

On-Time Manners

By Kenita Gibbins

Once upon a time, I worked for two doctors. My favorite doctor always started his appointments with patients when expected. He would call or have someone call if he had an emergency. I understand circumstances and I believe most people also understand. If patients are told why the doctor is late they will wait or reschedule.

The other doctor had a different story every day. One of his patients had a seizure in the waiting room. I think it was triggered by anxiety. My favorite doctor and his nurse were able to assist the man immediately while I moved other patients to wait in exam rooms.

I went on day after day making excuses for Dr. Late's lateness. I'm sure he felt my hostility. One day he called me into his office and he said to me, "I think we are going to have to do something about our relationship." I asked, "Do you want me to quit?" He said, "Well, no, not soon." I quit. I did learn I reminded Dr. Late of his former wife. I guess the divorced wife didn't like always waiting for his arrival either.

On many other occasions, my friend Shoshana would show up late for breakfast dates. I finally confronted her. She was shocked. Her lateness was a darn cultural thing! Being on Indian time is no excuse to me. I told her I would always leave if she were later than 10 minutes. I explained she worked very hard to become a citizen of the United States. Citizens of America believe in punctuality. In fact, I notice the older we get the more likely we are to arrive early. I didn't say to her, "Lateness is nothing but being rude." I do tolerate being caught in traffic as an excuse.

My husband continues to stress me out day after day because he has no sense of time. George does not understand how much this worries me. He knows where he is and how to get home so why would I worry? Three years ago I was on a bus in Poland and received a call from my daughter-in-law who had been told not to call me. Trina gently told me George had passed out on his bicycle for an unknown reason and was in ICU at University Hospital. I immediately called him. I learned our daughter was seeing about him, and he could be in the hospital several more days. My friend and I continued our trip to Lodz. We did our tour for two days. Meantime, I canceled my trip to Croatia. I purchased flights home from Warsaw.

My dear spouse refuses to wear a watch. He has no sense of the misery he creates in my stomach. He dismisses my offers to get him a mobile phone so he can call me. I wear myself out walking in Costco or the Botanic Gardens trying to find him. I think he is rude and inconsiderate. However, I'm always extremely relieved to hear his key in the door, so I forgive him over and over. I wish I could train him like I trained Shoshana.