

Friend just won't shut up

Dear Annie: I have a friend of over 20 years who has become such a motormouth that I have begun to avoid contact. She talks nonstop. If I call her, she immediately launches into a marathon monologue, and trying to break in with a comment doesn't work. I once decided to let her talk until she ran out of things to say. Five hours later, she was still talking without coming up for air, and I said I had to go somewhere and hung up.

I try to tell her this, but she just gets angry. I know that other people and even some her family members have distanced themselves because of this. I hate to drop her, but I see no other solution. — *Frustrated Friend*

Dear Frustrated: Because you said she's "become" a motormouth, I'm assuming she hasn't always been one. Try to dig deeper when you can get a word in edgewise; she has to breathe at some point. Try to see whether there are some underlying issues. Some people talk excessively as a way of

suppressing or avoiding bothersome thoughts or feelings.

Others talk excessively simply because they think everyone will be fascinated by their stories or because they feel they're not really being heard. You can

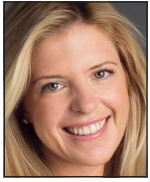
try setting time limits on your conversations. ("I'd like to talk, but I only have 10 minutes for this call. Then I need to get back to work.") You might also try interrupting her, summarizing to her what you've understood so far and then leading that thought toward a conclusion. Ultimately, set whatever boundaries you need, and don't feel guilty. Our time on this earth is precious, and no one should have to sit through a five-hour marathon monologue. In that time, you could have run an actual marathon.

Dear Annie: I'd like to respond to "Feeling So Bad," the woman who was upset that her friend "Nancy" had passed away and the friend's husband, "Bill," hadn't filled her in. Her husband, according to the writer, limited visits to his

wife during her terminal illness. My wife, too, was diagnosed with a terminal and rare cancer. She, for some reason, felt embarrassment and shame, which I since have learned is completely normal. My wife didn't want to be talked about, didn't want to be seen with a wig or a scarf around her bald head and so forth. My orders from her were that no one was allowed to visit or drop by at all. I did just as she said because meeting her needs during this awful time was more important to me (and to her) than worrying about our neighbors and friends. Indeed, other than our trips to and from treatment, she shut herself in the house. "Feeling So Bad" need not be upset. I suspect that "Nancy" told "Bill" that she wanted to deal with her sickness in her own way. I've learned that there is no right or wrong way to deal with the process of death. — *B.R.*

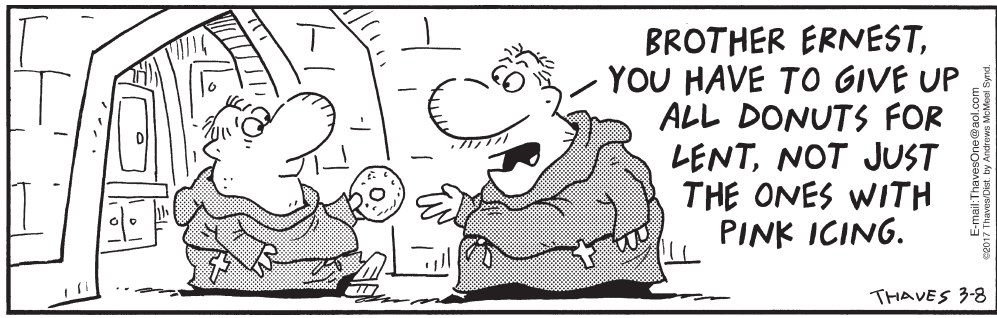
Dear B.R.: I appreciate hearing the perspective of someone who has such a personal experience with this issue, and it may bring "Feeling So Bad" some peace, too. Thank you for sharing.

