

Childless couple tired of criticism

Dear Annie: My husband and I have chosen not to have children. His family asks repeatedly if we've "changed our minds" about it, so obviously they do not approve of our choice.

My husband recently gave me a 30th birthday party, and invited his extremely child-oriented family. The entire duration of the party, I noticed his siblings and parents fussing with the very young children (about ages 4 and up), not paying attention to anyone but the kids. I found this rude, and thought they could at least pretend to be interested in my birthday celebration. When I asked one of my sisters-in-law if she saw me open her gift, she retorted, "Sorry, watching my daughter was a little more important than a 30-year-old opening presents."

My husband and I are extremely generous with all of their children. Am I wrong to think that their behavior was rude? They seemed to believe simply showing up was good enough. My family and friends with children seem perfectly capable of tending to their kids while still being able to interact with other adults. How should I handle this? — *Not-So-Happy-Birthday*

Dear Birthday Girl: This depends on the kids. Children, espe-

Annie's Mailbox

Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar



cially the very young ones, require constant supervision. Surely you are grateful that the parents watched to be sure their kids didn't crash into your glass table, empty the tissue box into the toilet or whine loudly about the food.

We think you were kind to invite these little children to your birthday party. But if you have kids around, you cannot expect to have the parents' undivided attention. You are assuming it was somehow a subtle criticism of your not having children, but we don't think it was intentionally rude. Had those kids been running wild, you would have written us to complain about the parents' inadequate supervision. (We get plenty of those letters.) If you want an adult party next time, it's perfectly OK to exclude the children. Otherwise, this is how it's going to be for the next several years. Please

don't let it bother you so much.

Dear Annie: A friend recently lost his home in a fire, and said the reason was two 9-volt batteries that were loose in a drawer. The fire occurred while they weren't home. Something similar occurred at my husband's office, but it was only a small spark and they were able to get it under control quickly.

Please tell your readers to be sure to store their batteries in their original containers and to make sure that the contact posts aren't touching. I always place a piece of tape over the contacts before I throw them away. If we can save even one life (or home), it will have been worth it. — *M.*

Dear M.: According to the National Fire Prevention Association, the odds of 9-volt batteries starting a house fire are slim. Nonetheless, batteries should not be stored loose where they can come into contact with metal (keys, pocket change, aluminum foil, paper clips), glue or other materials that could cause them to spark. Cover the posts and store all batteries upright in their original packaging. It is best not to dispose of them in the trash. Check with your local authorities to find out where to take them for proper disposal or recycling.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your posture, tone and word choice will telegraph your status. Note that it is not automatically better to try and claim a higher status. There will be many benefits to showing deference to the others involved.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Being a know-it-all has surprisingly few perks, but there are quite a few bonuses that go along with being someone who is willing and eager to learn from the knowledgeable.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You'll be privy to problems that fascinate you and problems that bore you to tears. Pick your company carefully. Since you're likely to get involved, it may as well be with problems you find interesting.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). When you want to go where the action is, you have to expect the traffic. You'll get stuck in some metaphorical version of this and the best way to handle it is to relax, listen to music and accept that this comes with the territory.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It is said that nature abhors a vacuum, and so do cats. As the lion of the zodiac, you should know! As soon as one thing drops out of your schedule and energy field, you'll prepare to fill the void with something better.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You may offer to help people out of a need to be useful, but please know that you do not need to be useful to be loved. Also consider that the easiest way to keep your word is not to give it in the first place.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It is said that there are no mistakes, only lessons. However, when one misses the freeway exit, thus adding 10 miles to the journey and arriving quite

late, one can't help but think that some "lessons" are truly unnecessary.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Humans are not born knowing how to be moderate, restrained and emotionally mature. Those who display these qualities have blundered plenty. If you happen to misstep, forgive and correct yourself. Don't dwell on it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Yours is the plan that's going to work — once you convince the others, that is. Persuasion will be tricky, requiring that you lay back, play it cool and let them think it's all their idea.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). When you expose your feelings, you reveal your true self. You think it's going to cause a commotion, but really it will just cause others to know you better and feel closer to you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It will flow better if you give without anticipating a return. You'll relax into your usual easy charm and mine something wonderful out of the situation you wouldn't have seen had you held on to prior expectations.

