

WHAT ABOUT: BUYING A GIFT? HATING A GIFT?

DEAR KATHY:

Q: I am invited to a wedding out-of-town. The bride and groom are both professionals and they say they already have everything. The bride is not having a shower and they have not registered for gifts. It seems to me this is a demand for money. What do I do?

A: This kind of dilemma presents itself with increasing frequency. Second marriages or first marriages between older, well established brides and grooms often mean that the traditional wedding gifts are not appropriate. At some point more sterling, crystal or porcelain just becomes clutter. And, depending upon the financial situation of the couple, even a gift of money can be “coals to New Castle”. In this case the prospective bride or groom is a friend and you can, therefore, judge whether a monetary gift will be appropriate.

Beyond money there are some other creative ways to celebrate the union. Consumables are an option. If they are oenophiles, consider a very special bottle of vintage wine or champagne. Some five star restaurants will deliver a romantic dinner to a private home. Check for that possibility in the city in which they live. Another area for gifting is the charitable donation. Are the bride and groom passionately committed to some charitable cause? To their alma mater? To a religious cause? Consider a donation in their name. The important thing is to let them know that you are happy for them and want to share their joy. That is what the gift giving is all about.

Q: I received the most hideous doo-dad as a wedding gift. I don't even know what you would call it, although it's obviously a decorative piece. The problem is that it is from my godmother, who will be visiting us often and surely will look for her gift to be on display. What do I do?

A: Unfortunately, this is one of those instances in which love trumps good taste. You have to make sure that the gift is put out whenever your godmother comes to visit. Just try to look past the ugliness to the loving person who gave the gift. If the thing is unbearably hideous - well, accidents do happen. You might then replace the “doo-dad” with something you like and tell your godmother that you think of her when you look at it. But if you can stand it, hang on to it. You'll be teaching your children a very valuable lesson about priorities; i.e. people are more important than things.

Q: My neighbor is getting married. She has been living with her boyfriend for years and now they are having a big wedding. I really don't approve of that, and yet I know it would create hard feelings if I did not attend (after

all, we live next door to each other) and give a big gift. Am I too old-fashioned?

A: Your neighbor and her boyfriend have been living together “without benefit of clergy”, as they used to say. That is the situation of which you disapprove. Now they are going to rectify it. Big wedding or small, the important thing is that they are getting married. They are going to stand up before their families and friends and commit to one another. That is something of which you can heartily approve. Go to the wedding and celebrate with your neighbor and her husband. Marriage does not exist in a vacuum. It is a social contract that requires the support of the whole community. That is an old fashioned value that continues to prevail.