

How to fix before it's too late?

Dear Annie: I'd like to fix the relationship between my fiancée and my mother before things get out of hand.

My fiancée, "Beth," fixates on instances where she feels my mother has slighted her. For example, Beth calls me by a shortened version of my name, a nickname my mother hates and has ranted on about. My mother has also raved about the many talents and successes of the friends I had in high school (a decade ago) while only complimenting Beth on how "cute" she is (something that annoys Beth to no end.)

I either don't recognize these issues in the moment, or I'm not present when they happen. I have told my mother how much Beth means to me and asked her directly whether there is something she doesn't like about her, but it's made no difference. Mom has a tendency to run at the mouth and I'm not convinced she thinks about how her words impact those around her. I can understand why Beth feels animosity from Mom.

Both my family and my fiancée are extremely important to me. Beth gets along with the rest of my family, but it seems that

Annie's Mailbox

Creators
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Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar



every interaction with my mother leads to hurt feelings. I would suggest a direct conversation between the two, but that possibility seems remote. How can I improve this relationship before it reaches a breaking point? — *Stuck in the Middle*

Dear Stuck: First we commend you for recognizing how damaging this dynamic is and making an effort to fix things. Your mother sounds jealous with her unflattering comparisons and subtle criticisms. But Beth seems insecure and overly focused on slights, intentional or not.

Please talk to them separately. Tell your mother firmly that she must accept your fiancée or she will be the one to lose out. Explain that she raised you well, so she should trust your choice in a life partner. Add that getting along

with Beth means having another person to love, and more access to you and future grandchildren.

Then speak to Beth. Tell her that Mom is anxious, and fearful that she is losing her son. She needs reassurance, tolerance and patience. Make sure Beth understands that you love Mom and aren't going to cut ties. But if the two of them refuse to accept one another, there is nothing wrong with visiting Mom on your own and letting Beth stay home.

Dear Annie: A while back you had a letter from "Stuff in the Suburbs," who complained that her neighbor smoked on his back porch, and the smoke wafted into her bedroom. She liked to sleep with the windows open and her husband was allergic to the smoke.

A cheap, easy solution to the problem is to buy a window fan and direct the flow outward. There's no incoming smoke, and you get a nice breeze along with some white noise to aid slumber. — *Shreveport, Louisiana*

Dear Shreveport: We also recommended a fan, but we didn't mention the added benefit of the white noise. Thanks for the helpful postscript.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Meditation lends spiritual lift and a vantage point from which you can recognize the totality of your life patterns — some have served you well, and others have brought you needless pain.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Today's impeccable timing is dependent upon something as unpredictable as another person's actions. What happens is truly remarkable in its clockwork precision.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Of course you're not so callow that you rely on another person to make you feel attractive. Neither are you impervious to compliments and special attention. It's nice, and you deserve it! If it's not forthcoming, it's time to ask why.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You shouldn't have to solve problems in order to earn the attention and affection of your loved ones, but you'll probably solve them anyway. Helping is your nature.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). One of your greatest joys in life is in making things. Anyone who can help by giving you the space and/or resources to build what's in your mind will automatically become your favorite person.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Excuses that were legit in an age without Internet and Google just don't fly anymore. Just about everything you need to learn is readily accessible, and you'll take advantage of that today.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Your mind is powerful and restless these days, so you need to give it lots to do. Run it or it will run you. Think about what you want your experience to be, not what you fear.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Strangers notice that special charisma in you that your nearest and dearest may have become blind to, due to overexposure. It is only when you return after being gone for a spell that they'll be able to see it again.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Are you forgetting something? Possibly it's a birthday, bill or casually made social hook-up. Whatever the misstep, correct it before sundown to minimize damages.

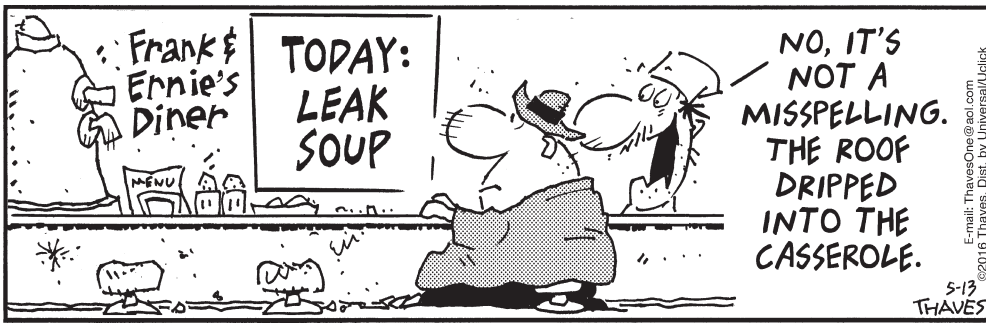
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It's a bad time to take a break. There's so much vivacious momentum going right now it would be a shame to back off. See your work through, and carry relationships on to the next level.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You can trust the information that comes to you through subconscious channels, even when it doesn't logically coincide with the official story or anything else people are trying to get you to believe.