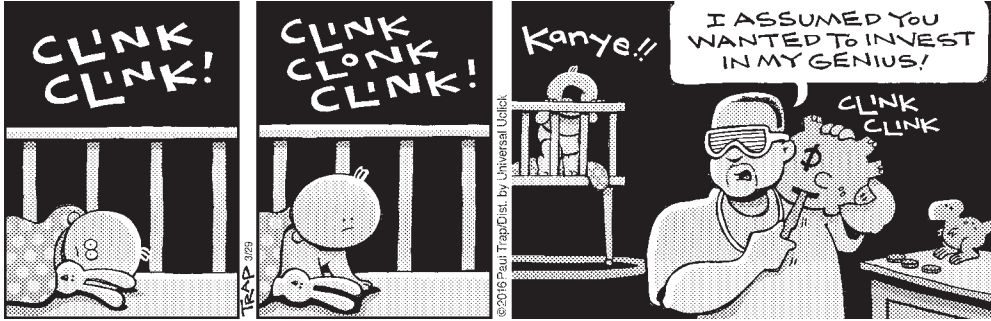
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You really click with someone. This doesn't happen every day. Act on it, immediately. Maybe you won't become best friends, or even associates, but there's a drop of magic in this connection.

WEDNESDAY'S BIRTHDAY (March 30). You don't have anything to prove, and when you give up trying, you gain access to that club you've been trying to get into. Singles: Next month sparks new love connections. Couples: A shared interest will bond you. June features family helping family. August brings fresh financial resources. Virgo and Scorpio adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 50, 33, 10, 28 and 14.