DEAR ANNIE

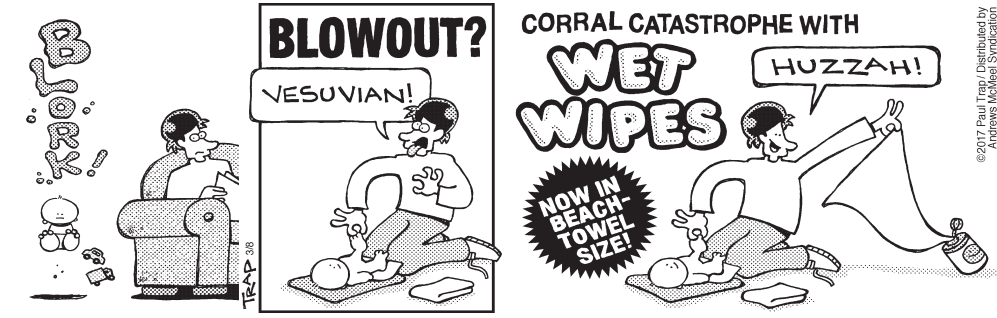


Annie Lane
Creators
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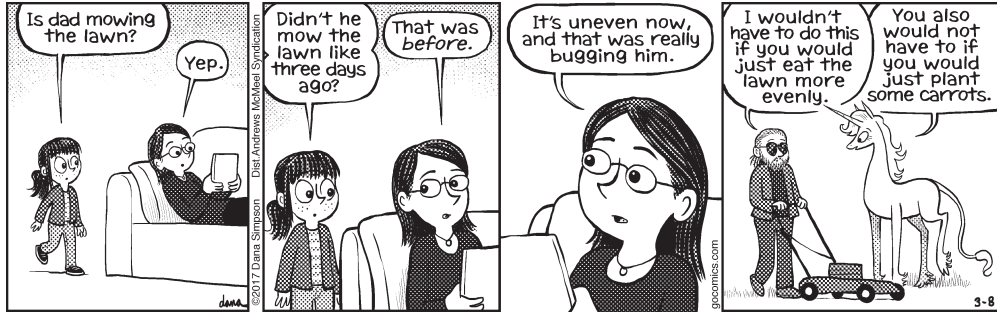
FRANK AND ERNEST



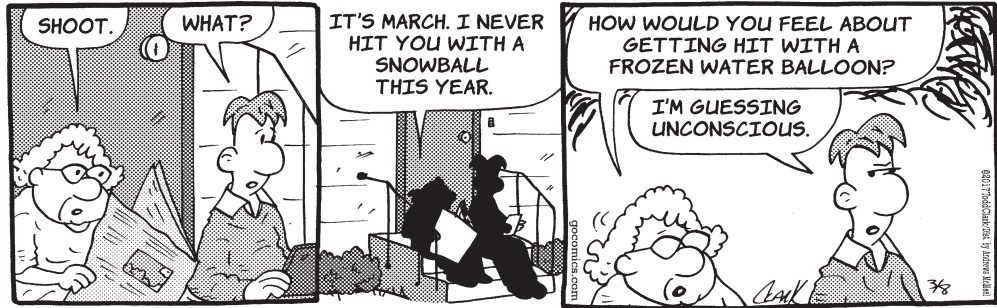
THATABABY



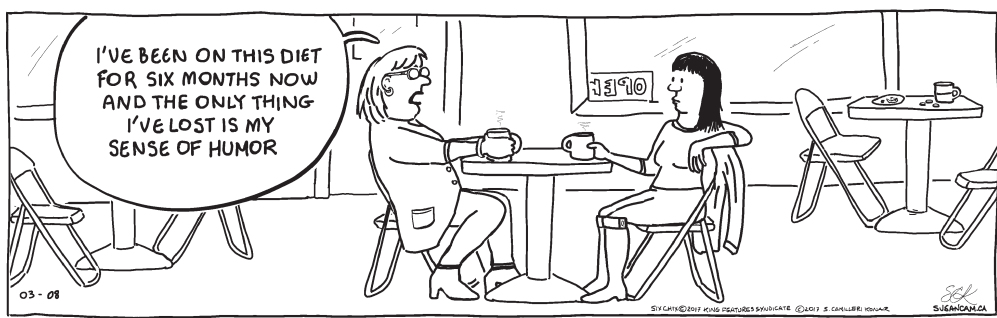
PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



LOLA



SIX CHIX



MUTTS



BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Comfort is loose clothes and tight relationships. It feels good and cozy, until it doesn't. Because comfort is a little messy, and it can get too comfortable, too messy. When that line is crossed, comfort changes to discomfort.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Energy cannot be destroyed, only transformed. You have been a part of many transformations that you are conscious of and many more that you are not. Today, change will occur around you, through you and because of you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The one skill that has the greatest potential to enhance (or ruin) your life is the skill of knowing how to find good relationships and avoid bad ones. Most people are not born knowing this skill. Study and thrive.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). What you believe about people is what you know about them. It's hard to learn differently. All your questions and observations will follow the prior belief. Drop preconceived notions to the extent that you can, and ask again.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Let the others coast down Easy Street while you take the mountain pass. Challenging work is good for your mind, body and soul. Not to mention, you're extremely attractive to others as you take it on.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). In the words of the inimitable Talking Heads, "You may ask yourself, how did I get here?" You can bet that any answer you come up with will oversimplify things, but it's still good to ask. This will inform your next move.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). When you like someone but you can't put your finger on the reason why, give yourself a little shake and then try to reason it out. Relationships (business or otherwise) based solely on a person's charisma

will be regrettable.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your social nature is amplified today. You like to get to know people, which of course is very different from trying to figure out "their deal" so you can offer advice and fix it (like some you know).

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The bottom line is that the very predictability that would make you feel secure would also bring a level of boredom so severe it could be classified as dangerous.

