

Liking the independent life

Dear Annie: I moved out and started living on my own several years ago, and I have fallen in love with living independently. However, over the years, my parents' insistence that I move back near home has increased. Despite being only an hour away by plane (about 300 miles), they insist that I "need to be within driving distance in case anything happens."

My parents are both still working and by no means need to be cared for. If they do need to be cared for when they're older, I will probably move back closer to them. I'm an only child.

But right now, the guilt tripping is getting out of hand, and it makes me enjoy my phone calls with them less. Lately, I don't feel like calling them much, but that bums me out, too. How do I let my parents know that I need to be on my own without hurting their feelings? — *Child Forever*

Dear Child: As annoying as it might be, you will always be their little girl, and I'm sure

they are just missing you. Don't let them make you feel guilty. You might point out to them that they did such a great job raising you that you have the self-confidence to live independently and start your own life. You're

only 300 miles away — which, by the way, is driving distance — so perhaps plan a few more trips home this year. And who knows? If you decide to have kids someday, you might want to be close to home so Grandma and Grandpa can help with baby-sitting.

Dear Annie: This is in response to last month's letter from "Dog Lover," who wants to get another dog but can't because his wife has refused. I can understand the wife's position. I have been married for over 53 years and have had many cats and dogs as pets in the household. Granted, I have been the one to bring them home, but I have also been the one who has done all the caretaking. My animals have always been trained and well-treated. My husband has enjoyed them

all but has never put the time in. I have to do the work necessary to have a healthy, happy pet.

A dog is like a child. Someone has to train it (which most people don't even know how to do) feed it, give it quality time, clean up after it, take it to see a doctor, be prepared to expend large amounts of money on it if necessary, groom it, keep it clean and, most of all, love it like a family member.

Many people get pets and then, after a while, totally drop the ball, ignoring or even abusing it. Then it's off to the pound or thrown out of a car on a back road.

I suggest that this man volunteer at a shelter. When the right animal comes along, he can invite his wife to meet it, and they can decide together whether they want the responsibility of a pet and discuss who would be responsible for what. If they decide together it's the right thing to do for them, then they can give a needy furry friend a home.

All my pets have been rescue animals, and they have all been wonderful family pets. — *Mary*



Annie Lane
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Face and process your emotions in a controlled, safe environment — home alone, writing in a diary or hitting the pillow or the punching bag. This will prevent your feelings from coming out in uncontrollable ways.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You feel nervous around certain people. Maybe it's not as cute as it is in the movies. Maybe your body is really trying to tell you something about the dynamics of the relationship. Maybe your body is saying, "Run!"

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). When there's no clear path, you either make one or turn around and go home. Much will depend on how important it is to you and yours that you reach the destination you had in mind.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Your worth isn't tied to another person, no matter who — no matter how powerful — that person might be. Seize the opportunity to assert your independence, if only to prove to yourself that you're whole on your own.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The performer in you comes with a thicker skin than most — part of the package deal. Because of this, you don't realize how delicate some people's feelings really are — something to be extremely aware of today.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Of course you want fun; who doesn't? But letting yourself have it whenever you want it is a recipe for weakness. Like a good parent, gently remind your inner child of the rewards for sticking to the job at hand until it's done.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). To have a vendetta in your heart can be a very motivating and positive force if used correctly. The "I'll show you" energy is powerful. Just note: No one ever "showed

you" by making bad, self-destructive choices.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's not always the case, but today things will work when they're right and they won't work when they're not right. Therefore, don't spend a lot of energy on trying to make something work when it's just not clicking in. Move along.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're in a mood to ignore what you need to do, but the fact that you need to do it doesn't go away. Remember why. Remind yourself of the end goal. Want harder, and the motivation will come.

