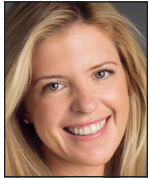


Past abuse stalls dating

Dear Annie: I'm a 46-year-old woman who has been married (and divorced) twice. Both marriages were filled with abuse — physical, emotional and sexual. Add to that severe child abuse — which has me permanently disabled now — and, well, I'm scared to be intimate with anyone ever again.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

I've been on two dates in the past 13 years. I'm finally getting to the point where I like myself and am considering dating again (if anyone will want to date a middle-aged disabled woman). But I know that if I find someone I want to marry, the relationship will have to involve sex. It's been 13 years since I last had sex. And for the seven years prior, it was forced sex, never consensual on my part.

Do you have any suggestions? Right now, the thought of sexual intercourse terrifies me. It's certainly not an issue now, but it will be when I start dating again. I do see a coun-

selor, which has helped me greatly, but we never discuss healthy sexual relationships; we just discuss the past abuse. — *Ready to Start Over*

Dear Ready: I'm so sorry you've experienced so much abuse throughout your life, but I'm also inspired by your positive attitude. I'm confident you'll find someone out there who is worthy of your time, and he'll be a lucky man indeed. But before then, you really need to discuss with your counselor how past abuse has impacted your current relationship with sex. He or she may even be able to refer you to a sex therapist who specializes in working with victims of past abuse. A counselor's office is a safe space that's free of judgment, and this is exactly the type of thing a counselor is there for.

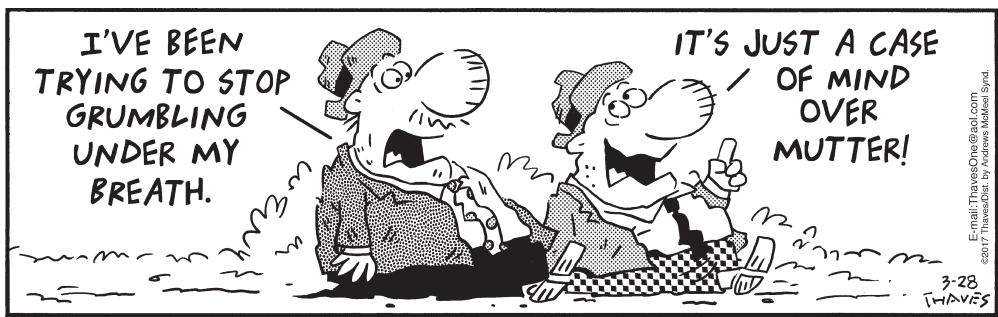
You're only 46. You still have decades of fun ahead of you. Hang in there, and keep striving to open your heart.

Dear Annie: I appreciate your empathetic and helpful responses to those who write to you. Recently, you responded to "Frustrated Friend," who was having difficulty with someone who talks incessantly and does not allow any comments.

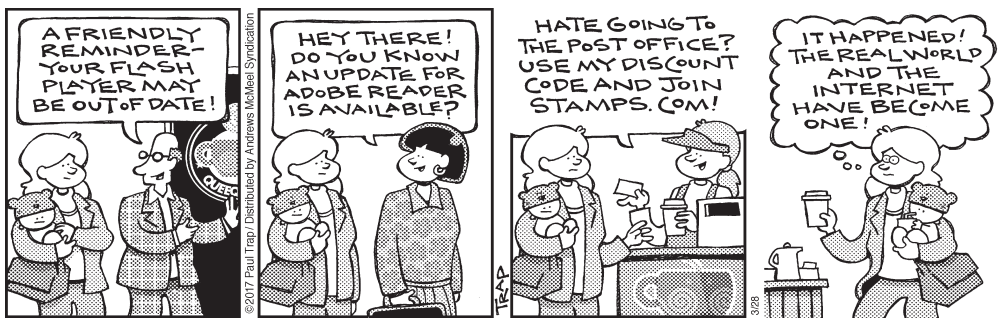
I am an experienced mental health professional and wonder whether you considered that someone who cannot stop talking may be in a manic phase of bipolar affective disorder. There is no way of reasoning with or even interrupting people who are exhibiting these symptoms. They should be under the care of a psychiatrist. Medication is the first treatment of choice, followed by counseling. — *A Licensed Clinical Social Worker in Sarasota, Fla.*

