

The Best Policy

 by: Wayne and Tamara Direct Answers - Column for the week of July 28, 2003 How do I help a former friend let go of a friendship that's not working for me? This woman, I'll call her "Anne," is a life coach. We met last year and hit it off as friends. The problem for me is the vast majority of our conversation centered around Anne and her situation, particularly as it related to men. On and on these conversations would go about this guy or that. My honest feedback was not well received. Prior to getting fed up with the lack of balance in our friendship, I invited her to speak at a conference I organized. The event took place last month, and Anne was just okay as a speaker. Reviews were mixed, but it was done. Last night Anne left a message indicating she wanted me to be a referral for a potential client. I feel bad about recommending someone I no longer believe to be effective. How do I get off her calling list without being unkind? Laurel Laurel, in this situation truthfulness is more important than politeness. Politeness will get you more of what you don't want more of. Anne doesn't take criticism, or the truth, well. She makes a good first impression, but she does not have the understanding she is trying to sell to others. Giving Anne what she wants makes you a co-conspirator with her, and that is an incongruity you cannot live with. Just as your life must proceed from honesty, so must Anne's. Tell Anne reviews of her performance don't allow you to make a recommendation. If she takes offense, she is taking offense to the truth. Tamara Beating A Dead Horse I am American and my husband British. We met while he lived and worked for two years in the US. When we became engaged, we discussed where we wanted to settle and that place is America. We both feel strongly about this. We did, however, decide to move to the UK for two years for him to finish a few things and get his US green card. That is much easier to do abroad than at home, and we told his parents we would only be in the UK a short time. My mother-in-law is a person who uses mind games to get her way. She has directly insulted America to me claiming everything from American greed to gun problems. She whines that her grandchildren will not be close to her, and she has even hung up the phone on my husband. She is a right brat! I know it must be hard for her, and I understand, I really do. But we can't always live around the corner, and I am starting to get angry. My husband told his family they are welcome to come stay with us for a month or longer at a time, but my mother-in-law said, "I don't like to fly, and I don't think I'll like Texas!" My husband knows his mother is a difficult woman, but he hates conflict and wants to keep the peace. My mom says keeping my cool is the best thing to do. Kay Kay, before you insult the royal family or British cuisine, remember your mom's advice and keep your cool. Don't argue with your mother-in-law. By the very act of arguing you are giving substance to her wishes. Arguing as if it is unsettled may make it unsettled. When you give in to a difficult person, they don't become more reasonable, they become more difficult. They think they are entitled to win all the time. Once you have moved, your mother-in-law can visit you, and if you can afford it, you can visit her. Maybe she'll even like Texas. Or maybe she will love to hate Texas. But either way your mother-in-law's behavior sounds like a better argument for emigrating than for living around the corner. Wayne

About the Author

Authors and columnists Wayne and Tamara Mitchell can be reached at www.WayneAndTamara.com. Send letters to: Direct Answers, PO Box 964, Springfield, MO 65801 or email: DirectAnswers@WayneAndTamara.com.

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