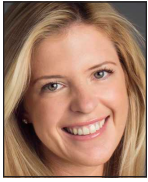


Coping with anxieties and OCD

Dear Annie: I'm a sophomore in high school. Lately, I've been having some anxiety. I can't quite pinpoint it, but it's this sense of impending doom, as if something very bad is about to happen. For example, I'll be lying in bed and suddenly I'll be overcome with dread, thinking the ceiling is about to collapse on me or just some vague bad thing is going to happen. Then I get this feeling that if I just complete some gesture — making the bed and then getting back in or turning the light on and then back off — I'll prevent the disaster from happening. It's bizarre, but I feel the need to complete these actions every time the anxiety flares up.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

So far, I have managed to keep these spastic episodes to myself, not even my close friends know. But lately, they're becoming more frequent and intense.

For instance, I work at a clothing store on the weekends, and the other day, I was ringing a woman up, removing the security tag off the blouse she was buying, when all of a sudden, that overwhelming feeling of panic crept up on me,

and I felt as if I absolutely had to put the security tag back on and then remove it again — four times. The woman kind of gave me a confused chuckle, and I tried to pretend it hadn't happened. It wasn't a big deal, but I worry I'll do more stuff like that in the future.

I know, of course, that my random gestures aren't going to stop something bad from happening. But knowing that doesn't make it any easier to suppress the urge. What's going on? Is this normal stress? Am I crazy? — *Feeling Neurotic*

Dear Neurotic: You're not crazy, but it sounds as if you have obsessive-compulsive disorder. The kind of "magical thinking" you describe — think of it as making up your own personal superstitions — attempts to provide some semblance of control over the external world. Many people who experience magical thinking were raised in chaotic, unstable households and developed obsessive-compulsive disorder as a coping mechanism. Visit the International OCD Foundation at <https://iocdf.org> for more information, and talk to your parents, a school coun-

selor and/or your physician about therapeutic treatments.

Dear Annie: This is in response to "Confused Mom," whose young daughter keeps being disappointed by her unreliable, mostly absent father.

When I kept having to tell my children that Dad was not coming, the kids were getting angry with me, as though it were my fault. I finally realized that their dad needed to be the one to tell them he would not be coming; this way, he would hear the disappointment in their voices. The children were so happy to see "Good Time Charlie" on the weekends, while I was the one who raised them on a daily basis, with all the rules. Both of my children turned out pretty darn well, and they still loved their father — but they understood that he was not a great father. He was only the man who had walked out of their lives when they were 5 and 7.

"Confused Mom," when your children get much older, they will realize who the good parent was, but I know it hurts to watch a child growing up with expectations and having her heart broken every time her father does not show up. My heart goes out to you.

— *Been There, Done That*

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). To develop a crush on someone who is unreachable, unknown or very distant is more or less common. To develop a crush on someone you're already in a committed relationship with is love at its finest.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Colors reflect. Sound echoes. You shine back at your love with distortions lovely and confusing, glints of sparkle and fading sunshine. It's not an accurate representation but a personal one — the only kind a person can give.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Why things end up where they do is a question you constantly have going in your mind today, partly because you don't want what you're working on to end up in the same way. You'll find out then plot your course differently.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The great prizes of the day are connected with your home and all that means to you. There's a spirit you cultivate there, and it's very much alive and generating energy.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). People will receive your creative output in a variety of ways, some that may please you, some that may offend. You really have no control over it. As a creative person, your job is to create and let go.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The part of your mind that's wrapped up in an endless, nagging to-do list is really bogging you down. Bottom line, if it can't be scheduled, it won't be done. Either put it on the calendar or cross it off and forget it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You'll find a new affinity for a relationship, interest or object you possess. It's like finding treasure in your

own pocket. The feeling of wealth costs nothing to you. Sweet felicity! **SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).** You will alternate between producing beautiful work and admiring the beautiful work of others. These tones are both so enjoyable and becoming on you. This is a good day.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Being too comfortable is disempowering. Agitation can be a favorable condition. Go deeper into your agitation. Let it move you to make a difference.

