

Not digging the doggie doo

Dear Annie: We live in a friendly town. Yet, we have some residents who are terribly disrespectful people of other people's property.

We've had dogs and love dogs, but we would never think of taking our dog to our neighbor's lawn to do its duty. We've consulted several experts and they all say that the dog's urine can cause brown spots on the lawn. We even paid to have new sod put in. We've asked people not to do this, but the minute our back is turned, they ignore us.

We aren't allowed to put up "No Dogs Allowed" signs, so that doesn't help. But we have a number of dog parks these folks can use instead of our lawn. Apologies to those dog owners who do the right thing, but how do we get inconsiderate dog owners to behave? — *Totally Confused*

Dear Confused: Dogs "mark" their territory and if they have used your lawn in the past, they are likely to make a beeline for it again.

Are there laws in your "friendly" town that prohibit dogs from using private lawns? If so, report each incident to the police. Another option is to go outside whenever you see someone coming with their dog and not leave until the owners pass by completely. However, you can't always be there each time, so here

Annie's Mailbox

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are some other suggestions: Spray a diluted mixture of cayenne pepper (or ammonia, vinegar or citrus) and water on your lawn, or look for a commercially available dog-repellent spray. Get a motion-activated sprinkler. Build a fence. We hope one of these works.

Dear Annie: My child died recently. My friends tell me they don't know what to say. I don't know which is worse, someone who says something inappropriate or someone who says nothing.

I know how they feel. I used to be someone who didn't know what to say to a person whose loved one had died. I shudder to think of how often I might have said something inadvertently hurtful or remained silent because "they might be having a good day and I don't want to ruin it for them."

I have news for people — you

can't ruin our day. Mine was ruined the day my child died. When you say nothing, it makes us feel that our loved one's life was insignificant. But this person was important to us. This person mattered.

Here is my advice for what you can say: "I'm sorry about your loss." Include the person's name or their relationship if you can. Whatever your version of "I'm sorry," be it in the form of a hug or in words, is perfect. That's it. That's enough. It doesn't matter how the person died. However, if you have an anecdotal story about this person, please share it. We love to hear stories about our loved one. Send a text. If there is an online tribute to this person, sign it. Also, cards are wonderful. I don't know what is the statute of limitations on expressing condolences, but we are still receiving cards months after the event, and they are still comforting.

The family holds these things close. We are struggling to put our lives back together without this person in it. — *Sad*

Dear Sad: If you haven't already done so, please contact The Compassionate Friends (compassionatefriends.org). Our deepest condolences on your heartbreaking loss.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your psychic gifts are strong now. You can envision a future for someone that the person wouldn't have dreamed of if it weren't for you. It's beautiful, positive, hopeful and entirely possible for all who believe it is.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Your friendship circle is enlarging, and you soon will entertain many. Start gathering ideas now. You'll be a spectacular host when you get the planning process going way before you have to.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You'll manage to escape yourself for a little while, which is fun. Not that you're bad company — quite the opposite! But it's always interesting to experience different people (even if it's you being someone you hardly recognize).

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Answer the question that is easy for you. Take on the challenge that appeals to you. Solve your part. This isn't selfish; it's smart. No one else has your strengths. Lead with them.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). If the talking is going on and on and yet you don't seem to be coming any closer to an understanding, it's because you're not having a true conversation, which requires back and forth, listen and response.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). If you were an outsider who knew nothing about the situation you would ask "why" a lot and question the basic tenants that the insiders are blind to. Magic springs from an obvious question.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). One relationship is starting to take up more and more of your mental hard drive, not to mention the time and emotion you're pouring in to it. In fact it's so all-encompassing you're starting to forget your irritations, insecurities and enemies.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A hobby will once again stir your interest, if not your passion. You'd like to see improvement in this endeavor, but the truth is that you would do this forever, regardless of the result.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A colleague may annoy you with his illogical way of doing things. Will you grow even more annoyed when these ways actually work? Your open mind allows for this kind of good fortune!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your affection makes you willing to overlook a less-than-appealing aspect of someone. The right feeling is there, and that's what matters most. Your benevolence will boomerang.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). While you're joking around, playing with possibilities and generally trying to amuse yourself, you may just stumble upon a solution. There will be time for a brief celebration before tackling the next issue.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're proactive when it comes to your goals. If you can't commit yourself to your plan for at least two hours today, you will get cranky. Ask your loved ones to leave you to your work. You'll be doing them a favor.