FRANK AND ERNEST



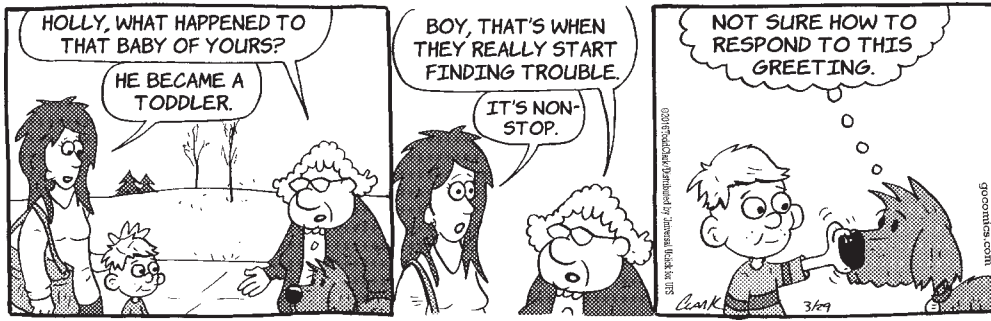
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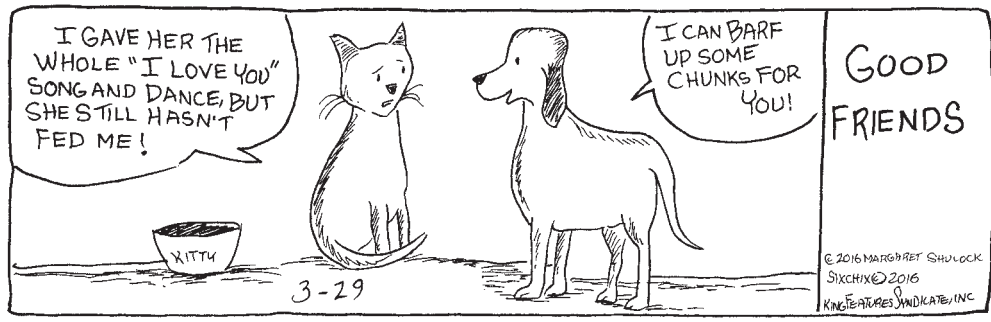
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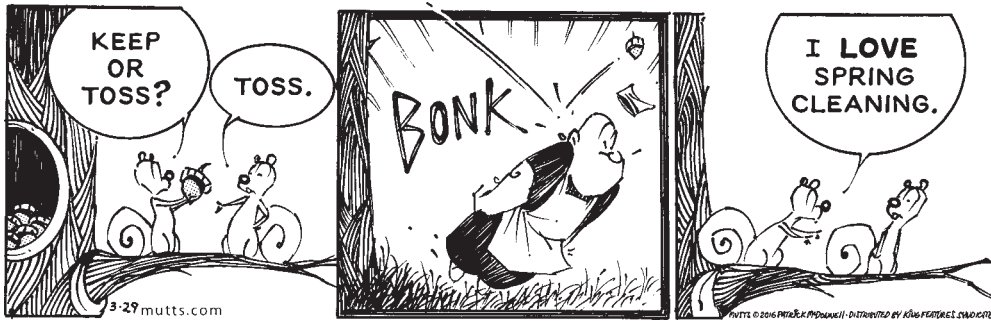
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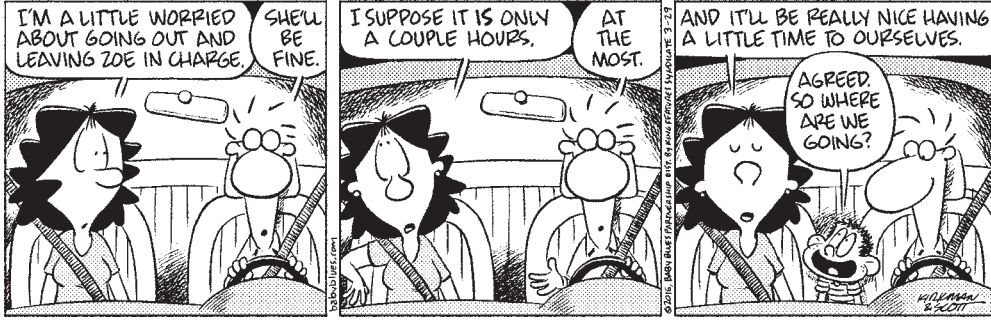
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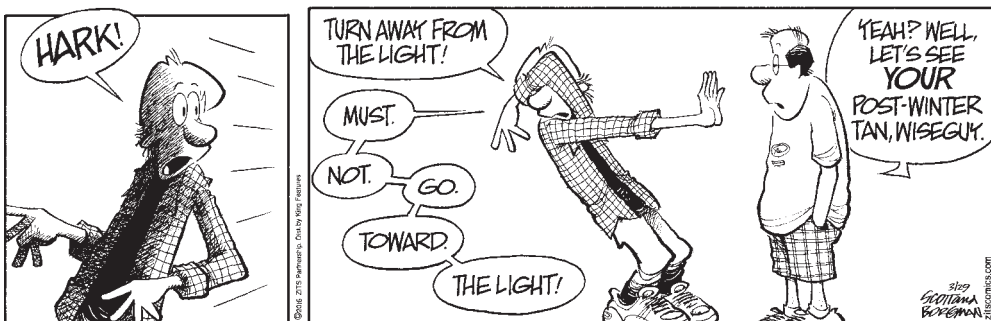