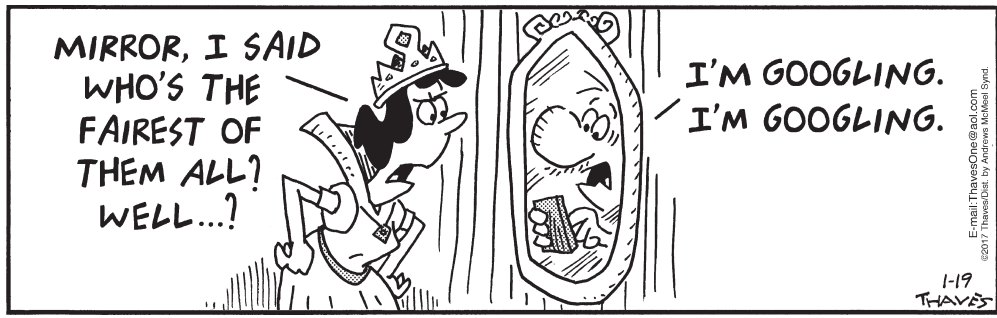
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). First place, second place — it's nice to get a medal, but really what matters more is doing the best you can with what you have. It's better to feel progress and not place than to win first place without feeling progress.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It's fine luck that you are not tempted by the same things that others in your group find irresistible. You will help the others focus and stick to what's positive and productive.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). As you bring order and tidiness to your home, you confront yourself, remember details of life, decide who you want to be, see who you are, and (bonus!) get a clean place to operate from.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 20). Inside you there are many places you haven't gone yet. The potential is shimmering, though you'll have a lot of self-control in this regard so the year will gently unfold for you. Relationships are your ticket to new lands inside and out. Financial rewards are best in February, April and July. Libra and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 29, 33, 10, 4 and 32.

