

# BRUNCH

## EVERYTHING MUST GO!

Failed in your New Year resolutions already? Here's our easier guide to a better 2016: just get rid of all the clutter in your home, your wardrobe, your diet, your manners and your life





# MERCI

## POLISH YOUR MANNERS

Maya Daswani who heads a finishing school that covers personality development, grooming, social graces, etiquette and communication skills, lists the differences between the well-behaved and the merely well-dressed

When it comes to good behaviour, you probably know the basics. They taught you 'please', 'sorry' and 'thank you' in school. You know the order in which to CC your boss, colleague and underling in an email (in decreasing order of designation). You know the rule about checking your phone in the middle of a real-life conversation (don't do it). You've probably also realised that you should stand on the right side in an elevator to allow people to rush past.

So how come some people come across as truly polished while the others look like they've been raised by wolves? Etiquette trainer and soft-skills expert Maya Daswani says that good manners are those indiscernible qualities that make others feel at ease, thwart uncomfortable moments and set the better person apart from the ordinary. It's better for your career too, she says. "Being rude doesn't get you promoted, but social graces will smooth your way to the top." Here's what to keep in mind.

### On the phone

■ Stop with the missed calls. The era when talktime was expensive is over. Expecting someone to call you back after seeing a missed call is considered bad form today. And don't use the excuse, "Oh but you never pick up" to justify it.

■ When a call drops mid conversation, be the person to call back regardless of who made the call. Earlier, good manners would indicate that the caller should call back. Today, reconnecting the call indicates that the conversation is important to you.

■ One old rule still stands: the caller should end the call.

■ Be the one who provides the details. Daswani's peeve is with callers who don't identify themselves. Or worse, use their



first name and expect you to figure out the rest. Introduce yourself quickly and clearly to ensure a smooth conversation.

■ Refinement means not making the other person fumble. So repeat key information like an email address or phone number. Don't leave it to the other person to ask for information twice. And unless you know the person well, use SMS, not WhatsApp.

### At a dinner party

■ One of the best markers of your social upbringing is how you interact with a room full of people at a meal — be it a wedding or a wine dinner. It's a social situation, so be social. Get acquainted with everyone, don't just chat with the one person you know.

■ Make the new person or the solo diner feel welcome. Involve them in conversations. Sometimes it's as simple as asking "How about you?" during a discussion.

### In general conversation

■ Women, sit with your knees together. Men, stop the hideous practice of manspreading by keeping your knees too wide while seated.

■ Be curious, not nosy. It's time you stopped asking people why they are not married. And never ask why someone is divorced.

■ The worst offence is getting graphic. No need to ask a new mother how long she was in labour or whether it was a C-section.

Offer congratulations and hope mama and baby are doing fine.

■ Remember, it's not what you say but how you say it that sets you apart. And if you have nothing nice to say, don't say it.

- Rachel Lopez

