

Speech impediment impedes work

Dear Annie: I'm almost 19 years old, and I've had a speech problem ever since I could talk. When I was about 7, I started getting help to correct my speech, and I continued until I graduated high school. Around that time, I got a part-time job. I worked with a lot of customers, and a lot of times they would ask me whether I came from out of the country, because I sound as if I have an "English accent."

I've been asked so much that I've tried to take it as a compliment, but now that I have a new job working with customers full time, it's becoming more of a problem. It gets annoying, but with a customer service job, I cannot get angry with our customers. I talked with my parents about it, and they said that I just have to try to not have it get to me.

The problem is that because I am asked almost constantly, I've become very self-conscious. I try my best not to have my speech problem, but it's not something that I can fully control. I need

advice on how not to be fast to anger when asked about my "accent." Have any pointers to help me get through my day? — *Speech Problems in Pennsylvania*

Dear Speech: I'm printing your letter because you offer an invaluable perspective. I will now think twice before asking someone about an "accent," which might turn out to be an alienating and awkward question, as you've shown.

As for your getting through the day, focus on what you can control. You can't control what customers say, but you get to decide whether or not it bothers you. For what it's worth, I've found that meditation can work wonders to make all the annoying, stressful parts of daily life a little less so.

Dear Annie: Your suggestion to scroll down and hit "unsubscribe" on unwanted emails could result in your reader's being hacked. My computer guru tells me to first check the email address of where it originated to make sure it is not spam (i.e., from a malicious or fraudulent

sender, as opposed to a vendor whose mailing list you're actually on). Hitting "unsubscribe" tells the sender there is someone working that email address.

Any emails not wanted should be blocked instead so they go into the junk email folder. Any emails wanted can be sorted by going to the search box at the top and putting in the name or subject. That will reduce the list of emails to be sorted through.

I am sure other readers have more suggestions. — *Full Inbox, Too*

Dear Full: Right you are. Here's another.

Dear Annie: Once "Inbox Infinity," who has 6,972 unread emails, clears out her inbox and prevents future floods, she should set up one account for friends and family only and a second account for commercial transactions and shopping. The second account would be disposable, so if it got overwhelming or were spammed or hacked, she could close it easily and start a new one. We have done this for years with great success. — *Jean in Florida*

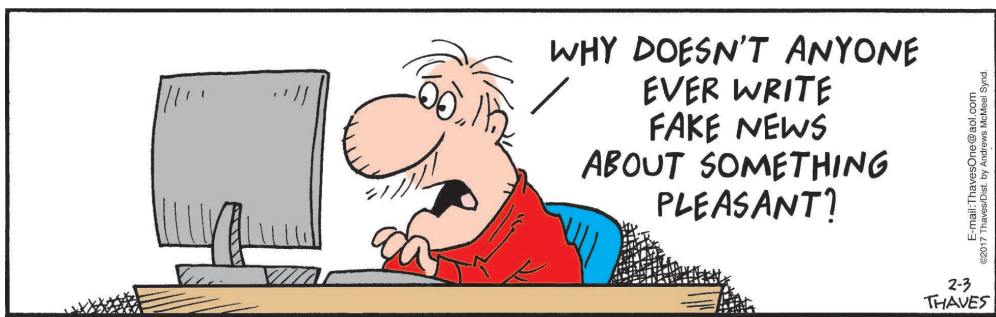
Dear Jean: That's a useful tip. Divide and conquer.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

FRANK AND ERNEST



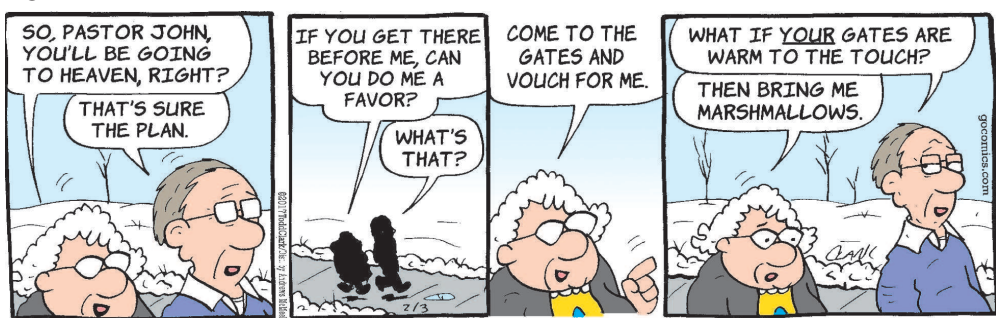
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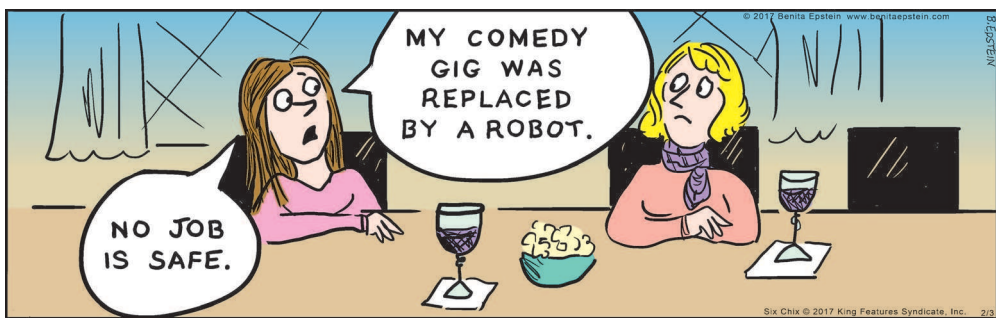
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LOLA



