

Flying is not for wimps

APRIL 25, 2011

On a recent flight, I was reminded that not everyone follows the rules of etiquette when they travel. One woman reclined her seat all the way back, diminishing the workspace of the woman behind her who was trying to work on her laptop. A discussion ensued.

Who was right?

We went to Shawn Gilleylen, the creator of the Success with Etiquette training program, to find out.

"Someone's tone can make or break this kind of experience," Gilleylen says.

The woman who was trying to work needed to understand the other's circumstances, she says. "One woman has to do her work, but maybe the other woman needs to sleep so she can go to work. You never know. Don't think your issues are more important than someone else's."

So, on this one, approach is everything. "If you smile and say, 'Excuse me, I have to do a lot of work, and was hoping to be able to use my laptop. Do you mind not reclining all the way back?', you'll probably have more luck," she says.

How well do you know flying etiquette? Take this quiz, and then see what Gilleylen says on how to handle each situation.

Situation: Grandma and Grandpa are traveling with a baby. Grandma is talking very loudly, and Grandpa is helping to entertain with a blaring Elmo game, much to the dismay of nearby passengers who are trying to sleep. The sleepy passengers should:

- A. Yell at Grandma and Grandpa to pipe down.
- B. Point out nicely to Grandma and Grandpa that everyone is trying to sleep.
- C. Suffer in silence.

Answer: B. "With proud grandparents, you will go far if you address how cute the child is," Gilleylen says. "Once you've had a pleasant interaction, kindly point out that those around you are trying to sleep and ask that they keep the volume down. "

Also, get others involved. "You'd be amazed at how quickly people with a similar goal can rally together," she

says.

Situation: The person sitting next to you sneezes continuously in your face and doesn't cover his nose. You should ...

- A. Give him a tissue.
- B. Sneeze back on him.
- C. Speak up.

Answer: C. "When this happens, I make a gesture and say, 'Let me wash my hands or clear the air,' " Gilleylen says. "That might make them be more mindful for the next sneeze."

Situation: The plane is late, and there are lots of people who are sweating out making a connection. The connecting passengers should:

- A. Exit the plane when it is their turn.
- B. Ask people in front if they can exit ahead of them.
- C. Wait for the flight attendant to decide; that is his job, after all.

Answer: B. "It's up to the passenger who is in a rush to really try to plead his case here," Gilleylen says. "The flight attendants might make an announcement to let people by, but then that can be followed by 'Can you please allow me to get ahead of you?' Be polite and use manners. You'd be surprised how many people will step aside if they are asked."

Situation: Your seatmate has headphones on, yet the music is totally audible. You should:

- A. Get the flight attendant involved.
- B. Poke them and ask them to turn the music down.
- C. Put in earplugs.

Answer: A. "In this circumstance I think it's best to get the help of an attendant," she says. Get up and discreetly ask the flight attendant for assistance, Gilleylen says. "This is their job, and that way you can stay anonymous if that is your preference. Everyone has a right to enjoy their flight. Don't feel afraid to get satisfaction."

What plane experience has had you up in arms? Or do you have better solutions? Let us know.

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