Dear LCSW: Thank you for raising this important point. I hadn't considered that it could be something that serious, but it's possible and, at the very least, worth exploring. I'm printing your letter here so that "Frustrated Friend" might consider helping her friend seek psychological help.

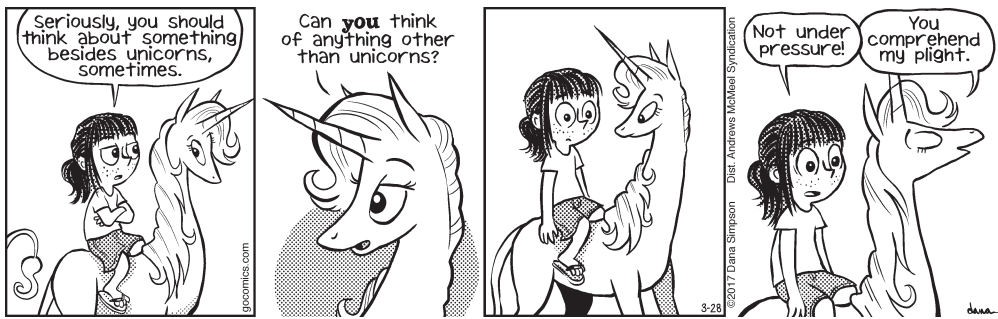
FRANK AND ERNEST



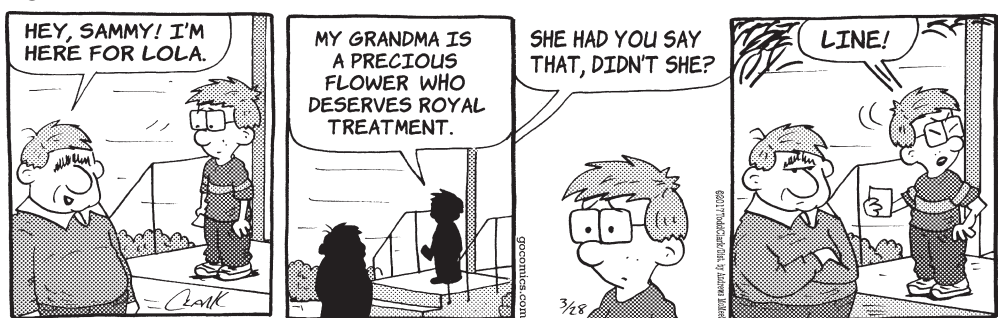
THATABABY



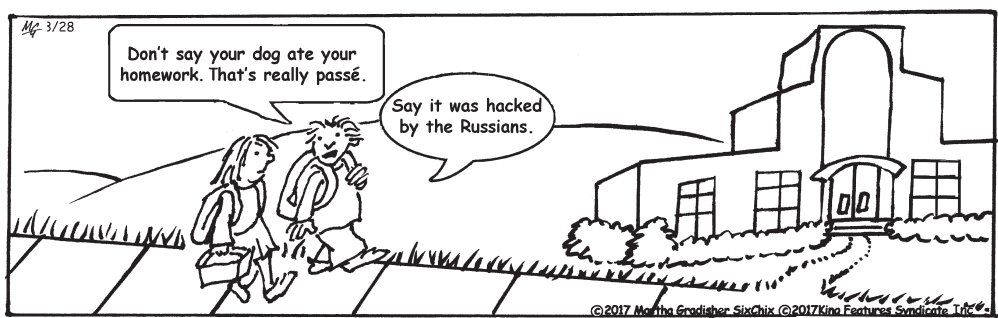
PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



