

Wedding guest worries

Dear Annie

Dear Annie: My fiancée and I are planning our wedding, which is next spring. We're so excited to share the day with our loved ones, and we've both been pleasantly surprised by how stress-free the planning process has been so far. But we've run into a conundrum while working on our list of invitees.

Two of our friends, "Alex" and "Mary," split up about a year and a half ago. They had been together for seven years, and it was an unhealthy, codependent relationship, so when the breakup finally happened, it was a mess. Mary was devastated. Alex was, admittedly, pretty insensitive about it.

Alex has moved on and been dating someone else for about a year. Mary hasn't dated anyone since the breakup and still holds a lot of bitterness against Alex. We were at a friend's dinner party a few months ago, and Mary stormed out when Alex showed up with the new girlfriend. If she hears that any of us have been in contact with him, she goes on a rant about how much of a "scumbag" he is.

My fiancée and I really don't want to deal with any drama on our wedding day, but we want to invite Alex. How should we handle this?
—Cold Feet About Hothead



By Annie Lane

Creators Syndicate Inc.

I have recently noticed a change in her behavior when she reacts to something I have told her, and I am not sure what to do about it.

When I confide to her that I am worried about a certain situation or if I am just venting about something that happened to me that day, she is very quick to either try to solve the problem for me or say something that minimizes my concern.

What I am looking for in these conversations is an empathetic friend with whom I can share frustrations or concerns. I am not looking for a solution.

Am I being too sensitive? — Not Heard in Nebraska

Dear Not Heard: We humans are hard-wired to be problem-solvers. And some people, have an especially hard time letting anything just be, thinking every problem might be fixed with the tap of their hammer.

It probably hasn't even occurred to your friend that she could simply listen without giving advice. So do point it out to her. When you just want to vent about something, begin with a disclaimer: "I'm not looking for advice. I just want to vent about this." If your setting that boundary would cause you to lose her as a friend, then she wasn't much of a friend to begin with.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Consider the importance of passing on a verbal legacy of positive stories. Those who hear of the strength and fortitude of earlier generations will be inspired to find greatness inside themselves, too.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). A relationship that has been at odds now has a good chance at aligning most auspiciously for both parties. Differences become less significant as you see ways to serve a mutual interest.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You want to be inspired. You want to be challenged. The person who can do this without thinking, flinching or worrying in the least how you'll react to the dare will kindle a mighty attraction in you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Don't forget about the stories common to your family or group. These verbal traditions, passed from generation to generation, communicate the shared values of the group, which include strength and commitment.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The natural drive is to relieve tension. That's why some people can't resist popping the bubble wrap. However, it would be a mistake, and a missed opportunity, to let the tension out of a relationship too soon.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). In most of life's deep questions, the answers lie in the context. Because each situation is unique and complex, one quantifiable answer is never going to fit all. In a related story, be wary of vitamin salesmen and the like today.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You've so much energy to bring to an arrangement that finding another leader who matches your level will be nearly impossible. Assuming you're going to lead, now is the time to work on your vision.

Hone one that will be good for all.
SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You need to make an intellectual connection today even more than you did yesterday, otherwise you're going to feel alone on your thought plane and unsure about what to want next. Seek company with the like- and high-minded.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Scientist and statesman Ben Franklin called his habit of journaling the "constant felicity" of his life. You, too, will delight in keeping track of your life in this way, as it will give you clarity now and later, a lifeline to the past.

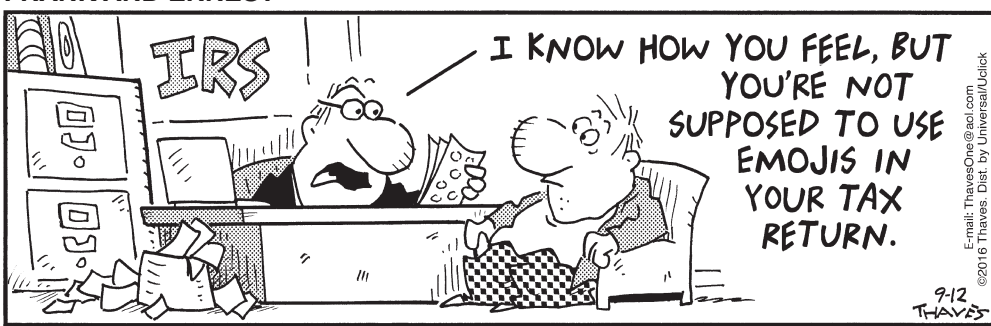
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your virtues are not being disputed, nor your contributions contested. And yet, you still feel opposed by someone who is supposed to be on your side. It's time to ask: What is this argument really about?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). If you got your way all of the time, life would become unbearably boring. Today will bring an encounter with someone who challenges you and makes you feel driven to earn respect and attention.