SIX CHIX



MUTTS



BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're not here to show anyone you're better; you're here to be better. The impression you make matters a lot less to you than the work you're committed to.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). When the conversation is over, let it be over. Don't replay it in your head. Anything you replay will be distorted. You have a much better effect when you don't worry so much about what exactly it is.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Love and life lessons can be learned through difficulty or ease. Both are valid methods of education, though lessons of hardship tend to be learned faster and deeper. Mankind is wired this way.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Warren Buffett famously stated, "Our investment philosophy borders on lethargy." Apply it to your energetic investments today, because there's much drifting across the radar that's not worth trifling over.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Life isn't a contest, and that goes double for love. If someone is trying to cast you as a competitor in what could or should be a non-competitive arena, your best bet is to opt out of the game.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're not imagining it: The one who keeps paying special attention to you is smitten. It's likely that you're not sure how you feel about this but the days to come will make it clearer.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). With your immense powers of creativity you will create scenarios in which you can shine. This is especially effective on the social front; friends love your brand of fun.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your story is more interesting than you think and is packed with valuable information and inspiration. How and when you share it will be important. Don't wing it. Work on it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You will fail many times before you will succeed. You can't get ready for the big leagues any other way except through trial and as many errors as it takes to learn the right way.

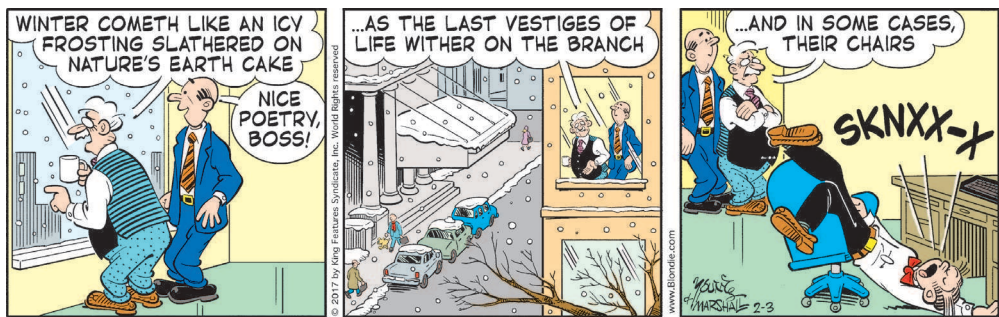
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Often we assume that the people we admire are somehow happier than us and they lead glamorous, problem-free lives. Nope, not true, not usually, anyway. In fact, maybe you're the lucky one.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Someone shows up to take the heat off of you. You'll be glad that the attention is flowing away from you, but this is not a reason for you to pack up and go. Stay and contribute. You'll learn something.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Craft your communication to present your ideas and identity in the best light. Pushing "send" takes a fraction of a second, but the consequences can be lasting.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 4). You will grow in strength, popularity and vitality as you spend the bulk of your time repeating successful actions hanging around the people who make you thrive. Your family grows in March. May brings new avenues for learning and earning. July is a second chance at an old path. Things have changed. Cancer and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 40, 7, 28 and 19.

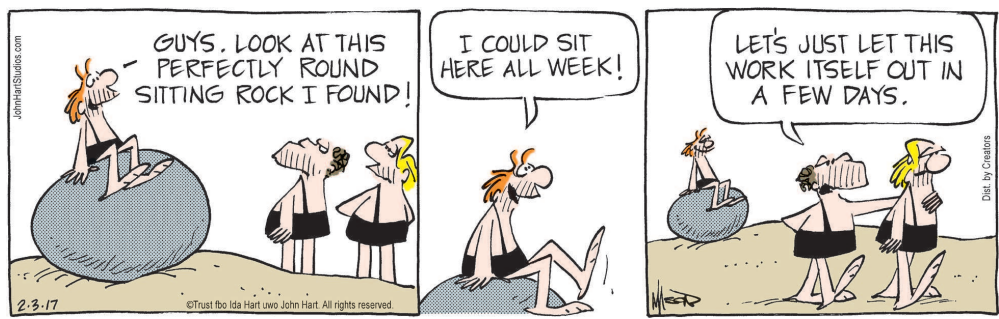
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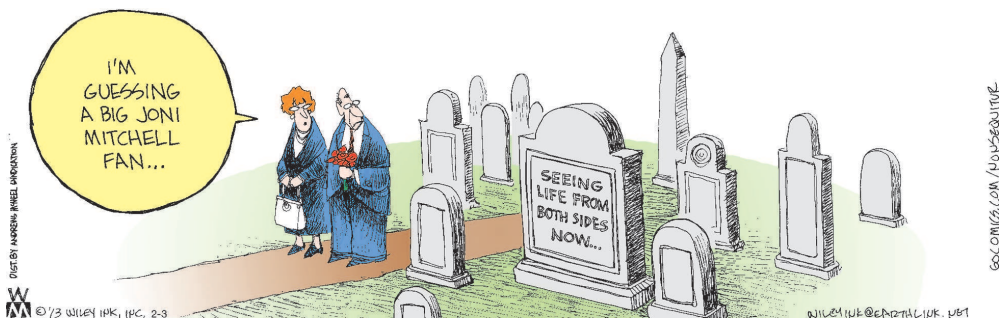
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BIZARRO



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WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

