

Customer Service



We live right around the corner from Walmart. Unfortunately we find ourselves there way more than we should be. We don't particularly love the place; it's just so darn convenient.

Recently however my husband needed to purchase something at Target so bright and early on Saturday morning we ran over there. He won't like that I'm revealing this but it's a crucial detail in my story so I have to be honest – he was buying underwear, well boxers and I guess they qualify as underwear. They certainly aren't underpants. I learned that by the reaction I got as we walked through the door at Target and I said "Let's go find you some underpants."

We were happy to discover that the ones he was after were on sale. There was a big huge sign hanging over them that said 4 for \$20 or \$5.99 each. (Note to self: Always take a picture of the sign.) I love to save money so this was a no brainer. My darling husband (sorry about the underpants remark honey) picked out his four pair and we headed up to the register. That is all we needed so we assumed we'd be out of there quick. I should have known it would not be that easy. Nothing is ever that easy.

Cashier: Hello

Me: Good morning, how are you?

Cashier: Well it must be a good morning since I'm wearing pants.

Me: (awkward silence while my brain tries to process what he just said)

Meanwhile my husband was blissfully unaware of this conversation because he had gone past the end of the check out and was looking at the Starbucks trying to decide if he wanted to pay \$7 for a cup of coffee.

The weird cashier rang up our four pair of boxers, hit the total button and said "That will be \$26.97"

Wait, what? That is not what they should be. The minute I said "that isn't right" the guy behind us with one item switched registers like I'd just skunk stunk the place up. He moved so fast I couldn't identify him in a line up.

Me: That's not right; they are on sale 4 for \$20

Cashier: So do you still want them?

Me: (Inside my head) Are you freaking kidding me?

Me: Yes I still want them but I want them at the right price.

Cashier: (Deep sigh, dramatic eye roll) I'll have to get a manager.

Me: Ok

He must think that will dissuade me. You don't know me pants boy.

What the hell happened to customer service in this country? Why do they act like I'm the one who did something wrong? I know the customer isn't always right but how about at least acting like you care if you even make this sale.

The manager came over and Slacker Number One explained to him our situation. Without even making eye contact with me he got on his walkie talkie and dialed up someone in the men's departments.

Manager: Are there boxers on sale?

Radio Girl: Which ones?

Manager looks at Dumbbell who proceeds to dig them out of the bag.

Manager: Merona

Radio Girl: Yes, the men's Merona single pack novelty boxers are on sale 4 for \$20.

Me: (Loudly to both of them) THANK YOU!

No response.

Manager: Are they novelty?

Cashier: I guess.

Dude, they have little leprechauns holding mugs of beer. ARE THEY NOVELTY?

By this time my husband had wandered back to my side. I kept my eye on him because in situations like this he has frequently said "Forget it; we'll take our business elsewhere." I knew he was just one idiot remark away from blowing out of there. I would have been glad to have joined him.

Long story short the manager put his magic code in the register and adjusted the price. I again thanked them both and again they both ignored me.

Rude, rude, rude.

In stark contrast to this experience, the next day we went to Savers, a local thrift store looking for dishes to take camping. I had a 30% off coupon and when our teenage cashier rang it up the discount didn't come off. He apologized profusely and immediately called for help. He was friendly and courteous the whole time we waited for someone to show him how to do it. Then he thanked me for the opportunity to learn how to ring those coupons.

I want to find that boy's mother and send her flowers.

Guess that's what we get for being uppity and going down the road to buy our underwear.

Yesterday we went to Walmart to get some camping gear. I saw a pregnant teenager with a tramp stamp, a kid riding a bike up and down the aisles and there was a half eaten candy bar on the shelf in the cat food aisle.

Our people.

It feels good to be home.

Technology

We like technology in this house. I am sure it is no surprise given what I do for a living. Under one roof we have four laptops, an iPad, a Blackberry, three smart phones, a Kindle and my husband just found out he is getting a tablet for work. It is likely at any given time any one of these devices is only inches away. Obviously there are certain times we put it down. Playtime on the floor with my grandson, date night with my hubby and a new episode of Survivor are good examples. However lately I do think we may have a bit of an addiction. Here's a sampling of why I may be a little concerned. (Names withheld to protect the innocent and because some of this is downright

embarrassing!)

