

Dealing with debilitating grief

Dear Annie: I am a 69-year-old man who, until now, only read your column periodically. Each time I read your advice to someone, I would say to myself, "Hmm, that's really good advice." I never ever thought that I would need to write to you. Well, now I am eating those words.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

In late August, I lost the most important person in my life to inoperable pancreatic cancer. My wife was diagnosed in June 2014, and despite the fact that the cancer spread to three additional organs, she fought back. This amazing woman refused to let the cancer win. She went on with her life, and even though she received chemo and radiation therapy on a regular basis, as well as numerous medications, she refused to give in.

I drove her to every doctor's appointment and every radiation and chemotherapy appointment, as well as all over the country as we searched for clinical trials. However, after two-plus years, her fragile body could fight no longer, and she died in my arms.

is that I am a total mess. Friends and family are calling me to come to dinner. I don't want to be around people as I grieve; I prefer to be alone all of the time. Our house is just as it was on the day she died because I simply can't part with her things at this time. Yet seeing these things sends me into pain and sobbing sessions that may last for hours. I have completely lost faith in everything, and I don't trust professionals. I have joined several grief support groups, but I do not find solace in them yet.

My wife and I spent 50 years of our lives together. She was my best friend, my soul mate and my only love. Without her, I feel empty and incomplete. Although people keep telling me that things eventually will get better, I have my doubts. I am trying to take care of myself and to do the things I believe she would want me to do if she were still alive. The only thing I really have difficulty doing is sleeping. I would appreciate any advice you can offer. — Neil

Dear Neil: I know that nothing I say can reduce the enormity of

your loss — that my response may come across as cliched or maybe even a little hollow — because in the face of such grief, words look ridiculous and small. Still, I must say, with all of my heart, that I am so sorry for your loss.

In these times of deep grief, turn to the memories you and your wife shared. Let them warm you through the night like a blanket. They are eternal. No one can ever take those away from you. Your wife lives on in your heart. Let her strength help you through this.

Be patient with yourself and permit yourself to grieve as long and as deeply as you need. But it sounds as if your wife was an amazing fighter, and she would want you to fight — to be strong, to write as much joy and happiness out of life as you possibly can, every single glorious day on this earth.

You are blessed to have friends and family who want to lift you up. When you are ready, you will let them. One day, someone close to you will find himself in this same unfathomable situation, and your friendship will be his saving grace. Think how proud your wife would be to see you spread that love.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). For a purpose to be worthy of you it must force you to do new things that stretch you uncomfortably. Another good sign is if the aim causes you to join with others to accomplish what you can't do alone.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Don't expect each step forward to advance your interests, because it won't work that way. Still, if you're moving, you're learning — and that's what counts.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The way to make this day count for something is to skip past the petty dramas that burble up in the early day. Forgive quickly and be equally quick to admit your own wrongdoing so you can sail on.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Later you'll get with the program, but you're in a mood to forget about it today. Your creativity will be strengthened by a lackadaisical attitude toward rules and structure.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Your mood: provocative. Your role: troublemaker. Your main asset: a feisty spirit. Your talent: saying the funny kind of thing that makes people wonder whether or not you're really kidding.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). There's no point to staying on point. Loosen up and allow yourself to drift to new topics, people, moods, states of mind. Make it count; record your findings along the way.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It's not enough to be in agreement with the plan. Unless you're totally enthusiastic about it, opt out now. Otherwise you'll be along for a mild and rather joyless ride.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). One of the

fastest ways to excitement is to sidle up to the one with the interesting life and make a new friend. You'll soon be included in adventures you wouldn't have known about if you hadn't reached out.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The new styles don't always appeal to you. But when you start liking what you see, it's a sign that it's for you. Anyway, it will be fun to attend to your image again and bring it up to date.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Winning isn't always important to you, but today it will be. To win, you don't have to be the best in the world; you just have to be the best in the race. That will be easier when you chose the right race.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Self-restraint doesn't have to be equated with a somber tone. Discipline doesn't have to dampen your spirit. If anything, people experience your vibrancy because there is less to interfere with it.

