

Parents' fights distress teen

Dear Annie: I am 13 years old. My parents have been fighting for as long as I can remember. It's not physical, but it is loud, sarcastic and rude, and they don't seem to notice that it affects me, as well as my older siblings. They fight every night, usually about bills, and it seems to be getting worse.

My father is really hard to get along with, and he is a huge control freak and really cheap with money. My mother is the opposite about money, and she spends a lot. My dad is usually the one who starts the fights.

Neither of them thinks there is a problem, but there is. Even after 20 years of being married, they just can't get along. I don't know what to do, Annie. They won't listen to me, they won't stop screaming at each other, and every single thing we do as a family ends with them fighting. — *Distressed Daughter*

Dear Distressed: Your parents have fallen into a pattern of behavior that has been going on for so long that they no longer realize how detrimental it is to their marriage and to their children. We won't get into the likely reasons for the constant bickering, but we can tell you that in order

Annie's Mailbox

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to change this behavior, they probably need third-party intervention, meaning a counselor or clergyman. Since they won't listen to you, please enlist the help of a trusted adult — a grandparent, aunt, uncle or a close family friend. Even your school counselor or a favorite teacher might be able to get through to your parents, so they can recognize how damaging such behavior is for those of you who witness it. And talking to one of these adults will also help you find some emotional support for yourself.

Dear Annie: In the past three years, there have been two deaths in our neighborhood. Both times, I made food for the families. One was a casserole and the other was a full meal, soup to nuts.

Neither time was the food acknowledged with a note or a

thank-you card. I was taught that you send thank-you cards for food received after a funeral. Is this not a Southern custom? Do I continue giving my time and effort, knowing it will not be appreciated or acknowledged? — *Southern Belle*

Dear Belle: Sending thank-you notes for kindnesses after a funeral is not limited to any particular region. It is expected and proper everywhere. People sometimes think that mourners are exempt from such niceties, but this is what friends are for — to help write notes to those people who made meals, sent flowers or did other such things. (And no, it doesn't matter how many casseroles one receives or wants. You thank the giver regardless.)

Please don't stop making casseroles. Our only suggestions would be to make sure they can be frozen, and to put them in disposable containers so the family isn't obligated to wash and return the dish. We are certain the food was appreciated, even though the neighbors may have been overwhelmed at the time. On their behalf, we'd like to thank you and all the other thoughtful people who care enough to reach out to others in times of need.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Your body is starting to show the benefits of your health and fitness efforts, and this will inspire you to do even better. Sure, this is work, but your happy spirit makes any attention you put on feeling better a joy.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Your friends will want to hang out at your place. This is where the acceptance and sense of belonging is, after all. They can feel it best in your kitchen, and you'll dream up something delicious to add to that.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21): You're all about proliferating ideas and giving sparkling communication. It's an attractive style. Even quiet and reserved people will find themselves drawn out by your charms.

CANCER (June 22-July 22): The resources are there, but they are not apparent. They are like underwater springs, and you'll have to apply your intuition to divine your way to the good stuff, like the ancients who used a sacred stick to find water underground.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): The orphans and strays will be attracted to your innate generosity, and perhaps you'll care for them by entertaining them and impressing them, taking risks that leave them gasping in awe.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Location matters — specifically, the flow of energy through a location. Set it up so that you can move easily through the tasks that keep your life rolling along. Bad organization brings with it some unnecessary stress.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): When loss, change or stress takes someone you love out of his or her normal coping pattern, you're there to give reassurance. The stability of your love can be counted on when other things can't be.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): Effectively walk through the good and bad of the day and you'll grow. When things seem to be turning in a negative direction, you can avoid getting caught in the downward spiral by keeping your hands and attention to yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Being there to celebrate the success of a loved one makes you feel connected. You have your own successes, which is why you can so easily relate and do it up in the memorable way everyone enjoys.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): A past predicament could have been altered had you made different choices, but most of it was out of your control. Moving forward, you'll continue to put yourself in a better and more powerful position.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): If you're not sure what matters, give the whole issue of your priorities about 15 silent, thoughtful minutes. Nothing is too hard for you to figure out when you allow the mental space and focus for that.