Someone and someone else realized they both updated their Facebook status while in the bathroom.

Someone caught themselves watching TV at the same time as they were watching clips on an electronic device of other TV shows.

Someone sends someone else text messages to say dinner is ready instead of screaming up the stairs like in the good old days....of a few years ago.

Someone and someone else often wake up to a glow coming from under the covers on the other side of the bed.

Someone puts everyday places in the GPS even though someone has been there a million times just to see how the lady will tell someone to go.

Someone does not print out recipes anymore but rather props technology up on the kitchen counter using said technology as a modern day cookbook thus requiring said technology to be cleaned off regularly.

Someone and someone sit side by side for hours and barely utter a word until one of the someone's comes across a cant be missed You Tube video and forces the other someone to watch it which is usually followed by "well I thought it was funny!"

Someone's reply to every dilemma of life is "I bet there's an app for that!"

Someone and someone else sleep with their technology close to the bed in case a middle of the night urge to pin craft projects or check basketball scores should arise.

Someone checks the weather multiple times a day online instead of going to a door or window like a normal person.

Someone stops in the middle of the aisle at the store to reply to text messages and check notifications.

Someone has diagnosed and treated several minor illnesses and injuries based on information obtained on Web M.D.

Someone actually cried when an electronic device experienced a catastrophic failure. (Ok, it was me, I cried, are you happy?)

Someone considers their large capacity external hard drive the best gift they've received in years.

See what I mean? Should I be worried? Is this normal? Are we normal? How do we fix this? When does the new season of The Voice start and will Usher do a good job? So very many questions....I don't know what to do...oh wait, yes I do...I'll Google it.



Laughter

all that im after
is a life full of
laughter.✿

Recently while watching Downton Abbey with my husband (yes, I have ~~brainwashed~~ convinced him to watch it with me) he made a comment that made me laugh so hard I had to hit pause. You'll only get this if you watch the show but you know that scene where Mrs. Hughes is firing that new maid that was chasing after Tom? Joel says to the TV screen "don't feel bad I hear there's an opening in town for a prostitute!" HA! Hysterical right?

That's how you know something is really funny. You either hit pause so you can finish laughing or you wind it back to see it again. We've got a few shows that make us do that regularly. At work everyone talks about have you seen this drama or that and usually my answer is no. I don't watch dramas. I like sitcoms. If I wanted drama I could turn the TV off and look around my crazy life. I like things that make me laugh.

Laughter is important to me. Laughter has gotten me through some of the most difficult times of my life. My therapist says I use humor to deflect other emotions. Not sure I understand what she means but she should have been paying ME for all the chuckles we shared. Charlie Chaplin said a day without laughter is a day wasted. I agree. Life is so painfully short. It's a crime not to find happiness in every possible minute that we can.

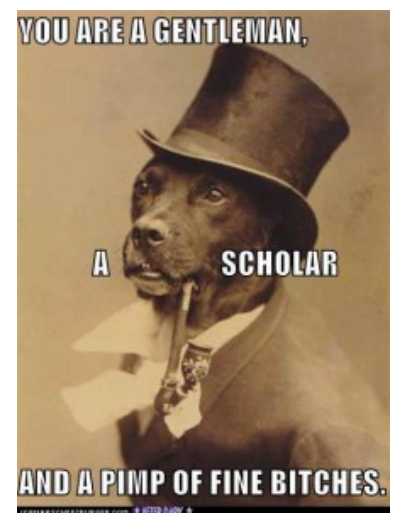
Is there really ever inappropriate laughter? When my best friend lost her son in a tragic accident people gave us dirty looks because I was feeding her a running commentary on the floozy her ex husband brought to the funeral. Was it inappropriate of me to make a grieving mother laugh? I don't think so. Laughter can comfort a broken heart.

When I was a senior in high school my best friend and I got kicked out of class for laughing. We couldn't help it. We were staring out the

window and a ladder walked by. It was most definitely one of those “you had to be there” situations but that particular day in that particular moment it struck us as hysterical. The teacher didn’t think so. Yet today, I couldn’t begin to tell you what was going on in that English class but Stephen and I could repeat the story of the ladder with every detail perfectly remembered. Laughter can makes memories.

