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HE WHO INVITES OR HE WHO HAS MORE PAYS?

Dear Miss Behave,

I am blessed with a successful career, and I do enjoy pampering myself once in a while with good food and other luxuries of life. Hence, among my friends, you could say I can afford most things others can't. So whenever we go out for meals, I would always offer to pay. However, after some time, this became a habit, especially with a certain group of people. Even when the invitation came from another person, I would always end up footing the bill. This has become so much of an annoyance that I have stopped going out with some of them.

However, after some time, I find myself missing their company. Is there any way I can get myself out of this — to be able to enjoy decent meals with my friends, and yet not being the one expected to pay for everything? - **Fr: Robin**

Dear Robin,

He who invites, pays. And, as a gracious guest, the person should always return the favour over the next meal. That has always been the Golden Rule. But like you, I have seen people blatantly ignoring the bill by picking their teeth or looking the other way. There were also a few whose bladders will automatically fill up at the very sight of the waiter walking over with the bill in hand. We have seen it all.

So, the next time you find yourself sitting next to Uncle Scrooge, try this:

1 Find an occasion for the other party to buy you lunch. You are not being cheap. You are just teaching him a lesson to not leech onto you.



Ask Miss Behave



2 Find an excuse for the other person to pay. This should be done prior to meals. Let's say if a friend comes late, then just casually say it out loud, "Lunch is on you for letting us wait, my friend!"

3 If you have always been the one to pay the bills, then don't be shy to just say, "OK, whose turn is it to take the tab now?"

Having said all the above, perhaps over time, you have educated people that you would always be the gracious one. Now, it has become sort of a "norm" and you find yourself stuck.

So, my suggestion would be 1) For you to openly voice your discomfort. For all you know, they would probably have misread your intentions and thought that this was what you wanted. Or 2) Pick a

place where you are comfortable paying for and do the invitation instead. Either way, I want you to look at it from another perspective. The fact that you could afford a lot more than what others could is a blessing. Being generous and gracious is a small price to pay, for the love and the warmth that good friendships could bring.

HOW DO YOU STOP A BORE FROM TALKING AWAY NON-STOP?

Dear Miss Behave,

How do you exit a conversation with a person that keeps yakking away on a topic that absolutely bores you to death? Perhaps it's my happy-go-lucky demeanor or my overly caring nature, but I see myself constantly getting sucked

into chatting with someone who can put me to sleep within minutes! Short of looking at my watch or staring at the exit door, is there any way I can politely escape instead of continuously standing there and giving the impression that "The lights are on...but no one's in"? - **Fr: Phoebe**

Dear Phoebe

I guess this is one of those times when your electronic gadgets come in handy. Pretend that your mobile phone is vibrating crazily and the world will stop spinning if you don't answer. If you are at a party, and you are still standing together with this person, just excuse yourself to get a drink or some food. If, however, you have made the mistake of sitting down with this person, you may still employ the same tactics. Except now, you need to pray hard that there are other unoccupied seats you can move to.

Another good alternative is to say that you need to say hello to the hostess, excuse yourself and scam!

If all else fails, introduce the bore to another person. This way, you avoid leaving the person stranded. He or she instantaneously becomes someone else's problem and who knows, both of them might hit it off and thank you for it later.

*** Any Image & Etiquette questions? Write in to: wendy@chap-one.com**

WENDY LEE is a highly sought-after professional image consultant from BrandImage Consultant International Institute. She is also an international speaker, master trainer and prolific author. She is a board member of Virtual Speaker Association International and serves as the associate editor of AICI (Association of Image Consultant International) Global Magazine.

For the past 18 years, she has dedicated her life to helping thousands of corporate executives define and refine their brand image by improving their appearance, behaviour and communication. If you have any question on image, branding and etiquette, write to wendy@chap-one.com



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