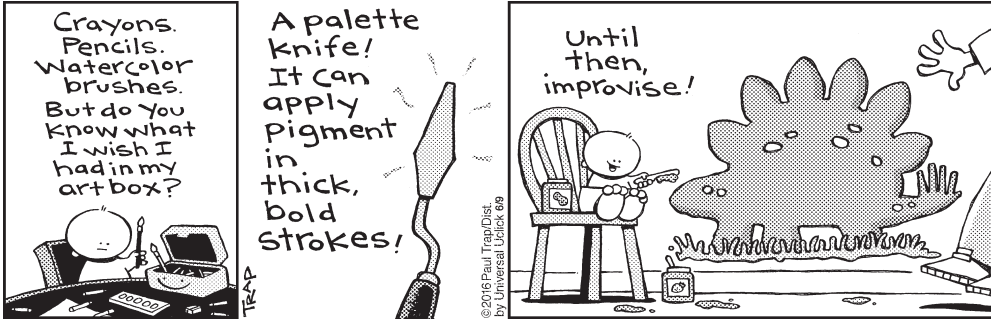
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): You'll make your choice. A weaker person would make no decisions, thereby believing that he or she has escaped all responsibility. It doesn't work that way. Not deciding is a decision, too, and therefore culpable.

FRIDAY'S BIRTHDAY (June 10): You're not aiming to gain power, just trying to be more effective. In dedicating yourself to that you will gain power, momentum, better connections and a more energizing emotional palette, too. Your project will cross the finish line in August and win an award in September. Family expansion happens in December. Sagittarius and Aquarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 20, 27, 39 and 11.