Years ago when I found myself alone, heartbroken and in an unfamiliar place my oldest friend used laughter to pull me up out of my sadness and remind me that life goes on. Laughter can heal.

Being told I am funny is the greatest compliment someone can give me. I would rather be told I’m funny than be told I am beautiful or smart or creative. I mean, we all know I am all of those things but funny is my favorite. (HAHA J/K) Do you know how I knew my first marriage was over? I asked my ex husband “Do I make you laugh?” and he said “Not particularly.” Knife to the heart moment but it was incredibly eye opening. And conversely I know that my marriage to Joel is solid because we make each other laugh every single day. I think it’s the secret to a good marriage. Try not to laugh when you’re in the middle of a fight and your partner shows you this picture. It’s impossible to stay angry.



In summary.... If you do not have a drink coming out of your nose, DVR pausing, can’t breathe or speak, wet your pants a little laughter on a regular basis I’m worried about you.

Get on the internet and look up pictures of dogs in clothes or those

ecards with old timey people saying ridiculous stuff or videos of humans being stupid. Find what tickles your funny bone and do it often. They don't say laughter is the best medicine for nothing. Laughter is good for your soul.

Off to look at some Grumpy cat. Now that is funny.

Hero

Not all superhero's wear a cape.

The one I know is about five foot six, hails from St, Louis and has an affinity for fixing things.

My super hero is my step dad and this afternoon our family and many friends will gather to celebrate his eightieth birthday. I think it's appropriate to thank him today for doing what super heros do – they save people.



When I was nine years old my father left his wife and five children (one of which was a newborn) and ran off with his secretary. So

cliché I know but the scars of this heinous act are still carried around by his five children to this day. My young mother's life had been about being a wife and mother from the age of nineteen. Suddenly she was solely responsible for making sure her babies didn't go to bed hungry. She had to scrimp and scrape for every morsel she put on our plates. She had to get a job and leave her baby in day care back in a day when that was not the norm. We moved often and learned to make due and do without. We wore things out and handed them down. We learned to make our own fun and learned the value of working for something that you wanted. We took care of each other. We grew up too soon. Thanks to the charity of others we got by. It wasn't until years later when I found myself in a similar but not as dire situation that I could start to imagine how completely overwhelmed and terrified she must have been. My mom needed life to cut her a break and in 1981 it finally did.

Bob Powell had recently joined our church and not long after some mutual friends introduced him to my mother. I was sixteen years old so the details of my mother's blossoming romance were not of any interest to me but I do know that the relationship advanced swiftly. Bob had a similar story. He was divorced and had two young adult daughters. He had raised them on his own teaching them everything they would need to know to be independent self sufficient women. Those girls could change a tire, do an oil change, fix a toilet and rewire an electrical outlet. I guess Mom and Bob bonded quickly over war stories from the front lines of single parenthood. Unfortunately he received a job transfer to Washington DC so on Valentines Day not terribly long after they met, he proposed to her and she accepted. By April that same year they were married.

As happy as my mother was I was angry at her good news. I was just finishing my sophomore year in high school. I had a job that I loved and my friends were my world. I had been forced to grow up quickly, go to work at 14 and help take care of my family. By the age of 16 I thought I was already a grown up. I did not appreciate this guy coming along and moving us 800 miles away from our family, our friends and our lives. When we landed in Virginia I did my level best to avoid

him as much as possible. We moved in to a lovely big house and my mom was able to stay home again. Suddenly we had all we could eat and I had my own room. Still it was hard to be grateful. I went to school, I got a job and I started to settle in but I wouldn't give my parents the satisfaction of knowing I liked it here. Looking back I realize I was kind of a disrespectful brat. I got in trouble. I disregarded rules. I was counting the days until graduation so I could get out.

