

CHOICES

Scenario 25

Pink Hair

It is the occasion of your 10th birthday.

All your friends have come around.

There are going to be games, plenty of food, and a massive cake.

“We’ll just wait for Nana to arrive,” says your Mom. “OK?”

Nana is your only living grandparent. She became a widow only two months ago.

Nana is awfully sweet. She loves you. She’s also a little unpredictable.

“I hope she won’t embarrass me.”

“She’s fragile, darling,” says your Mom. “Please be nice to her.”

Ten minutes later, Nana arrives.

You go to the front door. There she is.

You are about to kiss her, when you see that she has had her hair coloured – pink. Bright pink.

“Hullo, sweetie. What do you think?” She does a glamorous look at me gesture.

Your heart goes cold. She looks like a crazy hippie. Or someone who’s forgotten how old they are.

Oh no. What will your friends think? This could be a disaster.

What should you do?

A You say, “Hi Nana. Come on in. All my friends are here. I’ll introduce you.”

What next?

You take her through into the lounge. All your friends are there.

They look at Nana.

For a second you consider running away.

If only a trap door would open and swallow you up. How will you ever live this down?

‘Hey there,” call the girls.

“Hi,” says Nana, waving. “Call me Mimi.”

“Great colour,” says your best friend.

“Yeah. Cool.”

“I wish my Mom would let me try a new colour. It looks ace.”

Nana sits down with the girls and they chat away as if they’d know one another for ever.

Your Mom comes in.

“Wow! Mother. Look at you.”

“Do you like it?”

“What do you girls think?”

“Fantastic.”

Think about it

In this situation much depends on the capacity of the various people for compassion.

In the case of the birthday girl and her Mom they know that Nana has to be treated with great care – she’s still in a state of grief. Maybe the hair colour was an emotional outburst of some kind. But to criticise it could be deeply hurtful.

In the case of the girlfriends it is instinctive. They see that she needs a kind response.

Had they been mean girls, they might have been tempted to snigger, or show that they think she is ridiculous. Instead their response is one of kindness and affirmation.

They are not lying. They are seeing things from Nana's point of view.

"Kindness is a universal language that can be spoken by anyone."

Do you want to look at another scenario involving being kind? (Go to 11)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 25)

B You take Nana by the hand and lead her into the kitchen – away from the girls. There is no way you can let her be seen. You are so embarrassed. Maybe your Mom could get her to stay out of sight?

What next?

Your Mom looks at Nana.

"Wow."

She hugs Nana.

"I know it's a bit ... a bit ..."

"Pink," says Mom.

They both laugh.

"Must go to the bathroom," says Nana.

When she's out of the room, you say,

"Can you keep her here? I can't let the girls see her. Mom, please!"

"Darling, we can't. She's your grandmother. She loves you. She may be a bit ... eccentric ... but she came to be with you at the party. Come on. I'll take her in."

"This is killing me. I'm going." You burst into tears and run out the back door.

After a few minutes, your curiosity gets the better of you.

What's happening?

You look through the window.

Nana is in the lounge room. She is talking with your friends.

The girls are fine with the pink hair.

You stop sobbing and go back inside.

"Look who it is. The birthday girl. Come on in, darling. We're all having a lovely time."

Think about it

The mother here understands that the real issue is not the hair color – good, bad or indifferent - but the need for comfort and support.

Let's suppose that Nana's 'error' was not pink hair but something else – like crying too much, or spilling things, or falling over and having to be helped up.

In those cases, the key is to offer support. Not to say, "You shouldn't cry. Or spill things. Or fall over."

The girl's mother is wise enough to see that offering unconditional support is what her own mother most needs.

And, although it is awkward, she needs to offer this support in spite of the birthday girl's embarrassment.

Will the girls respond kindly to Nana's hair or not?

Most people go along with the lead offered by other people, particularly adults. The mother is offering total support to Nana. The girls take their cue from that. The mother has changed the situation from crisis and embarrassment - to happiness.

She is a wonderful role model.

"No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted." (Aesop)

Do you want to look at another scenario involving at risk adults? (Go to 3)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 25)