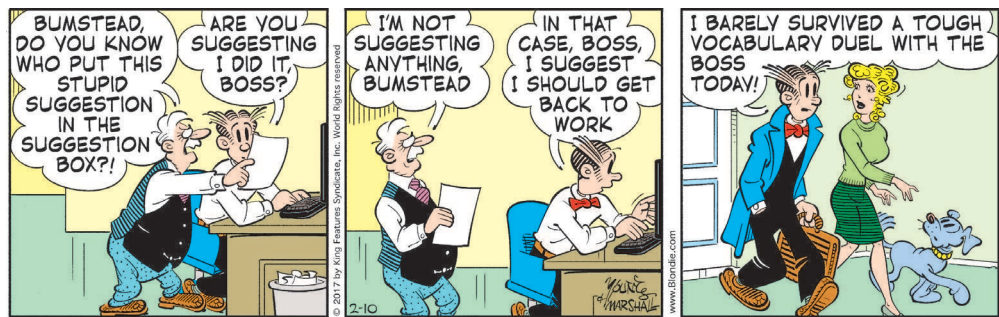
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You have a soft spot for those going through emotional turmoil, because you've been there. Wallowing, reflecting and examining each bit won't help in the least right now. Take a hand and lead the way to action.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 11). You're getting better at helping yourself succeed, and you'll see the proof of that before March is over. Family togetherness and adventuring will be a strong theme this year. May is your chance at a position; make sure you like the work that goes along with the title before you say yes. Love vows in July. Leo and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 6, 49, 32, 11 and 28.