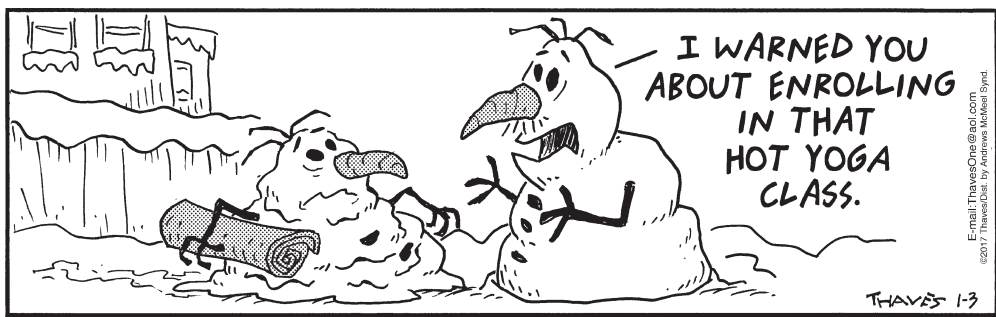
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The silliness and absurdities of life don't get past you. Making someone laugh will be your specialty today, and it will make you happy to know you spread gales of joy across the heart of another.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). True, there's much you have to fix and more you have to do, but don't focus there if you can help it. Focus instead on growing what's already going exceptionally well.

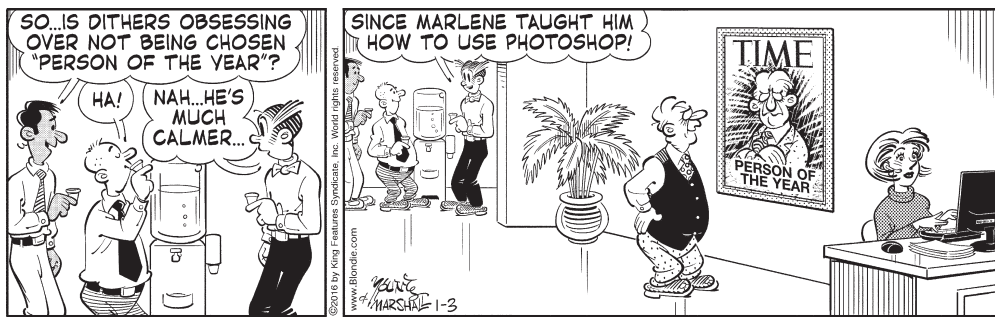
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You've been known to lose track of what makes you happy. When something makes you smile and laugh, make a note. It will help remind you to make more of these moments happen. Plus, when you look back, you'll relive the joy.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 4). Your path of compassion will lead you to care for needy individuals who turn out to give you exactly what you didn't know you needed and so much more. A reunion is in store. April begins a kind of treasure hunt. It's something else that makes your heart happy in March, but the extra money doesn't hurt, either. Scorpio and Cancer adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 20, 18, 3 and 22.