WEDNESDAY'S BIRTHDAY (May 25). You've a talent for bringing people of different backgrounds together, especially people of different ages. The generations will experience you as a kind of bridge — someone who helps make sense of their timeline. June brings exciting love, and you'll be physically more daring as well. There's a career breakthrough in January. Cancer and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 2, 18, 44 and 19.

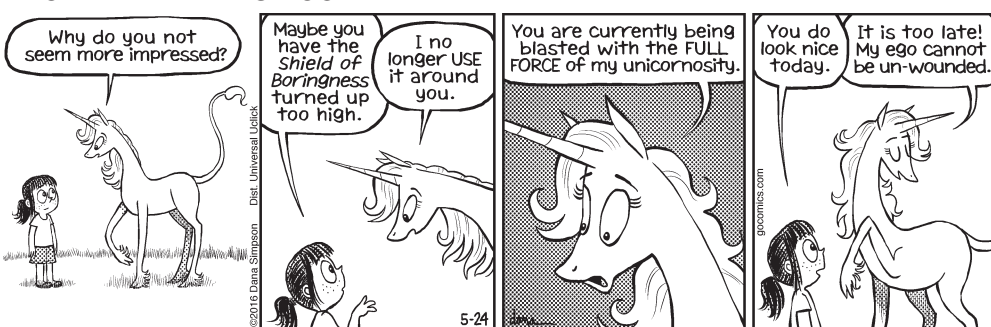
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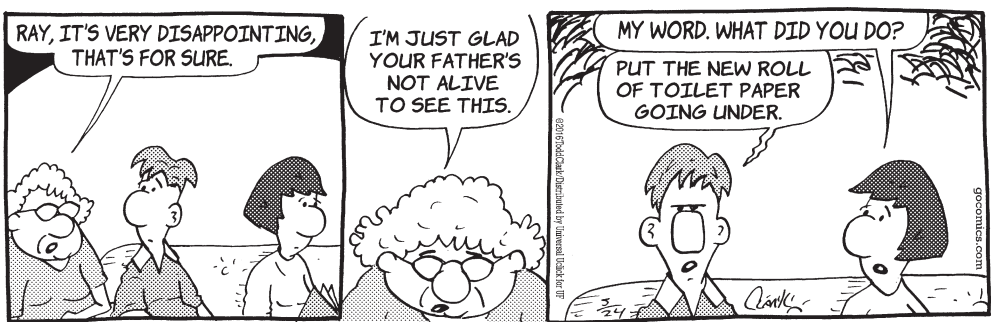
