



Miss Manners' Basic Training: The Right Thing to Say

Judith Martin

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Miss Manners hereby declares that "You look terrific -- did you have a facelift?" is not an acceptable compliment. For this and the other myriad rudeness that nowadays pass for consolation, congratulation and other forms of verbal communication, Miss Manners provides politely pointed comebacks, as well as the gracious and proper thing to say in any situation.

Miss Manners feels compelled to do so because saying the wrong thing -- whether in the name of originality, self-expression, honesty or instant empathy -- has become all too common:

To a Bereaved Person:

"You must realize it's all for the best."

To a Newly Engaged Person:

"Are you sure you know what you're doing?"

To a Pregnant Woman:

"You can still do something about it, you know."

The Right Thing to Say is a refresher course in etiquette as a second language, filled with the practical advice and sly humor that make Miss Manners such "good wicked fun, and helpful too" (*Cosmopolitan*). Including useful phrases for dealing with life's special occasions and mishaps, The Right Thing to Say explores the subtleties of saying "no," conducting a conversation without causing offense and the art of the apology when you do anyway.



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