

Ex makes himself at home

Dear Annie: My wife gave her ex (her son's father) a key to our home without telling me. I found out when I got home and he was sitting in our living room surfing the Web on my laptop.

My wife says she gave him the key so he can let himself in on the three nights a month he's scheduled to pick up their son for dinner as part of the custody agreement. But he has been making a lot of unscheduled stops at our house — to use the bathroom, have a snack, etc. I told my wife I don't like this, but she said, "Don't be selfish. It's my home, too!" I spoke to this man politely and told him I don't want him letting himself in, but he replied, "She says I can come over whenever I like."

Am I being unreasonable about this arrangement? I thought married people are supposed to agree on things like this. It's almost as though I have to share my home with this man, and he's not even a helpful guest. He'll eat a generous amount of food out of the fridge and leave dirty dishes in the sink. Last week, he bought his son a videogame console and violent videogames, which my wife and I had previously agreed

Annie's Mailbox

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would not be allowed in our home. Father and son will spend time playing games in his room when the boy is supposed to be doing his homework, sometimes late at night. I know the guy needs time with his kid, but there's no reason why he can't take the boy out to eat, to a movie or to a museum.

The ex never made much effort to see his son until we married. This is my first marriage, and I've never had any kids of my own, so I'm not entirely sure how to handle it. But I teach high school, and I've seen one long sad parade of kids whose parents don't maintain authority. So, Annie, what is the verdict? Should he have a key or not? — *The Husband*

Dear Husband: Our vote is "not," especially since he abuses the privilege. It may be her

house, but it's also yours. And while it's nice to be welcoming to her son's father, he should not have the run of your home, dropping in unexpectedly and keeping his son up all hours. This is not responsible parenting. It is indulgent. Dad needs to be as diligent a parent as Mom. He cannot be a "fun dad" and do things Mom would not otherwise allow. This does a disservice to the child. Please ask your wife to get into family counseling with you to work on this. Also look into the National Stepfamily Resource Center (stepfamilies.info).

Dear Annie: This is for "Confused Family Member," whose niece had a large wedding months after a civil ceremony.

My daughter also married civilly two weeks prior to big wedding bash for legal reasons. Her husband was being deployed within the month and she needed power of attorney in order to purchase their new home and do other things. We did not announce it, so as not to confuse anyone. And she kept her maiden name. She is also in the service, and it saved a lot of paperwork. — *Tootles*

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) You'll win the game, stomp the competition and claim victory in the battle. Knowing this, do you still want to take it on? Consider what the benefit to you will be beyond the momentary glory of winning.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) There's a reason you never catch up with the one to whom you keep saying, "Let's catch up." The vibe is off, the match is a miss, the common ground is yawn-inducingly broad — and yet still, insincere niceties prevent discomfort.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) If you want to know who cares the most, exit and see who follows, leave the job unfinished and see who shows up to finish it, or fly away and see who sprouts wings.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) Your wide-ranging interests pay off as you connect with many different types of people. The weird things you talk about with your intimates will lead to brilliant (and far less weird) conversation with acquaintances.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) You have many identities and roles. When one isn't going so well, expand yourself in another. For instance, if one relationship is bumming you out, losing yourself in a project or spending time with other friends will help.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You'll be inspired by learning about a variety of industries, cultures and subcultures. The lingo and ideas you pick up on are not only fun for you, but they also up your attractive quotient and make it easier for you to influence others.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) There are too many options. You'll spin your wheels if you consider each one. Give a quick glance and ask: Helpful or not helpful? Potential doesn't

count. Only things that are directly and immediately helpful count.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21) Did you lock the door? How old is the meat? When was the last time you checked the tires? It's safety-rundown time, and the old adage rings true: Better safe than sued!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) The ones you love may not support all of your endeavors, but the support you do get is still valuable. Of course, the question was never "Is it valuable?" It was, "Is it enough?"

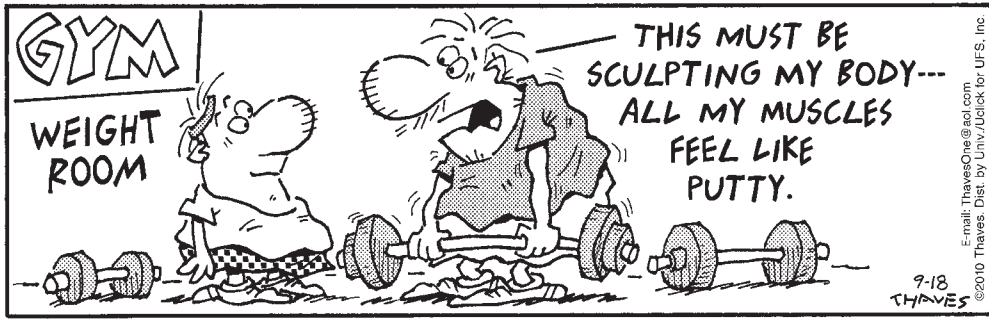
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) There are many highly intelligent people who extol the virtues of idleness, loafing, loitering, lollygagging and let's not forget napping. Might they be right? Test the theory.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) It should not be assumed that people do what they do because they like it. Other possible reasons: it's easy, it's there, it's what they know, it's comfortable. You can use this knowledge to affect change.