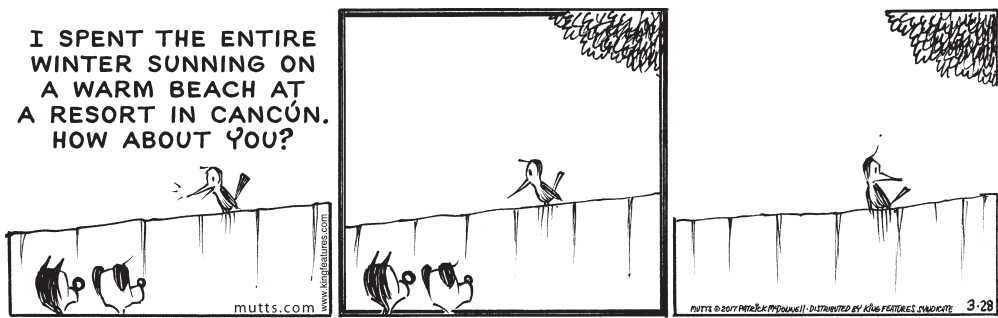
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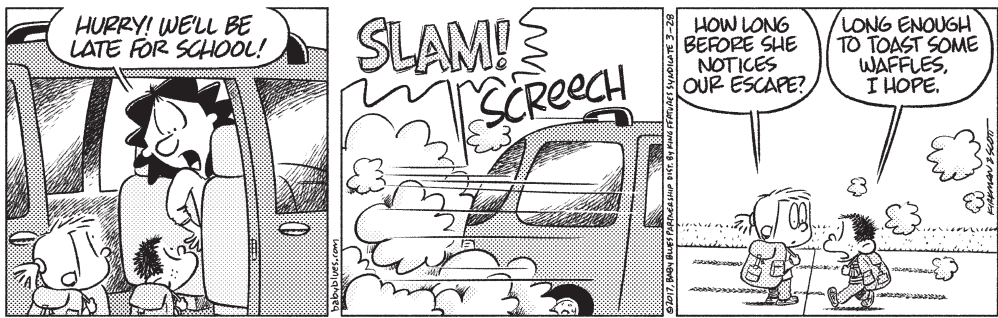
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MUTTS



BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). As you interact with the people around you today, you'll recognize that this is not your average crew. There will be enormous rewards for your gracious management of a wide swath of traits, talents, crotchets and flaws.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). People will ask you the questions they wish you would ask them. Therefore, don't waste your time trying to craft the right answer. Instead, turn it around and quickly get to the point of the discourse.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Can you keep your original shape under the crushes of conformity? Well, you're not sure that you'd want to do so. Today, you will mostly be enriched by the influence of others. You're too strong to be changed very much anyway.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). An interesting story will become even more compelling today. The thrill you get from learning will override any initial fear or self-consciousness you may feel in asking questions.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Being too involved with a person or project causes distortions of reality; intimate knowledge of the minutiae blinds you to the big picture. Paradoxically, you'll have to step back in order to get closer.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Make the choice that feels right. You don't know where it will lead, and right now, no one will tell you. Unlike a jealous sibling who might spoil a surprise meant for you, the universe wants to delight in your startling glee.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). When you are in love, no words, no touch, no eyes and no embrace can match those of your beloved. You'll find yourself in a similar "no substitutions" situation today.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's not that you want your life to look like a magazine. But that might be the end result as you seek a sense of physical, visual and emotional harmony in your environment. Much will be achieved to this end.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). History is like a purse you can rummage through to find useful information and tools, such as lenses that will change the way you see your world. Just remember that the past is for remembering or discovering, not for living in.