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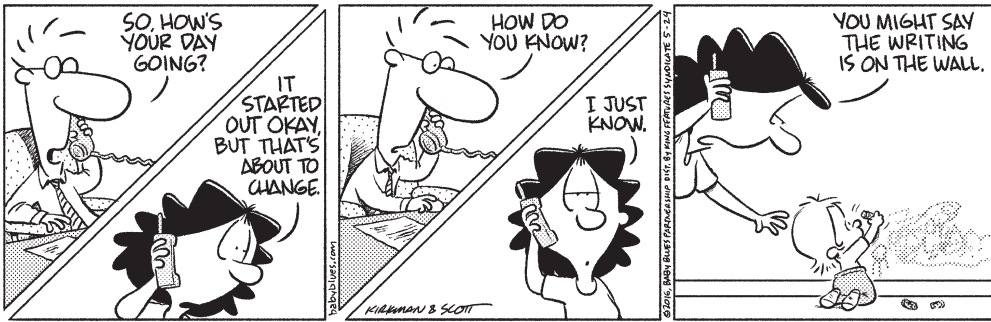
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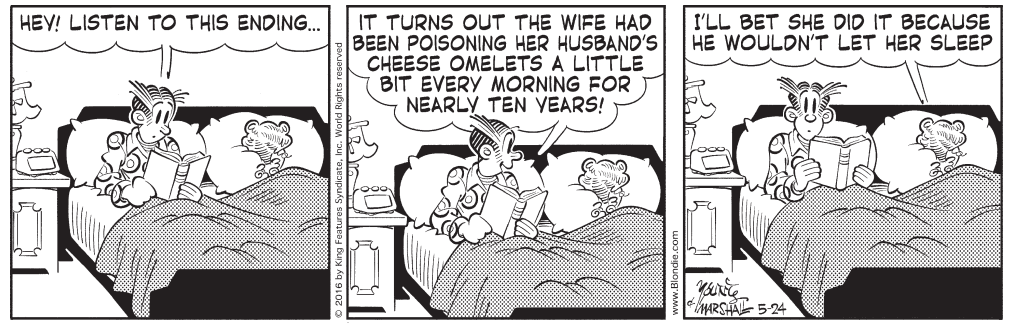
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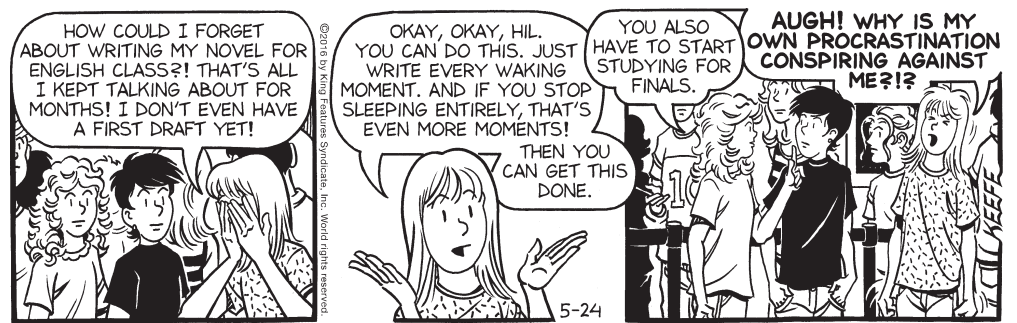
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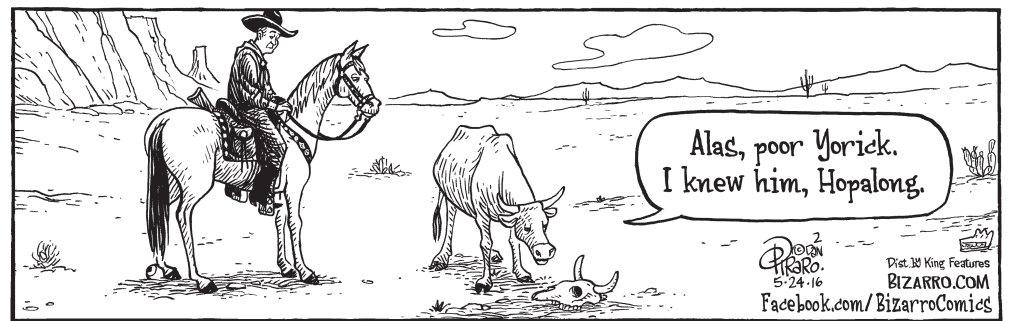
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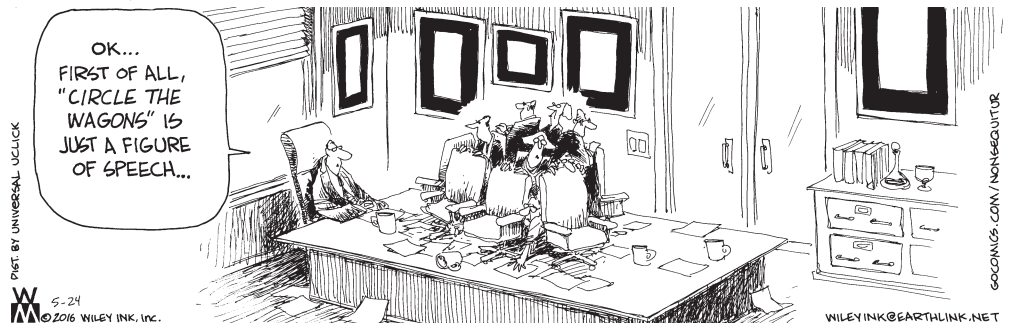
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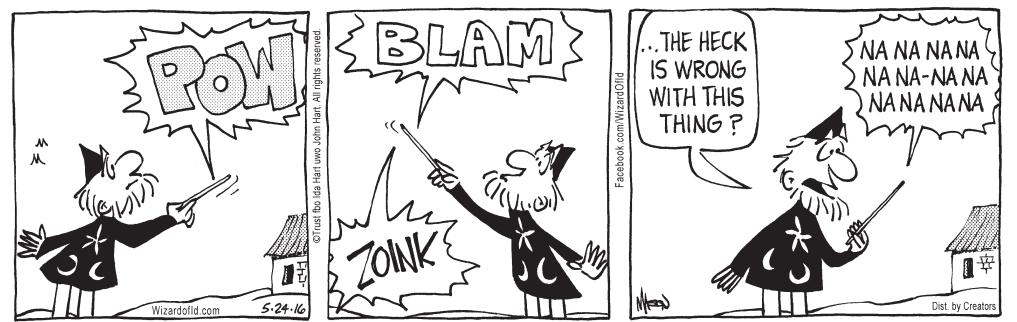
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