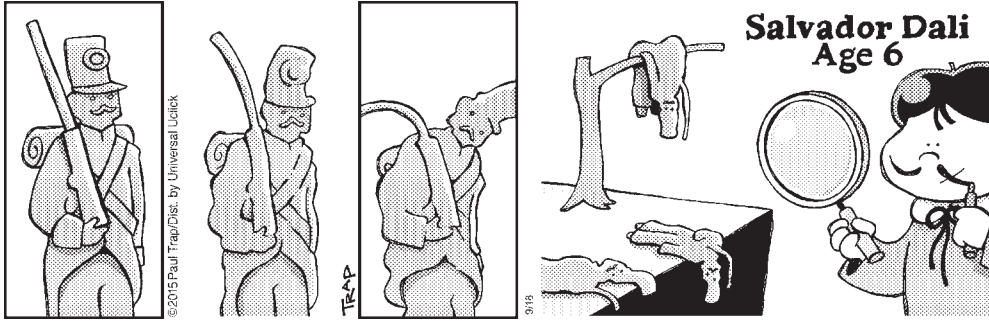
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Because you're certain to make an impression, the question becomes: Precisely what kind of impression would you like to make? If you want to have fun in the short-term, you can be afforded to be assertive or even shocking.

SATURDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Sept. 19) This year is anything but a rerun. There's so much that's brand-new and utterly enchanting about this part of your life. Love puts a cool Instagram filter on the way you see the world. Fancy transportation and far-off places steal the show in November. February shows you breaking free from a group that has limited you. Taurus and Aquarius people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 44, 49, 3, 37 and 16.

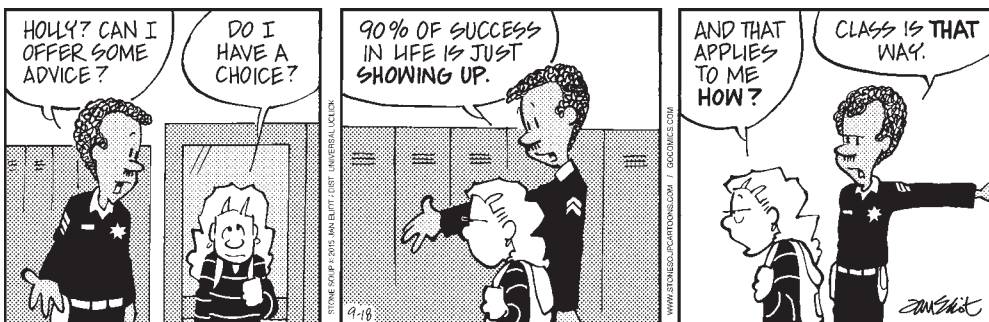
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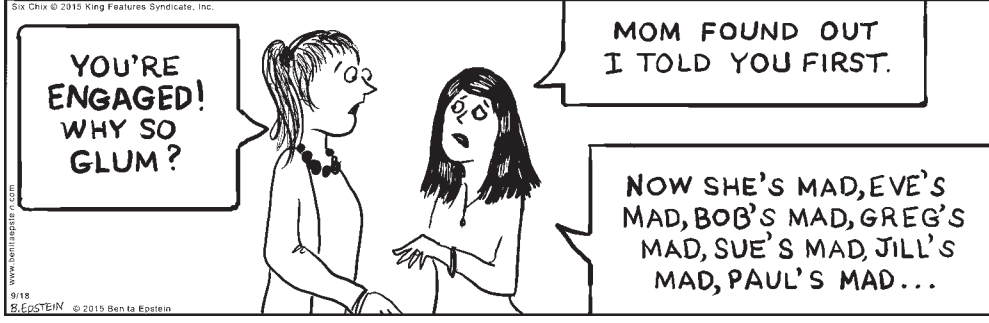
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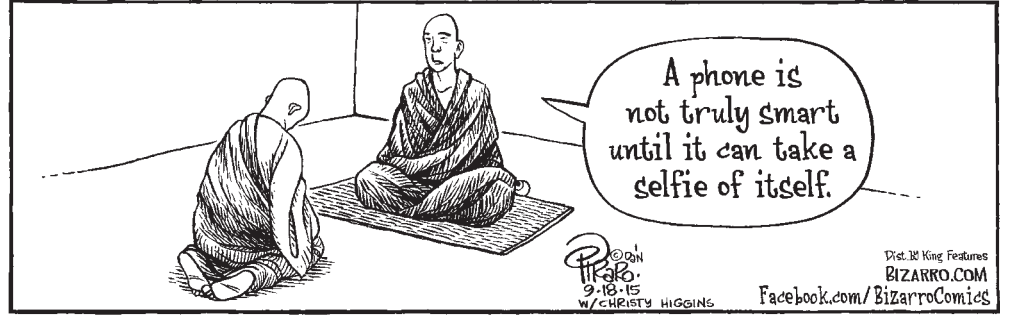
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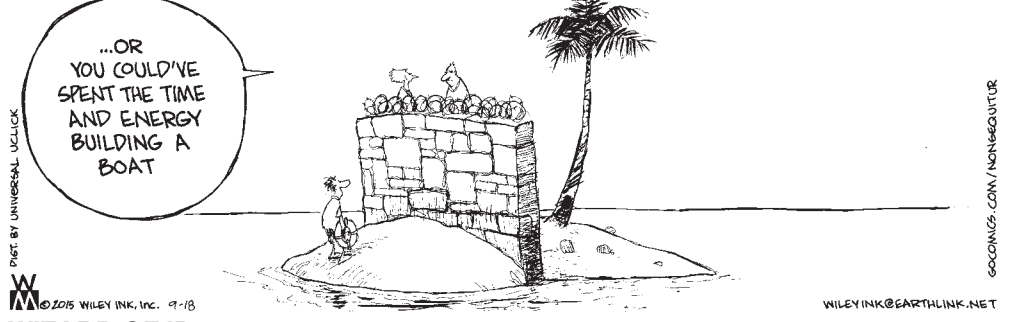
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ROSE IS ROSE