My feelings towards my step dad started to change during my junior year of high school thanks to what I now realize was a completely selfless act of kindness towards me. I had been casually dating a boy from church and he was taking me to a school dance. He showed up at the appointed time to pick me up but came in to the house and said "I don't think we're going to be able to go to the dance. Something is very wrong with my car. I barely made it here." I guess my face registered how crushed I was because before he could pick up the phone to call his parents my step dad said "Why don't you drive my car?" Every head in the room spun around to look at him to see if he was serious. Bob's car was his pride and joy. He drove a Datsun 280Z. He had recently been teaching me how to drive stick shift. He felt like knowing how to drive stick was something every girl needed to have in her arsenal of skills. "Are you serious?" I asked. "Yes, but only you can drive" he said. "I don't want this joker behind the wheel of my car."

My heart began to thaw.

What kind of man lets a teenage girl drive his beloved sports car? What kind of man marries a woman with five children? What kind of man lifts an entire family out of poverty and desperation? What kind of man sells his sports car because a station wagon would be more practical? What kind of man never gives up even though at times it was not easy? What kind of man tells people he has seven children and makes no distinction for the ones he actually fathered? What kind of man has been there for me in every painful and joyful experience of my life ever since the day I drove off to the dance in his car?



A very good man.

Blood doesn't make you a dad.

Love does.

Happy birthday Bob.

I love you.

Felicia

Heavy Metal



Today on the way home from work I scanned the radio dial for something other than political ads. I landed on DC 101 and they were taking it old school with AC/DC's Hell's Bells. I cranked it up and played my steering wheel drum the rest of the way home. I love classic rock and some bands have the ability to immediately transport me to another time. Some songs, if only for a few minutes, have the power to make me feel young again. Angus and the boys do it to me every time.

I was 16 years old the first time I heard AC/DC. The year was 1981 and I was being forced to move from Chicago to Washington DC. My mother was marrying an engineer who worked for the government so it was off to Virginia we went. I was leaving behind my friends, my school and a job that I loved. My endless begging and pleading to be left behind with relatives fell on deaf ears. Driving across Indiana, through Ohio and in to the mountains of Pennsylvania, my anger and resentment grew with each mile. I truly believed my mother was ruining my life and I made sure she knew it. Six months later and still struggling to fit in I was primed for a teenage rebellion. It was around that time that I met the boy who would one day become the father of my children. He was nineteen, already graduated and drove a 1970 cherry red fastback Mustang. He listened to heavy metal, could buy beer and was my parent's worst nightmare. One steamy summer night he popped his Back in Black 8-track in to the tape deck and said "this is my favorite album."

It changed my life.

I had always been kind of an oddball in the family with my taste in music. Raised on a steady diet of Everly Brothers, Mamma Cass and Neil Diamond, nobody in my family listened to anything that would have been considered heavy metal. I wore out my Mom's Elvis and Ricky Nelson records but by the 70's Elvis wasn't a rebel anymore and Ricky got hold. Rock and roll had changed. I liked the Eagles, the Beatles and when Electric Light Orchestra's Turn to Stone hit the radio waves during my preadolescence I couldn't hear it enough. While my sister was listening to Jeffrey Osborne and Barry Manilow I was spending my babysitting money on Rush and Moody Blues albums. When I hit my teens I couldn't get enough of Journey, Styx and REO Speedwagon. (My husband says those are girls bands and don't count.) Point being, I was going my own way musically. The house was listening to a lot of hymns and easy listening stations back then. (Would someone please answer Lionel Richie, he keeps calling.) I wasn't listening to anything back then that could have been called hard rock or metal but I was laying a foundation. When AC/DC entered my life I was ready.

I can't put in to words how it changed me. I knew I was listening to music that my mother wouldn't approve of. I was listening to music that she wouldn't allow me to have in the house. I had asked for Meatloaf's Bat out of Hell album and I was told I wasn't allowed to have it because there was a curse word in the title. Not sure if my Mom knows it but I bought that album myself and hid it in my room. I can still sing every word to Paradise by the Dashboard Lights.

Falling in love with AC/DC was pure rebellion. I loved it. It's been over thirty years since then and my marriage to that boyfriend didn't last, but he gave me three beautiful children and I'm grateful. I'm grateful too for Back in Black. The album and the song. When I listen, I time travel. When I hear those opening chords I feel a little bit like I'm about to do something that's going to get me grounded.

October