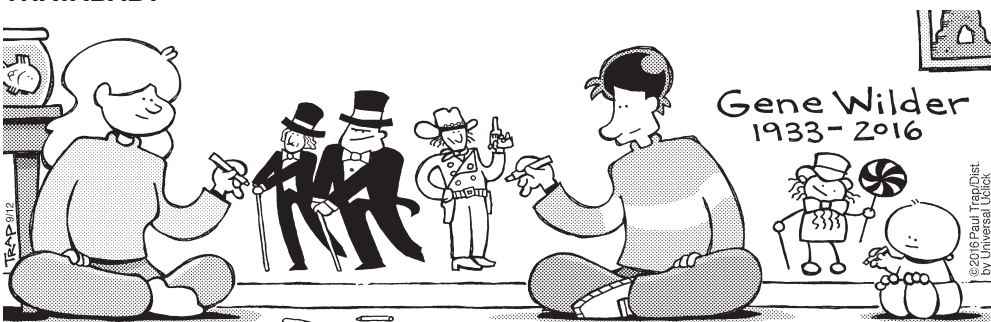
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You never seem to tire of trying to make life better for the ones you love. Their happiness is the basis for yours. That person who finds it easy to get and stay happy is the golden gift in your life.

TUESDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Sept. 13). Even though the year is what you make it, there are certain drops of undeniable good fortune that keep your spirit growing strong. The boundaries you establish will stand you in good stead in both your personal and business life. Make friendship a priority in November. You'll travel for love in April. Sagittarius and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 20, 3, 19, 44 and 6.