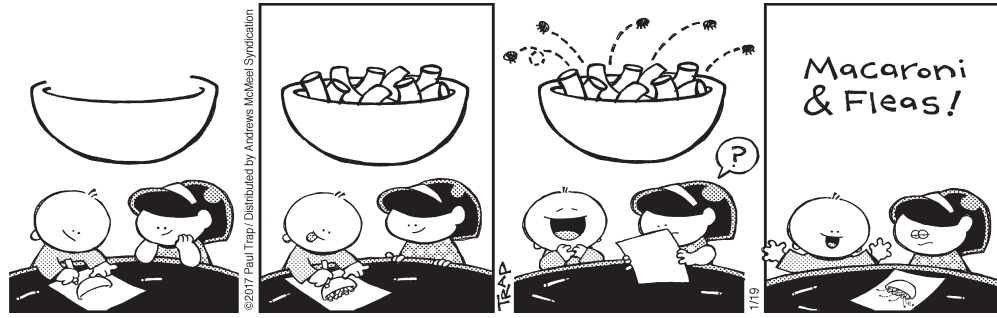
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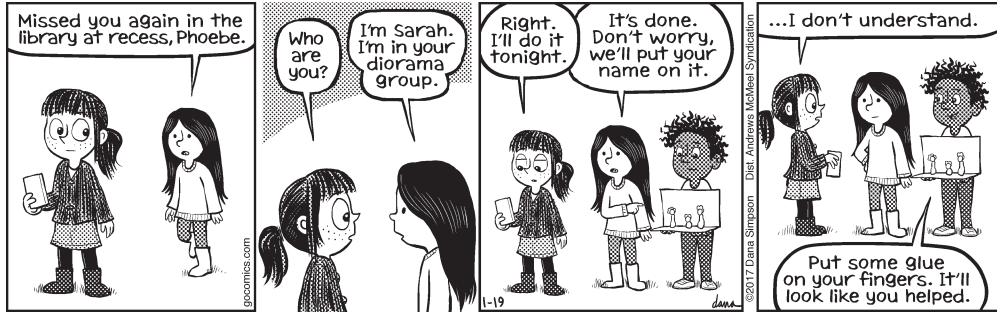
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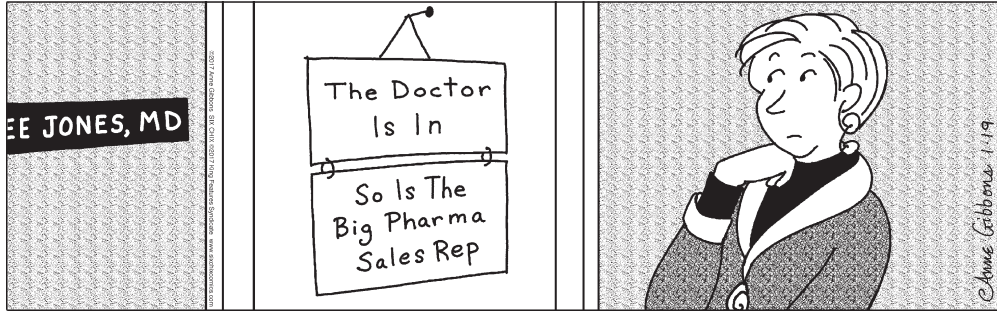
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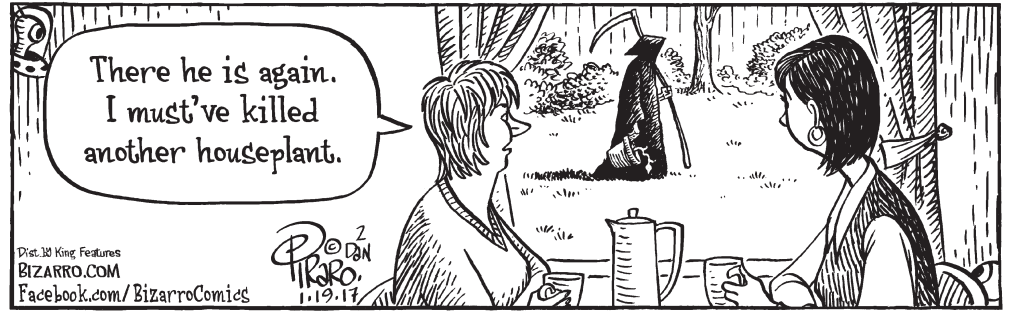
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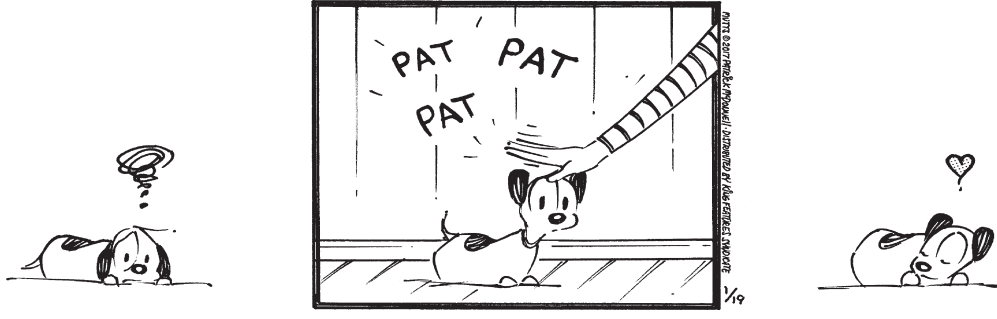
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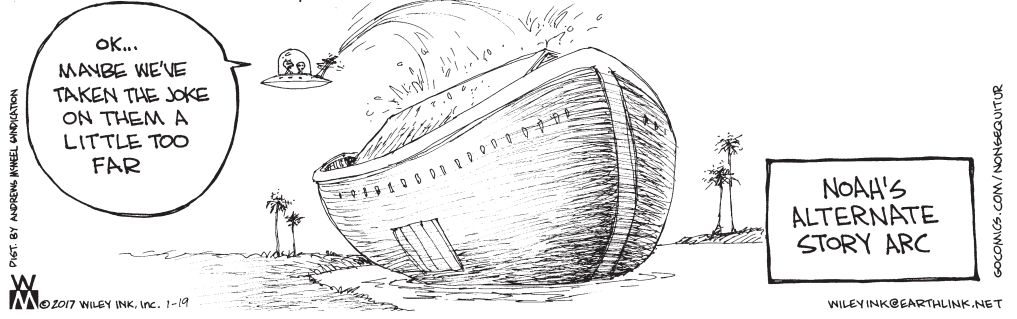
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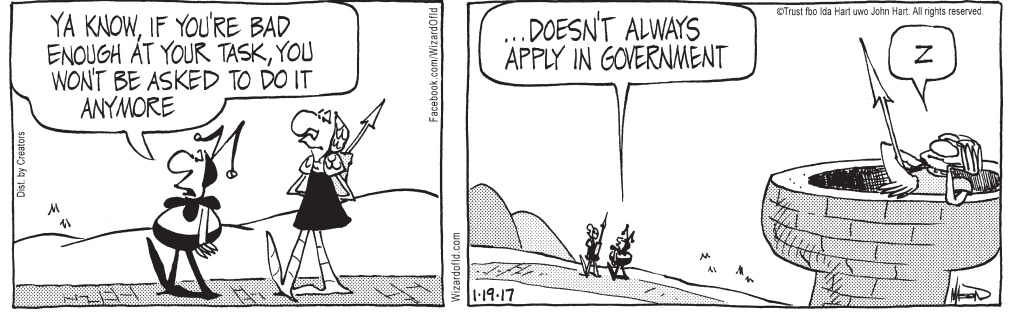
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