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From: mwalkermd@aol.com

Sent: Tue 2/8/2011 12:39:35 AM

Subject: Jewish Mom 101

Dilemma:

Steve's mother's 70th birthday.

Steve says to me "don't get her a present, she is ungrateful and she will turn it into a mind game."

After some discussion, we decide that we will take her and a handful of her closest friends/family to Las Vegas to celebrate (her choice of location), all expenses for everyone.

GIFT #1.

Then, because Steve's father is not alive and there is no one else to celebrate her birthday or get her gifts, we decide to get her a gift that would be celebratory of this "monument" year (70).

I spent a lot of time looking and finally decided on a Chanel watch. One that was first designed in the year of her birth. And I made sure it had 70 diamonds. All around, what I believed to be a thoughtful and appropriate gift.

Steve liked it because it was classy, and he thought that she would like it because of the diamonds. He suggested we engrave it so that she couldn't return it, but in a million years I never thought she would return it.

So on one of the Vegas nights at dinner, I gave her the watch. She acted very excited and proud and grateful.

The next day she had her friend ask me for the receipt. Steve and I were both heartbroken but Steve cautioned me that this was part of a bigger game that I could not win.

And so it begins.

She returned the custom watch, we get a (not full) refund. Chanel contacts me, concerned.

A few days later I get the returned watch receipts with a note that says "here's the receipt."

Steve takes that to mean that she expects the full value of the gift as another gift (like a debit card) – and that she feels entitled to the value of the gift and not the gift.

She emails me and says that she is returning the watch because she can't see the numbers but that she wants a Hermes one instead (same size numbers by the way) and that I need to call Hermes and give them my credit card number.

Steve advised me not to reply but instead to ask your advice on "Varsity Jewish Mom Management".

But then, this morning, I got another note from her saying (and I am cutting/pasting from email):

Good news, I found a birthday gift for me. Those skinny diamond bangle bracelets, worn in multiples, saw them at the jewelry show this weekend, want to check them out in NY, first. I can get 4 for the price of the watch

So the question is:

1. Get the bracelets for her and extend the full value of the original gift and call it a day
2. Get her the bracelets but let her know that this will be the last substantial gift (or effort)

3. Do not get her the bracelet and let her know that her behavior made us rethink the gift
4. Ignore her

It is true that I am not equipped to win a mind game with a Jewish mother. She does this to me quite frequently, and it is taking a toll on Steve. We are at a point where we just don't want to talk to her or see her since it always comes with a price. She sends me gifts with receipts (for repayment). We had to buy her house, pay off all her debt, and now she's basically on allowance since she blows through every dollar we give her. We tried to put a financial planner in between, but her behavior seems to be escalating.

So you have advice on the specific question (#1-4 above) or general advice on how to manage her and her expectations?

Sorry to be so long but felt like the color was necessary...Steve is copied on this mail in case he has more to add.