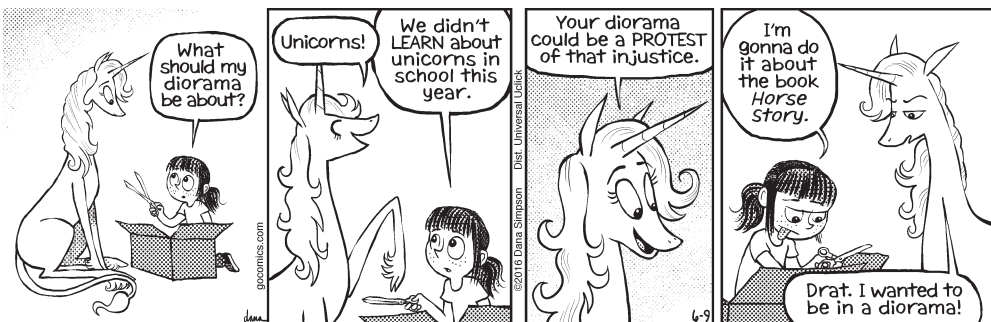
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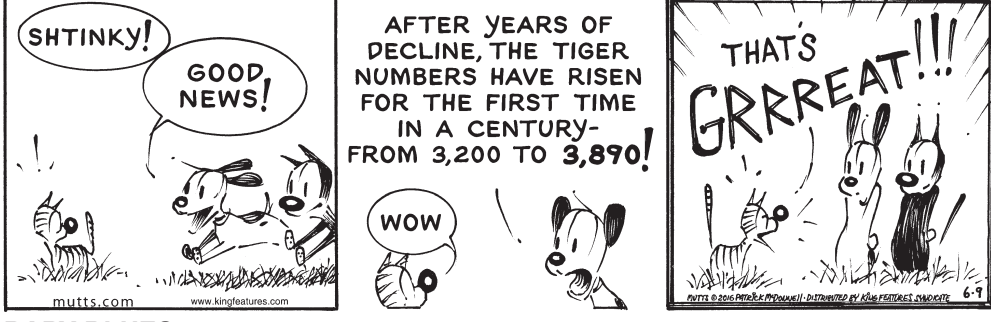
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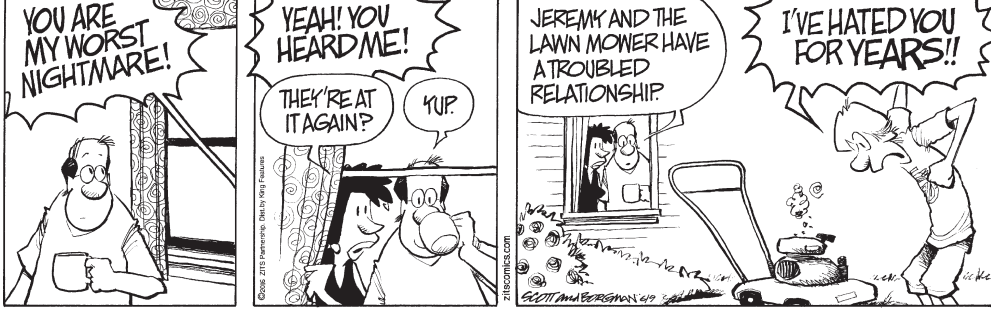
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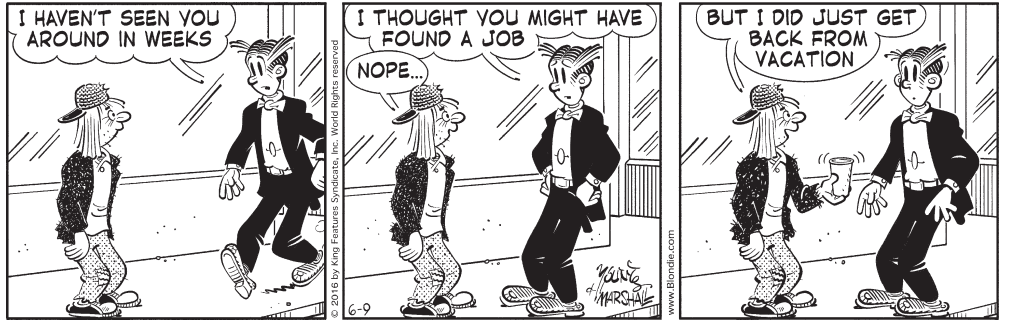
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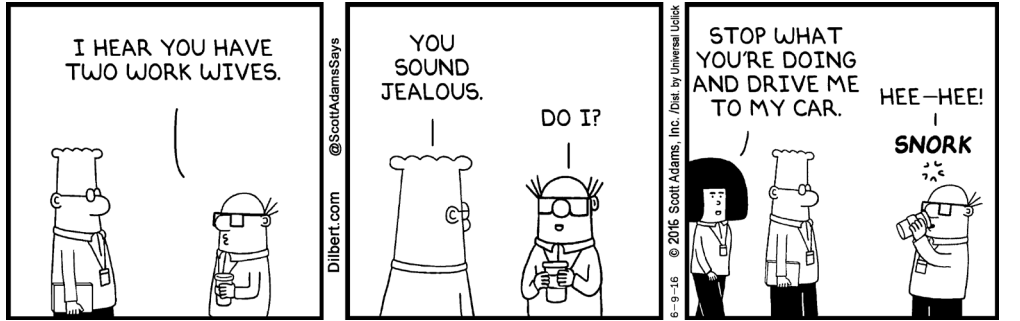
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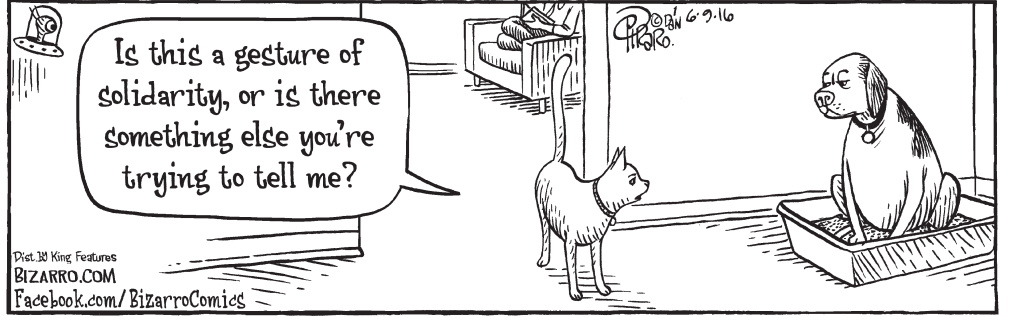
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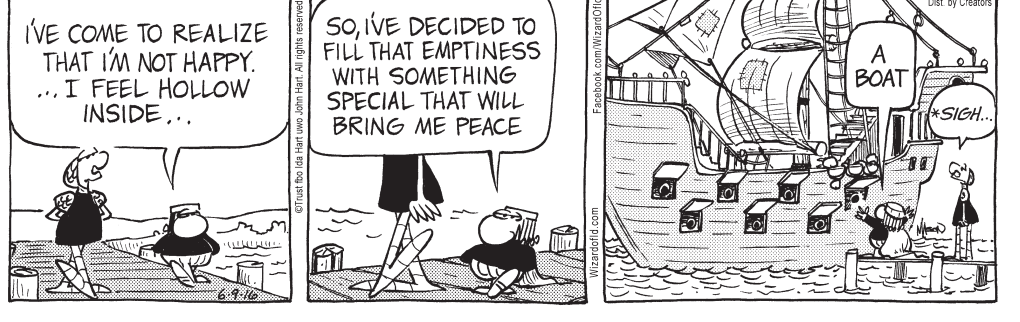
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