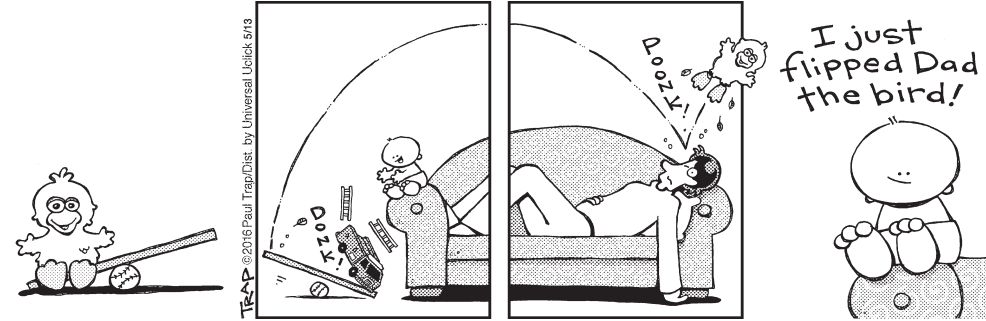
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You are the priority to another person, and you don't take the role lightly. It comes with responsibilities, including the onus to reciprocate, seizing every opportunity to make that person feel important.

SATURDAY'S BIRTHDAY (May 14). The butterflies return to your stomach in June, a sign that you're on to something you were meant to explore. Take it to the next level in July. A class will be involved. Your family will entertain you and make you proud in August. You'll never be sorry for what you do that's above and beyond the call in October. Gemini and Leo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 19, 32, 3, 38 and 5.

