

## Learning To Say Yes

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**By: Robin Pascoe**

An expatriate hostess was organizing a farewell luncheon recently for a friend moving away from Seoul. With the event less than two days away, she realized she didn't have a clue how many guests were coming. She had planned a menu but wasn't sure how much food to buy. A dozen invitations were sent out weeks earlier, but responses to her RSVP's had not been forthcoming. The hostess was feeling frantic. She called a close friend to sound off.

"What is with this town? Everybody ignores a requests for an RSVP. Have you noticed that?" the hostess asked her friend. "By the way, are you coming?"

"Do I really need to tell you? You know I will be there," said her friend.

"And how do I know this?" she asked.

"You should just know I wouldn't miss it. Certainly I don't need to let you know."

"That's the point. Yes you do need to let me know. No wonder I am tearing my hair out."

"Well I told so and so to tell you that I would be coming."

"I haven't heard from her either," said the hostess, her voice rising.

"There's no need to get so angry."

Much later that day the hostess sat down at her telephone. "Hello," she said. "I'm calling to see if you are coming to my farewell lunch for Mrs. X."

"What day is that again?"

"Didn't you get my invitation?"

"Yes I did. Thank you so much for inviting me."

The hostess took a deep breath to calm herself. "Did you happen to notice that I asked for a response? You know, an RSVP?"

"Yes."

"So... "

"Yes."

"Yes you noticed? Or yes you will be attending?"

"Yes to both."

"Thanks so much for making my life easier."

Much later that same day. "Hello," she said for the tenth time that day into the phone. "Will you be attending my lunch?"

"I don't know. Do I really want to come?"

"Look, I'm not calling you to beg you to come. I just want to know if you are planning on coming."

"Maybe."

"What kind of answer is that?"

"Can I let you know?"

"No! I need to know. Don't you ever entertain?"

"All the time."

"Doesn't it bug you when someone doesn't respond to an invitation?"

"Not really. What bugs me is when they simply don't show up."

"Yes, I guess I see your point." Something else to worry about, thought the hostess.

The day of the farewell luncheon arrived. Based on her phone survey, the hostess estimated that two thirds of those invited would show up. With five minutes to spare before the arrivals would begin, she was fussing with the flowers on her table when the phone rang.

"Yes?"

"This is \*\*\*\*\*. I'm not going to be able to come."

"Oh, we will be sorry to miss you," the hostess said in what she hoped was a diplomatic voice. "Tied up at work?"

"No."

The hostess waited for an excuse and was willing to accept even a feeble one. None followed. As she was taking a plate away from the table, the phone rang again.

"Yes?"

It was her close friend. "I'm going to be quite late. Start without me," and signed off before she could get any reason.

The doorbell rang. A guest stood before her with a person she had never set eyes on before. "I hope you don't mind... so and so is visiting and I thought you wouldn't mind if I brought her along."

"Not at all. I'll just set another place," said the hostess racing back into her kitchen to retrieve the plate she had just removed.

When her lunch was ready to be served, there was an empty spot for her close friend who was going to be late, another blank where a no show/no call should have been sitting, and one particularly gaping hole in the table.

"Where is the guest of honour?" the hostess was asked.

"I never heard from her. I just assumed she would be coming."

“What is it with the expats in this town?”

Suddenly, the entire table was abuzz on the subject of RSVP's. The hostess started to eat heartily. She knew already she had made more food than she would need.

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