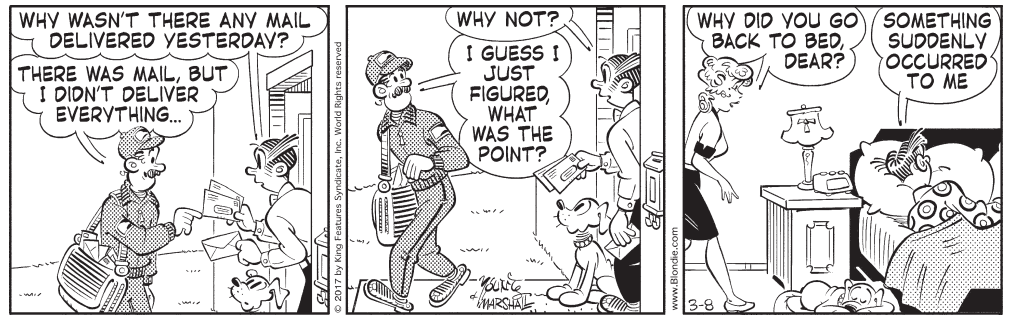
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Just when you thought you knew where you were going, a fog descends and the destination cannot be clearly seen. This is when you have to trust your map, engage your senses at a higher level and proceed with caution.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'll see the big picture today. For better or worse, the world is on a fast track to change and your role within it is changing, too, as you see new ways to help, contribute and get what you need from it.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Maybe sometimes it's beneficial to your creative spirit to reason about unreasonable things. Today it's rather pointless. If the problem is logical, solve it through logic. And if it's not, feel your way through.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 9). The love you give will be so sweetly received and redoubled. A trip you take before June will be magical. There's an exciting change in your professional life in April. One good relationship could change the whole trajectory. There's good fortune to be mined in familial events. Together you'll build something unique. Capricorn and Cancer adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 2, 5, 33, 17 and 21.

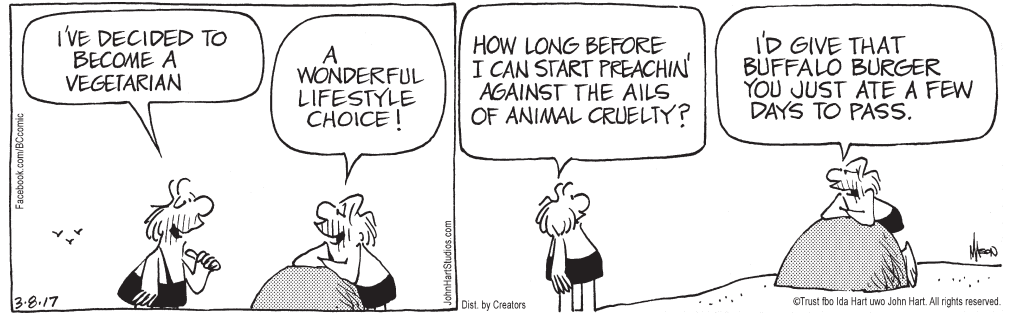
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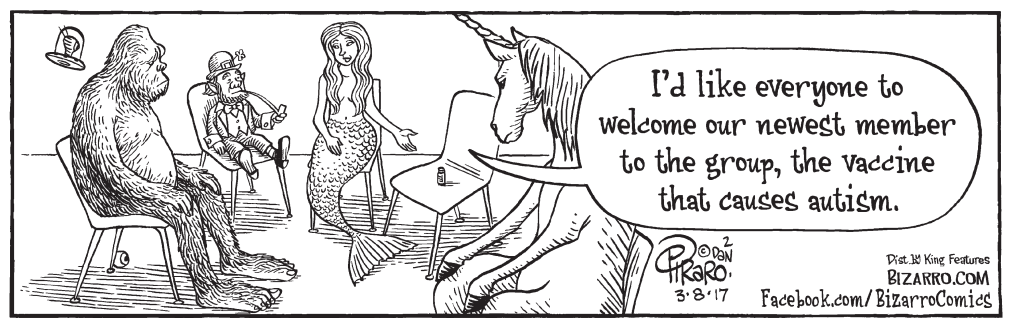
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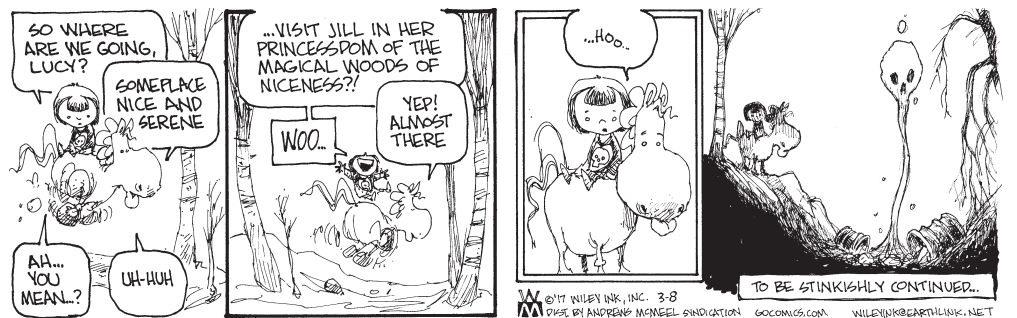
DILBERT



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NON SEQUITUR



WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

