

Guiding and helping each other



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Welcome to the month of love! Do you have romantic plans prepared for someone special in your life? Or do you give all of the people you care about an extra dose of love throughout the month? It's really quite hard not to think of sweet loved ones when everywhere we look there seems to be red and pink hearts, flowers, and stuffed animals.

There is a special someone in my life that I have decided to give an extra dose of love to right now ... my only daughter, Briella. As she has just hit her teenage years, it seems especially important to be mindful of all that might be happening her life. At the beginning of the new year, we began a journal together. She will write her thoughts to me as it suits her in her own time, and I can guide and encourage her in writing back. This has already been a blessing to us both.

But the biggest dose of love came in the form of a room makeover. She's been asking for quite some time to change the girlish pink on her walls to something more sophisticated. And so, over the last several months I have been buying the staples (bedding, curtains, paint) to redo her room while she is at school. But for this to be an extra special gift with a deeper show of love, I have also put a poem together for her with guidance and encouragement so that she will remember this moment for a lifetime.

My friends, in all things in life, it is our job and duty to not only guide and encourage our children and other loved ones, but to be a constant help to others who cross our paths—using our skills and gifts to be a blessing to them. On the flip side of this, we are also to be vulnerable and inquisitive. Vulnerable to admit the things we do not know or understand and allow others to help us. Inquisitive so we don't make ourselves victims because we don't understand something—we seek out answers from experts, professionals, wiser older people and even from the almighty Google.

Do you do these things—becoming the teacher or the student depending on the situation? Do you have a teachable and helpful spirit?

Over the years and on many recent occasions, I have heard people use their lack of knowledge, gender, or an array of other reasons for being “taken advantage of” in the automotive industry. I certainly cannot speak for all automotive repair shops, but I do have a business relationship with hundreds across the nation and I am here to tell you that many shops have the utmost integrity. Most reputable shops have one big goal really—to take care of you and your vehicle and to earn your trust. They want to explain things to you in a way that you can understand so that you can make an informed decision about the health of your vehicle.

I am sure there are some auto repair shops out there that fall into the stereotype we hear in the news—the shady mechanics that conspire to rip you off any way they can. But this is not the norm. And likely, those shops will go out of business quickly due to their dishonesty—there is just no room for it when there are so many great shops.

Upon assessment of accusations from our customers as well as stories from other shops, I am of the opinion that negative conclusions made by customers originate from one of three things:

1 Lack of knowledge—When

we are not savvy in certain areas, we must rely on the knowledge and guidance of others to steer us in the right direction. Generally, auto repair shops assess the problem you brought your vehicle in for and generate an estimate for you as well as give you an assessment on its overall health—in the form of a courtesy inspection. Based on industry standards as well as external issues, recommendations are made. It is always your choice in whether or not you wish to move forward with recommendations. These are absolutely not made to “upsell” you; they are made in order to achieve the best health for your vehicle. Auto repair shops are stuck between a rock and a hard place. If we don't make recommendations and we miss something, we get negative feedback for that. If we do make recommendations that the customer does not understand or does not want to hear, often times we get negative feedback for that. The old saying holds true: We're darned if we do and darned if we don't! The best advice I can give with this is educate yourself, find one auto shop you trust, stay loyal, and ask lots of questions.

2 Miscommunication—There are many people involved in the service of your vehicle, so miscommunication may happen from time to time. I encourage you to first, do all you

can to provide the most information possible—including the best way to get ahold of you when your vehicle has been assessed. And second, if there has been miscommunication, talk it out, ask questions, be kind, and don't assume malicious intent. We're all just humans doing the best we can.

3 Mistakes—Mistakes happen! It's a fact of life. You make them in your work. All of the people at your favored auto repair shop make them too—not intentionally—that is why they are called mistakes. Extend grace, have understanding, and build your relationship by communicating any concerns you have.

There are plenty of vehicles being driven on our roadways that need legitimate repairs and maintenance. We don't need to lead you astray or make up repairs that are not needed. Auto repair shops with integrity want nothing more than to guide you through the process and earn your trust so that you will choose them to be the sole caretaker of your vehicle.

To help clarify some of the many falsehoods about the automotive industry and the cost of auto repairs, this is the first article I will write in a series that will help you understand the process and cost of services your vehicle may require.