

Should men put the toilet seat down when they're finished?(Telegraph, 10/11/2015)

When Thomas Crapper popularized(社会に広める) the modern flush toilet in homes around Britain, he could not have known the magnitude(importance) of the domestic problem he was creating. For years, toilet etiquette has been a topic of consternation(驚愕、worry, shock), with the seat in particular opening a rift(不仲、亀裂) of disagreement between the genders(sex).

"It's easy to dismiss(はねつける) the toilet seat issue as inconsequential(not important) - but sometimes a petty(small and unimportant) argument is more than just a petty(些細な) argument"

It is popularly preached(説教する、talk about) that men should put the seat down after relieving themselves, but why – in this age of so-called equality – is this still the case? "Chivalry(騎士道精神)!" you may shout; "kindness!" you may yell. Well, OK - but is that good enough? Because, shockingly, men like touching the seat just as little as their female cubicle(small part of a room)-mates.

To solve the toilet seat dilemma, we must delve into(徹底的に調べる) the wider problems that surround it. These problems can be divided, rather neatly, into three separate areas of argument: equality, psychology and bacteriology(the study of bacteria). So let's pull up our trousers, flush out the problem and wash our hands of this khazi(toilet) conflict *once and for all* (きっぱりと) .

<The Equality Experts>

The toilet seat debate may be timeless, but it is also potent(powerful) with contemporary issues.

Universities around Britain have recently started to implement(take action) gender neutral toilets in order to nullify(無効にする) any ostracisation(仲間はずれ) transgender or intersex (男女の区別がない) people may feel. However, the reception to these loos has not been universally positive, with one third-year female student at Sussex University complaining to me that "there are no rules about how to leave the toilet seat, and that means we have to move it all the time."

"Sometimes you can tell that men haven't put the seat up, gone to the toilet and missed," continues the student, who wishes to remain unnamed. "And I don't see why we should have to deal with that when it should be their responsibility to move it in the first place."

The inference here, that altering the position of the loo seat is a man's role, is reiterated by Donna Dawson, a relationship expert who playfully (I think) brands me a "misogynist"(女嫌いの人) for suggesting that the undesirable task of lifting or lowering the toilet seat should not be exclusively left to men.

Dawson suggests that equality is represented by "compromise and meeting each other halfway; the important bedrock(根幹) of a relationship". Quite so - but she repeatedly describes a lowered seat as the toilet in its "natural" or "original" position. To paraphrase the age-old maxim, is this not trying to have your urinal cake(便器の中に置かれる脱臭剤(ブロック) and eat it?

you can't have your cake and eat it too

訳語 ケーキを食べたらケーキを持っていることはできない；ケーキは食べたらなくなる

解説 矛盾する2つのことを同時に実現することは不可能だという意味。

After our conversation, I spend (too long) formulating a 'one-touch' rule. In short: everyone agrees to touch the seat once during their lavatory trip. Men put it up at the start, women put it down. What could represent a more equal compromise, I humbly(謙虚に) ask?

<The Psychologist>

It's easy to dismiss the toilet seat issue as inconsequential(重要ではない) - but sometimes a petty argument is more than just a petty argument.

Couples' therapists believe that, psychologically, the toilet seat problem is indicative of wider relationship issues. The UK Bathroom Blog reported that the majority (44 per cent) of domestic arguments are bathroom related, and that 48pc of those disagreements stem from men leaving the seat up.

Stefan Walters, a couples' counsellor and psychologist at Harley Therapy, believes that leaving

the seat up is "a great example of the sort of minor issue that can lead to major discontent".

"Often," explains Walters, "it is these little issues that can build up over time and lead to resentment or dissatisfaction in the relationship."

However, the therapist also recognises that women are contravening(矛盾する) their desire for equality if they demand only men touch the seat. "I think we're all guilty of double standards at times; of striving for equality but then also wanting things to go our way."

<The Bacteriologist>

It's no surprise, but it still bears(一する必要がある) stating: the physical act of putting the seat up can result in bacteria transferring onto one's hand.

Dr Alison Cottel, Professor of Microbiology at the University of Surrey, explains the pathogenic(病原性の) dangers repeated touching of the toilet seat may present. "Only a few cells of faecal(糞便の) material (small enough that they are not visible to the naked eye) are capable of making someone ill," he warns.

"However, it is well documented that contact with microbes(病原菌) is good for normal development of the immune system. So perhaps having to touch the toilet seat because your partner does not return it to the agreed 'acceptable' position is actually a good thing, helping expose people to low levels of bacteria and keeping their immune system healthy."

The astute(目先が利く、抜け目のない) among you will have already detected in those words a handy retort(反論) for the next time your other half criticises your privy(私的な) protocol(手順): all you're trying to do is protect them against bacterial infection.

<All a matter of manners>

Dating expert Jo Barnett sums up the problem perfectly. "It is good manners," explains Barnett, "and yes, it requires effort – but that is the point. It shows consideration and these little steps go such a long way to a happy relationship."

Barnett's observation, that putting the seat down is a kind gesture, is insightful. For manners is all it is. There is no logical or equality-based reasoning behind men alone having to move the toilet seat from position to position, and therefore we should not be chastised(非難する) should we – once in a while – forget.

And equally, we might ask of our female toilet-mates: would it hurt to occasionally put it up after using it, if only for the sake of manners?(1015)