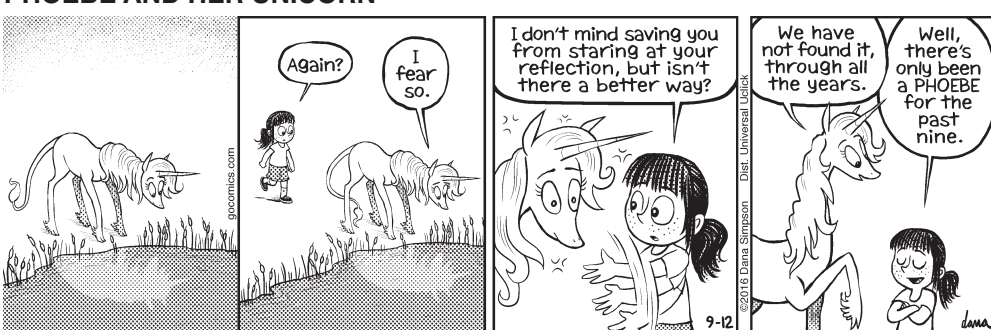
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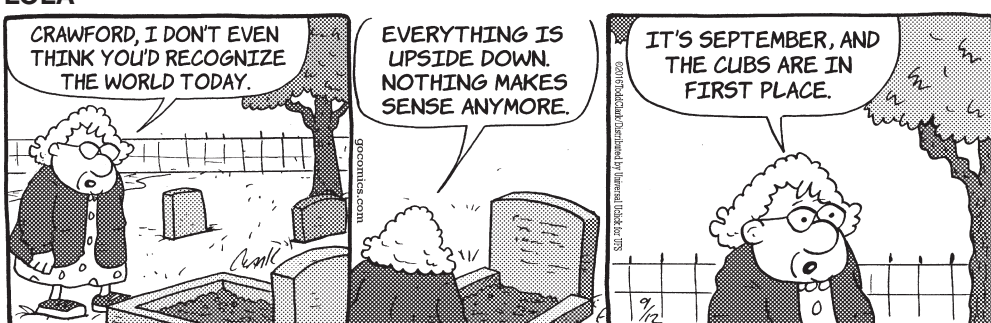
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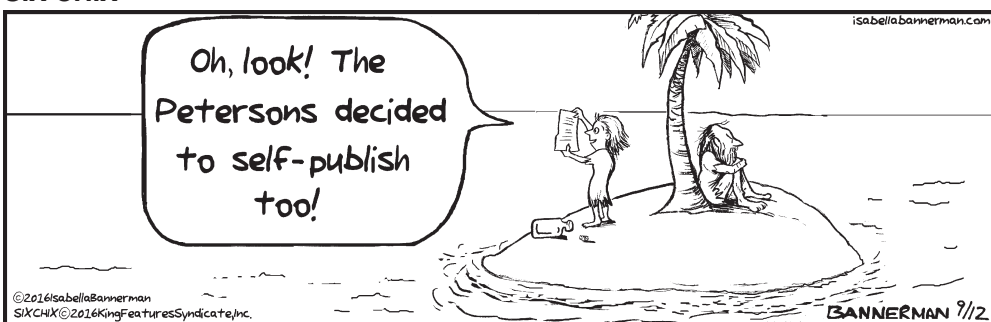
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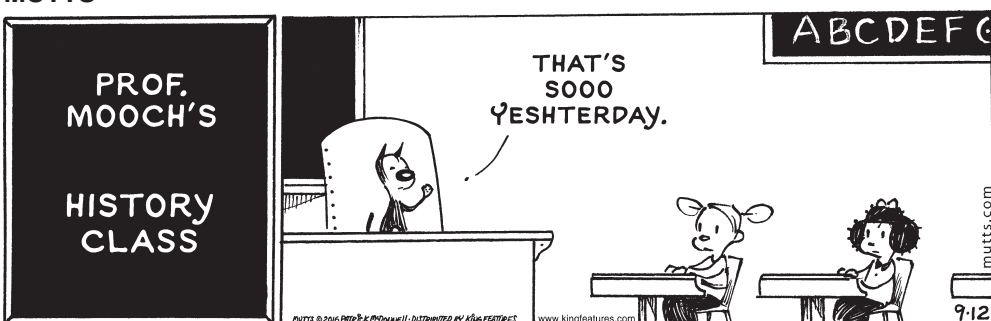
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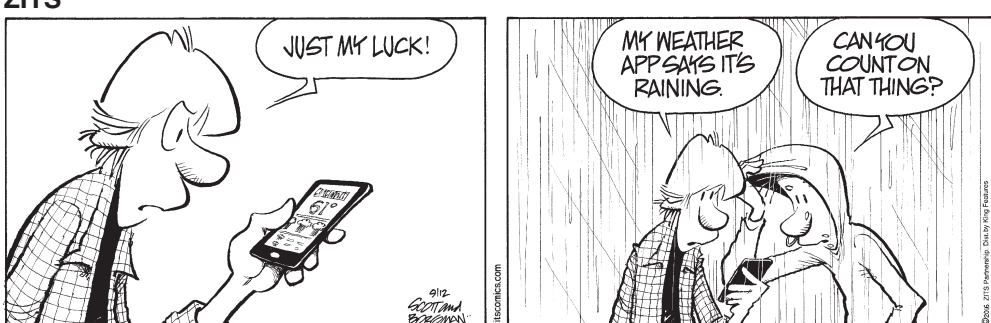
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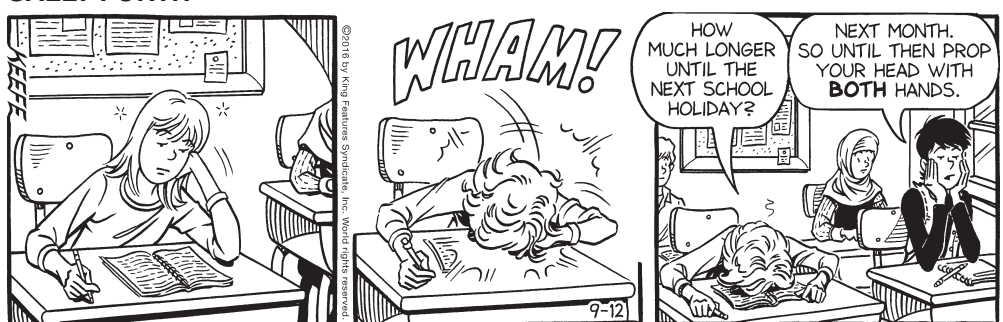
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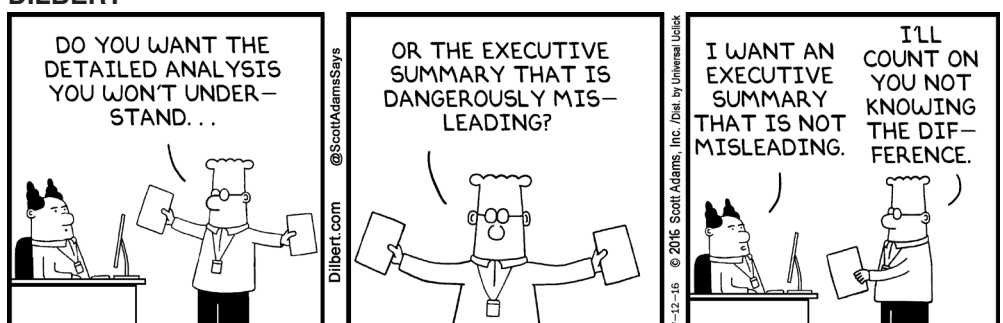
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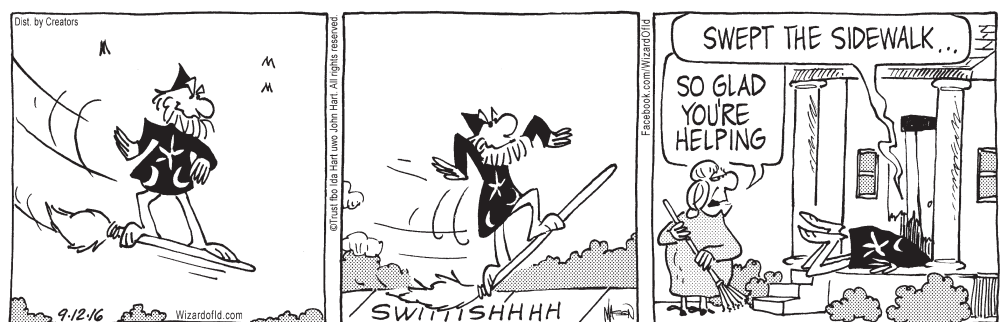
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