FRANK AND ERNEST



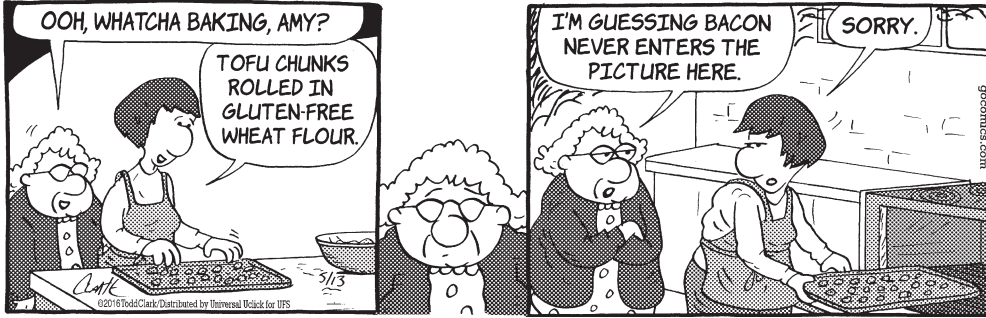
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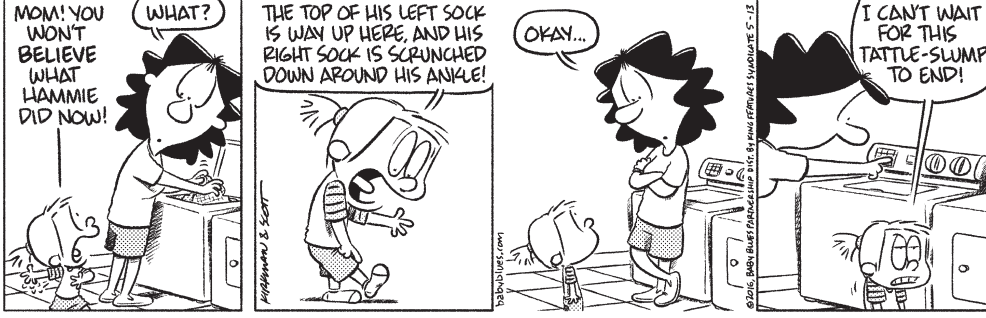
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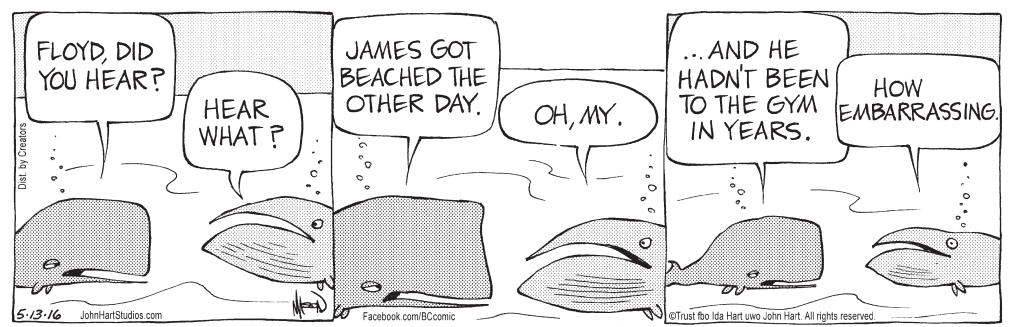
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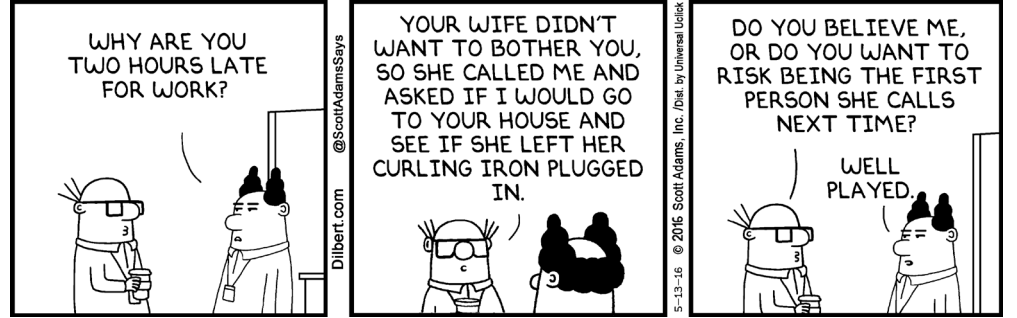
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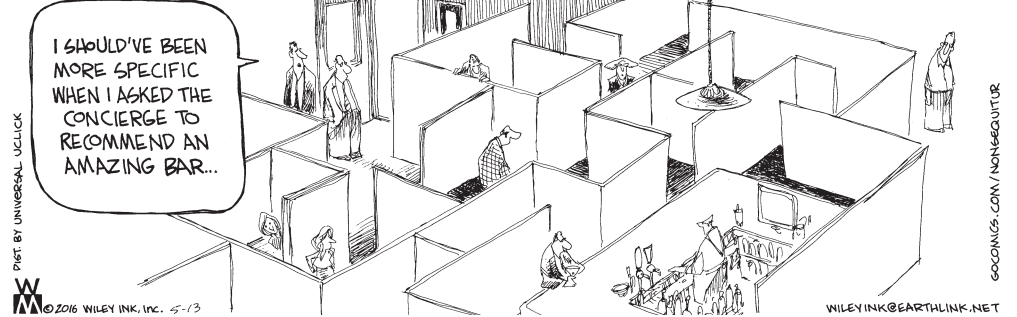
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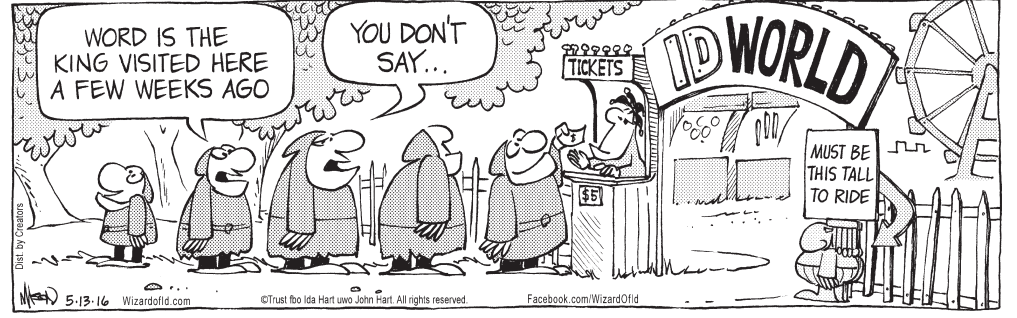
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ROSE IS ROSE

