for the college age son who wants to share a bedroom with his girl-friend when they come home for the holidays, Post replied, "No matter how indignant your son becomes, remember that you make the rules about sleeping arrangements in your home. Talk to your son and tell him that both he and his girlfriend are very much welcome, but you're uncomfortable with them sharing a room. You don't need elaborate justifications—you're on your own turf."

MORE NOT JUST FOR CHILDREN

The Emily Post Institute (www.emilypost.com) has etiquette tips for parents on minding their children, which really apply to people of all ages:

1. "Please" and "Thank You" are still the magic words they've

always been.

2. Teach your children, as soon as they are old enough to understand, to greet people by name.

3. Teach your children not to interrupt. This is part of learning to respect other people's rights – The mother who invariably stops and says, "What is it, dear?" when her daughter interrupts is helping her establish a habit that will do her a disservice all her life.

4. It is not necessary to write a thank-you note when a gift is opened and the donor is thanked personally at the time of opening. If the gifts are not opened in front of the donors, the child must write a personal note mentioning the gift by name to each donor.

In Emily Post's 1922 "Etiquette," still the virtual manual for social manners today, she describes the perfect hostess, the bad and good guests:

"She must first of all consider the inclinations of her guests, she must not only make them as comfortable as the arrangements and limits of her establishment permit, but she must subordinate her own inclinations utterly. At the same time, she must not fuss and flutter and get agitated and seemingly make efforts in their behalf. Nothing makes a guest more uncomfortable than to feel his host or hostess is being put to a great deal of bother or effort on his account.

"The guest no one invites the second time is the one who runs a car to its detriment, who leaves a borrowed tennis racquet out in the rain, who 'dog ears' the books, who leaves a cigarette on the edge of a table and burns a trench in its edge, who uses towels for boot rags, who stands a wet glass on polished wood, who tracks muddy shoes into the house and who leaves his room looking as though it had been through a cyclone.

"Courtesy demands that you, when you are a guest, shall show neither annoyance nor disappointment – no matter what happens."

That age-old Golden Rule works especially well during this season. Treat your friends and family with dignity and deference – as you hope they treat you – and have a happier holiday.

ALPHA & OMEGA METAPHYSICAL CHURCH OF FAITH

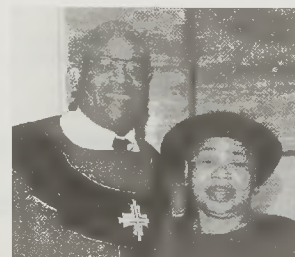
1800 GRAY AVENUE • WINSTON-SALEM, NC 27105

ELDER JOHN W. HUNTLEY, PASTOR

Joy to the world the Lord is come



Let earth receive her king



ELDER & MRS. JOHN W. HUNTLEY