It's a Mystery

Deb Gauldin, RN, PMS

ABSTRACT

In this column, a perinatal educator takes a humorous look at miscommunication.

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Thrusting an armful of grocery bags onto the kitchen counter, I glanced over my shoulder and saw two messages scrawled on a napkin near the phone. From the penmanship, I guessed they were written by my youngest. The note read, “Mrs. Kostal called about picking up greenery and someone called about llamas.”

Perplexed, I tried to jar my memory. Llamas, what llamas? I knew I ordered pine roping from the Boy Scouts, but had I also ordered llamas for the holidays? I’m a busy mom, but even I would remember placing an order for spitting animals. Sometime later, I realized that my son had taken a call about Lamaze—not llamas. Mystery solved. Cancel the order for Purina Llama Chow. Whew!

A similar miscommunication occurred during a recent trip to Mt. Kisco, New York. I was hired to do a presentation for the staff of an intergenerational day-care center. The facility housed day-care services for both children and adults. In addition to the setting, the intergenerational activities offered at the center were very impressive. During a tour, the program director, Carrie, escorted me into a room adjacent to the courtyard. It was filled with long tables. She explained that this was space they used for a unique animal education program.

When I first entered the room, I was welcomed by a very friendly, standard-sized poodle used for pet therapy. Next, I looked into a large aquarium. As if on cue, a turtle extended his sturdy neck. It seemed he was also offering a greeting. I was completely charmed. I love animals. Carrie elaborated, “This is where the seniors and children watch them grow, wash them, chop them up, and eat them.”

I gasped, and Carrie turned to see the horror on my face. She did her best to decipher my reaction. It seems the intergenerational day-care center offers an edible education program. *Edible*, as in vegetables grown in the courtyard, not pets! Mystery solved. Cancel the call to PETA. What a relief!

Over time, perinatal educators develop a keen ability to decipher and solve all kinds of communication mysteries. My favorite—and perhaps you have taken this very call yourself—came from a distressed woman who was full-term. She reported that she was experiencing a discharge from her. . .“virginia.” It was all I could do to refrain from asking how her Delaware was!

But we are trained to teach. We are also trained to keep a straight face and answer all questions with sensitivity and tact. That is why I choked back a chuckle as the woman continued. She said she was pretty sure she had also lost her mucus plug and wanted to know if she should try to find it, in order to be absolutely sure.

There were times when asking the woman if she had checked under the sofa were just too darn tempting. These are the very times it is imperative to hand the phone over to someone more emotionally mature and just accept the fact that some mysteries are never solved. After all, Virginia is a pretty large place in which to look.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

If you would like to share similar communication gaps or mysteries, please e-mail Deb Gauldin (deb@debgauldin.com). We may include them in a future column and can either omit or include the source, according to your preference!

DEB GAULDIN is a childbirth educator who travels nationally presenting keynotes and workshops. For booking information, call 800-682-2347 or visit her Web site (www.debgauldin.com). Deb's CDs and tapes contain humor and songs about pregnancy, childbirth, and the adjustment to parenthood. They are available through Lamaze International (800-368-4404).

ANSWERS – Labor Support Crossword Puzzle

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