

## Family Life... My sister-in-law's birthday flowers

**S i t u a t i o n :**

Last week was my sister-in-law's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and I sent a gorgeous bouquet of flowers. I thought it was a bit strange that she didn't call us to say thank you. Then when I called her two days later she sounded genuinely pleased with our gift and went on and on describing them in detail. I'm sure she'll send a thank you note – she has for things in the past. I just think it's weird that she didn't call. What do you think?

**A n s w e r :**

*Some people say thank you by phone, immediately whether it's long-distance or local call. Others send notes or emails. And we all know someone who chooses not to communicate or say thank you at all, for whatever reasons. It's all within the normal range. It's all average human behavior. Not right, not wrong. Simply average.*

*It sounds like a case of expectations and disappointments. And disappointments are part of everyday life. Your expectations may have been higher in this case because it was a special birthday and a more special gift. You expected her to be thrilled and call you the same day the flowers arrived. She didn't. That happens.*

*Labeling her behavior "weird" is the clue to the underlying anger in this event. Weird equals abnormal or not right. In other words, saying it's weird is saying it's wrong. The only way to relieve your ongoing tension about this is to tell yourself that she's not wrong, she's average. And do remind yourself that you're not wrong for hoping for a phone call. To help you cut through the belief that she's wrong, substitute the high-charge word "weird" with the more neutral word "different." Judy, her behavior or the circumstances aren't weird, they are simply different – different than you expected.*

*It's up to you if you want to keep it a big deal, or shrink it down to size. Make the effort to think rationally about it and you will forget about it. When you stack it up against your sense of inner peace, it really is no big deal.*