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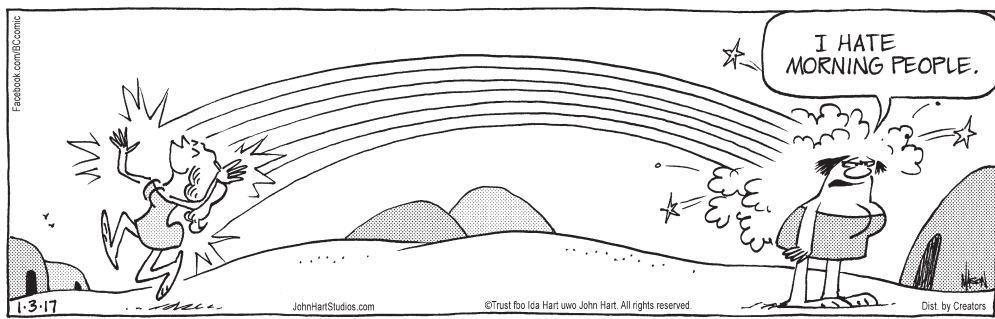
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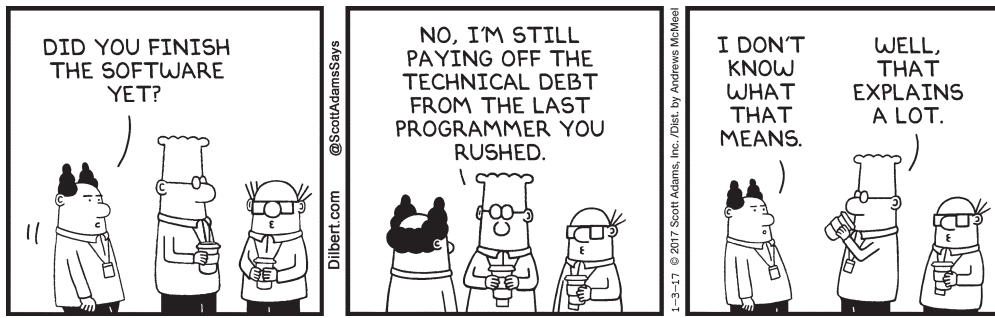
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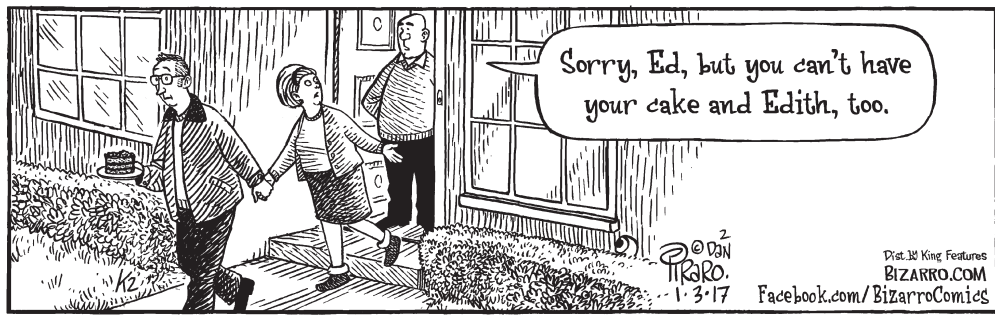
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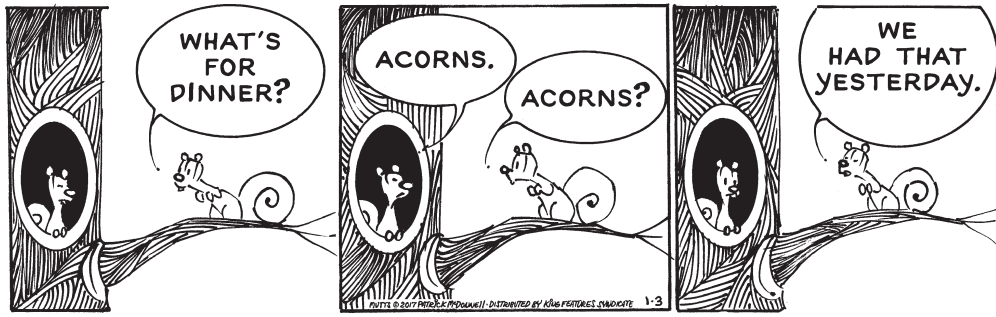
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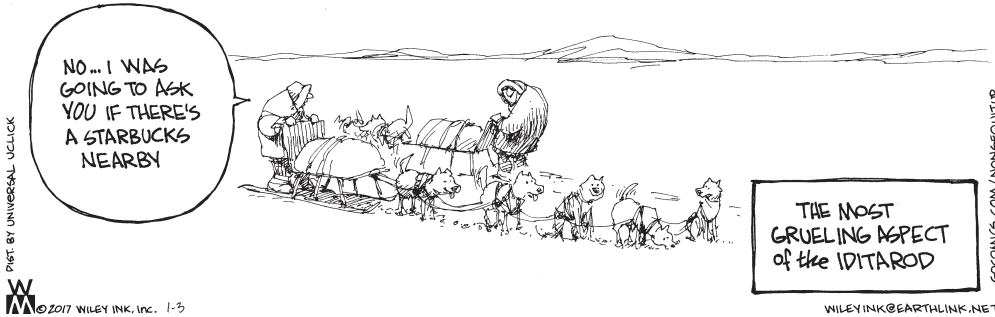
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