

Life Giving # 22

Honor vs. Pity

It happened on a flight to England a few years ago. American Airlines graciously upgraded me to business class, aisle. A wealthy, high maintenance, utterly obnoxious lady sat by the window.

I watched my seasoned flight attendant deal with her demands all during dinner. Eventually I went up to the galley where the attendants were sharing stories about their worst passengers ever.

I introduced myself to my attendant and explained that I was a business consultant and I taught on a lot of relationship issues. I said that in our trade we call what she did “porcupine hugging.”

I spent a bit of time commending her for the exceptional job she did, and I assured her that at my next seminar, I would be using her as a model of how to handle the impossible customer.

I used the lav while I was up there and could hear them start to talk again. Only this time, instead of focusing on how bad the passengers were, they each shared a story about how wisely they handled a situation. I could tell from the number of times they used the phrase “porcupine hugger” that it was their new favorite title.

The flight attendant’s peers gave her pity for her tough assignment. This was indeed a little bit life giving. I gave her honor for being bigger and better than the problem she faced. My gift was more life giving.

So who do you know who has hugged a porcupine with style lately? Can you give them an atta boy?