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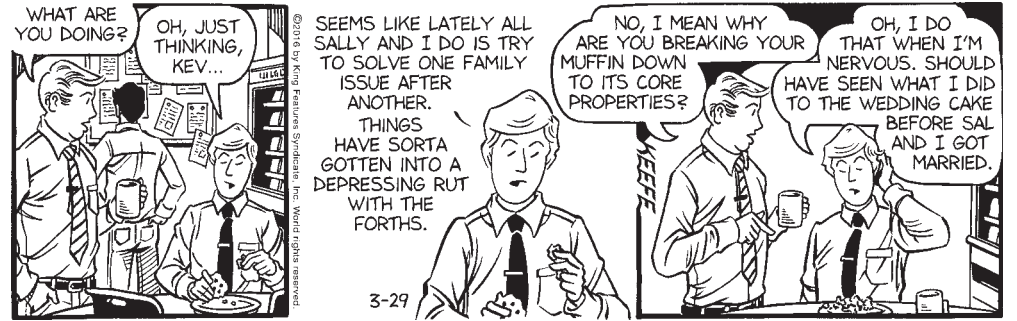
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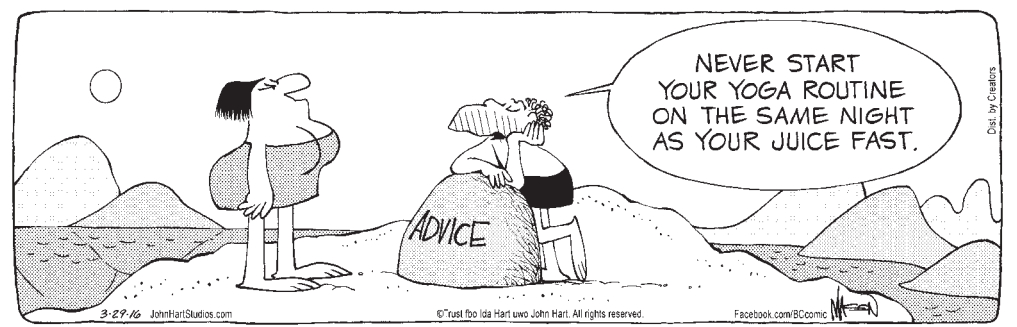
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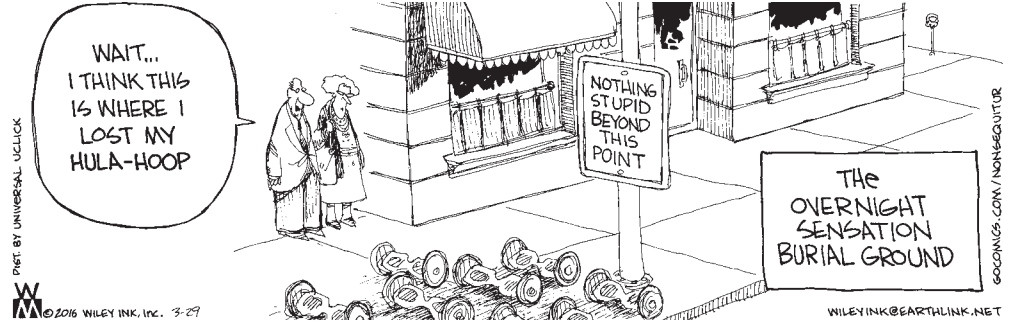
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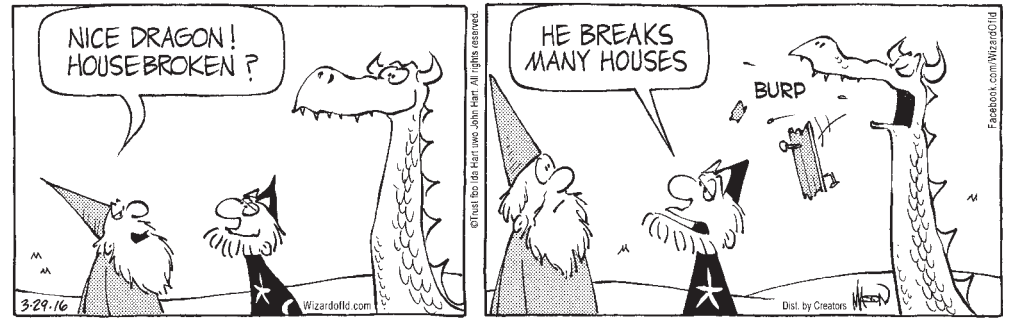
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