FRANK AND ERNEST



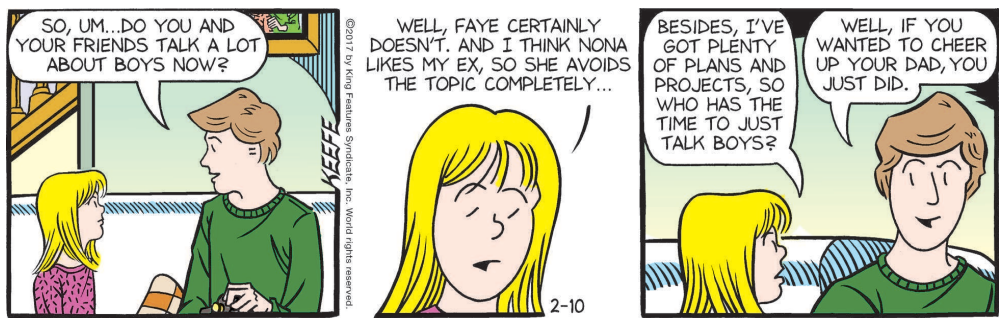
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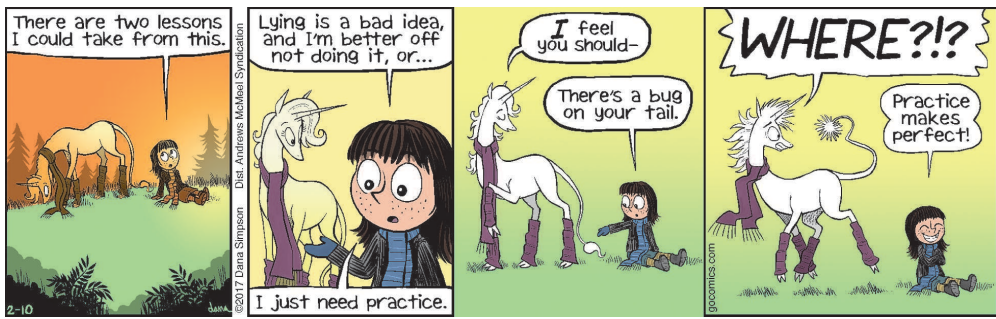
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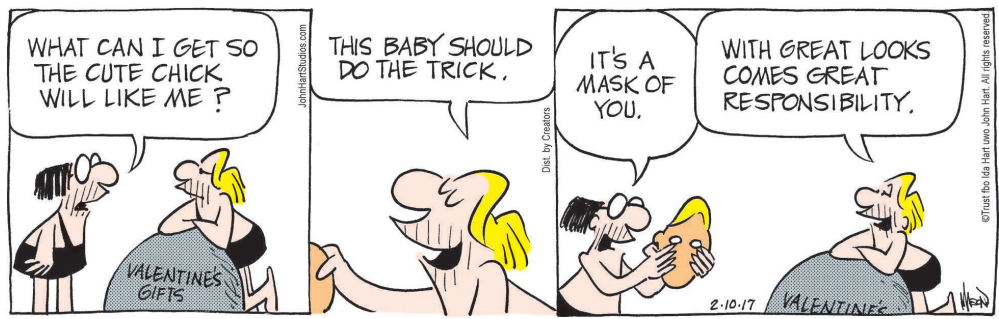
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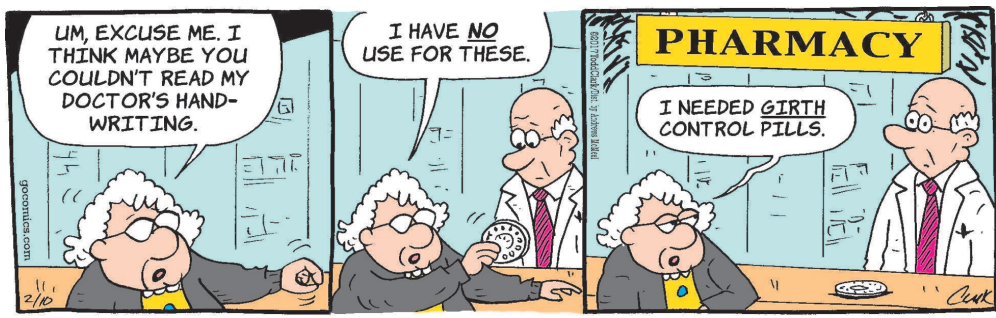
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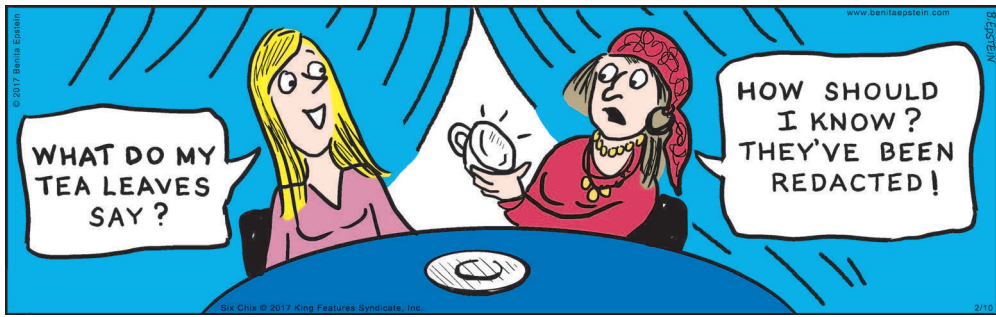
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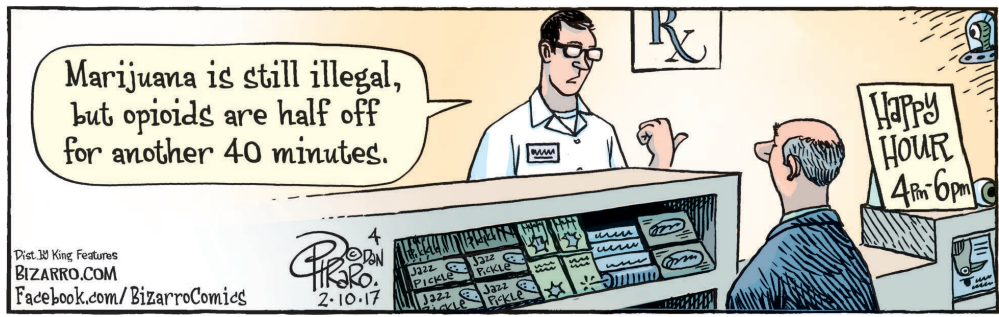
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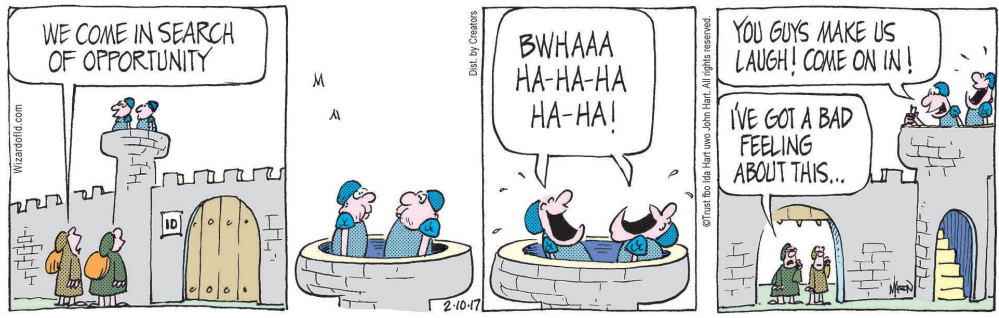
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