

LIFESTYLES

Approved Christmas present lists smacks of greed

Dear Annie: For my friend “Janice’s” birthday, I gave her a gift basket of bath items and a piece of jewelry. I thought the present was perfect for her. I never received a thank-you, so I gently asked Janice if she liked her gift. Her response was that she didn’t care for the bath items I chose. She said nothing about the jewelry.

I was heartbroken. I quickly returned the bath items and exchanged them for ones she had specified. I still never received a thank-you note. I am quite hurt by this, but it’s not the end of the story.

I just received a note from Janice, listing all the gift items that are acceptable for her and her children for Christmas. I am appalled by her poor manners. I would never tell people they have to buy me gifts for the holidays, let alone tell them what I expect to receive. Is this proper behavior? — **Frustrated Shopper in the USA**

Dear Shopper: No, this is rude, but you already know that. All gifts should be acknowledged graciously, and giving out shopping lists smacks of greed. Janice no doubt thinks she is doing you a favor by letting you know exactly what she wants, but it certainly puts a damper on your holiday cheer. Feel free to ignore her shopping list. You also might want to re-evaluate how much this friendship means to you.

Dear Annie: I am a married 27-year-old woman with three sons under the age of eight. I have been married to “Adam” for six years. Two years ago, Adam converted to a religion that I am not comfortable with. I am not very religious, nor am I raising my kids to be.

Even though we share a home and family, Adam now lives a life totally separate from me. I have no desire to convert or participate in his method of religious devotion. I love him, but our religious differences are pulling us apart.

Do you have any suggestions as to what I should do? I don’t know if this is how I want our family to live the rest of our lives. — **Memphis Melancholy**

Dear Memphis: Adam’s conversion must have been quite stressful for you. While many married couples are of different faiths, in order for such marriages to be successful, the couple must balance each other’s religious observances. You and Adam have not yet done this, and it’s understandable that

there would be a major rift.

Is Adam willing or able to compromise? Does it matter to him that the children are not being raised in his religion? Will it matter later? Is he pressuring you to join his religion? Can you treat his level of devotion in a manner that will not interfere with the rest of your relationship?

These are some of the questions you must ask yourself and discuss with Adam before you can decide how to proceed. It also might help to discuss

the religious issues with a clergyperson who can act as a mediator. Good luck.

Dear Annie: My co-workers and I have a question about family lineage. What is my relationship to my mother’s “Aunt Betsy”?

My co-workers say I am Aunt Betsy’s great niece. According to my understanding, however, I remain simply a niece until I am old enough to have a child of my own. Then I become a great niece.

A lunch is riding on your answer. — **Just a Niece in Warsaw, Ind.**

Dear Great Niece: Hope you have enough money to treat. Your mother is Aunt Betsy’s niece. You are her great niece, no matter how old you are. When you have a child, that child becomes a great-grand niece. However, “great aunt” is sometimes a mouthful, so it’s OK to call her “Aunt Betsy” if you prefer.



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