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free will astrology BY ROB BREZSNY

ARIES (March 21-April 19): I'm a big fan of facing your problems head-on and dealing forthrightly with your pain. But what if that approach isn't always best? Renowned psychologist Richard Lazarus said he wanted to "challenge the view that psychological health demands full realism." He believed that some sick people get healthy faster by refusing to admit how serious their problems are. To those in stressful situations, he recommended that they could reduce their anxiety by describing their predicament in a matter-of-fact way. "Avoiding what is painful, to a great extent, seems to serve a positive function," he concluded. Although I'm not sure this strategy is universally applicable, I do recommend it for you right now, Aries.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): To get misguided tips about how to invest, check out Henry Blodget's "The Complete Bad Advice Column" (tinyurl.com/ys4al8). For crabby, mean-spirited counsel about how to conduct your personal life, listen to Dr. Laura's syndicated radio show (drlaura.com). For silly chatter about trivial subjects, read the "most intelligent woman in the world," Marilyn vos Savant (marilynvossavant.com). But if, on the other hand, you'd like brilliant guidance about where to direct your substantial life energy next, tap into your own intuition. The astrological omens suggest that it's working better now than it ever has. It's far more useful to you than any so-called expert's blatherings.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): The Yanyuwa Aborigines of northwestern Australia believe that music literally has curative properties. In one traditional method, the healer sings a medicine song directly into the top of the head of the patient. The sound circulates through the body, driving out the illness or unease. According to my analysis of the astrological omens, something resembling this approach could help chase away your current malaise. Do you think you could find a shaman or shaman wannabe to perform the musical "surgery"? If not, do the job yourself. Spend 20 minutes a day singing the most potent healing songs you know into your own head.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): The counsel I'm about to offer is not given lightly. If you choose to heed it, it could wreak discomfort and disorder, at least initially. And you'll have to pump yourself up with more courage than you're used to feeling. Still, I'm convinced it's the right thing for you to hear; I believe that any breakdown it might engender will ultimately lead to a breakthrough. So here's the advice, courtesy of Franz Kaka: "Don't bend; don't water it down; don't try to make it logical; don't edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly."

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): In 2005, former mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani was paid \$100,000 for speaking at a fundraiser for tsunami relief. That's a prime example of giving a gift with steel cable-like strings attached. Be wary of this phenomenon popping up in your

own life, Leo. Don't accept such mixed blessings, and don't offer them, either. That's the cautionary news. The encouraging news is that if you're vigilant in guarding against generosity-that-isn't-really-generosity, the coming weeks will be favorable for the giving and receiving of modest gifts that have a big impact. Visualize Giuliani getting, say, an honorarium of \$5,000 for his help in raising money for a good cause, and you'll plant the right seed in your subconscious mind.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): I was enjoying a leisurely bike ride in a rural neighborhood where I'd never been. The houses were sparsely placed amidst overgrown meadows. The temperature was balmy. My endorphins had kicked in, and the fragrance of wildflowers had rendered me giddy. Then my mood shifted suddenly. While rolling downhill on a one-lane road, I hit a speed bump – freakishly, unexpectedly, right in the middle of paradise. Why was it there? My bike stopped cold and I flew through the air, landing awkwardly. The damage was minimal, and the shock was a bit invigorating. Still, I advise you, Virgo, to watch out for and avoid a comparable speed bump out there in the frontier you're exploring. There's no inherent karmic necessity for you to experience an inconvenient interruption like mine. Add 10 percent more caution to your roving and rambling.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): "Ordinary life does not interest me," wrote Anaïs Nin in one of her diaries. "I seek only the high moments. I am searching for the marvelous." Normally I might discourage you from pursuing that approach, Libra. You've got money to make and appointments to keep and groceries to buy, after all. And doing those tasks can make it hard to specialize in the marvelous. But for a limited time only, the planetary powers-that-be are granting you an exemption from the ordinary. More than that, actually: They're *insisting* on it. You need intimate contact with unreasonable beauty, sweet anomalies, beguiling ephemera, inexplicable joys, and small changes that inspire reverence.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): It'll be fine to eat ice cream with a fork this week. It'll be kind of cool to enter through exits, too, and you may generate good luck if you smash a mirror with a hammer or talk about subjects you're normally too superstitious to broach. You should also consider fixing things before they're broken, and listen ravenously to what's *not* being said. But please avoid trying to drink coffee with a sieve, Scorpio. Refrain from saying what you don't mean. And don't you dare try to fall up.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): "We were expelled from Paradise," wrote Franz Kafka in *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, "but Paradise was not destroyed. In a sense our expulsion from Paradise was a stroke of luck, for had we not been expelled, Paradise would have had to be destroyed." Do those ruminations strike a chord in

you, Sagittarius? I hope they move you to turn your thoughts towards your own personal version of paradise-on-earth. Consider the possibility that it was important for you to have been exiled from that land of bounty once upon a time. Meditate on what you'll need to do to prepare yourself to return to it when it becomes accessible again in the future.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): "Most painting in the European tradition involved painting the person's mask," wrote abstract expressionist painter Robert Motherwell. "Modern art rejected all that. Our subject matter has been the person behind the mask." Your next assignment is similar to that of modern art's, Capricorn: to recognize everyone's persona, but delve deeper to explore the maddeningly complex, crazily inscrutable, gorgeously wounded soul that's hidden beneath everyone's persona. Strip away the surface, in other words, and investigate the essence lurking below.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): The zoo in Anchorage, Alaska built a treadmill for its four-ton elephant. The cost was high – \$150,000 – but hey, if you own an elephant, you'd better take good care of it, right? Use this vignette as your operative metaphor, Aquarius. What's the symbolic equivalent of an elephant in your life – some exotic resource or giant responsibility or out-of-place treasure? Whatever it is, it needs extra care and attention. I'm not saying you have to spend a load of money. But you should at least spend some of your high-quality time.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Dear Pisces: We need a break from all these words we use, all this rational discourse. So how about if we sing to each other in a made-up language? Or we could use felt-tip markers to draw pictures and symbols on each other's bodies. Let's jump in over our heads and dance for each other underwater. Let's pretend we're two Helen Kellers tapping out codes on each other's wrists and ankles. Let's scrawl the stream-of-consciousness truths we want to express to each other on golden cards, and read them aloud to each other like we're announcing Oscar winners.

HOMEWORK: Comment on the following hypothesis: "You know what to do and you know when to do it." Testify by going to RealAstrology.com and clicking on "Email Rob."

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