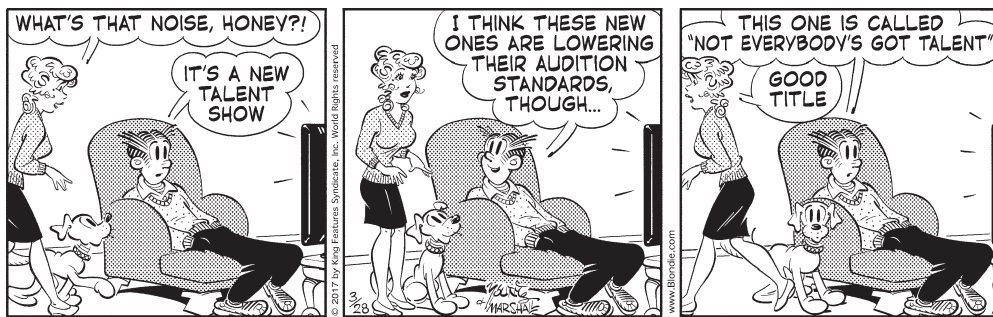
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Information carries no special quality within itself. It has to be put to use to impact the world. If it is ignored, it may as well not exist. For this reason, today, you'll be sure to act on what you know.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It will be better to connect your ideas than to protect them. The involvement of supporters and challengers will speed up and sharpen your process. Together you will leap forward, creating greatness.

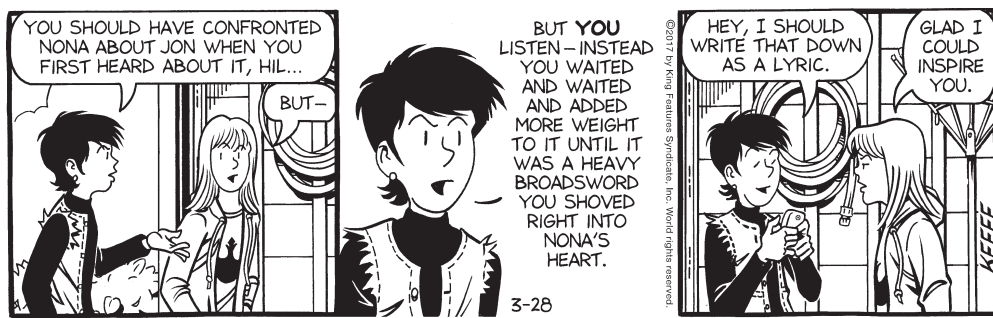
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Going with the flow is a specialty of yours, but not today. There is a rebel inside you digging heels into the dirt. No one can move you from this place. You and you alone will decide when to go.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 29). You are greatly and widely beloved. You'll influence many in a quiet, persistent way. It's about what you stand for. There's no ego in your work. You're devoted to furthering a particular principle or way of operating. Your best financial move may be illogical — you'll just feel it. There will be windfalls in July and November. Cancer and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 7, 42, 21, 29 and 38.

BLONDIE



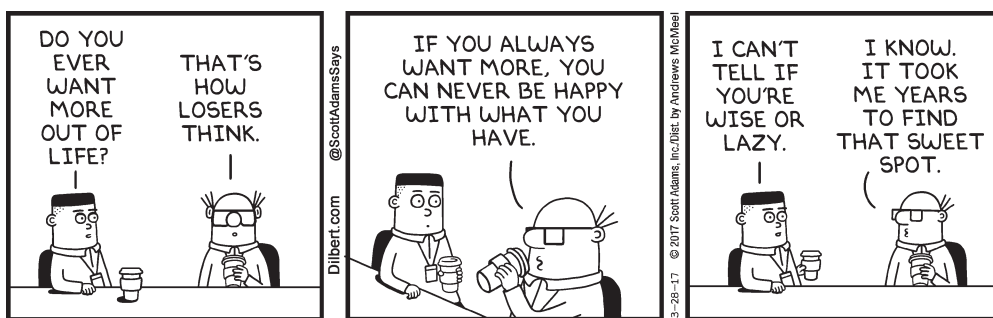
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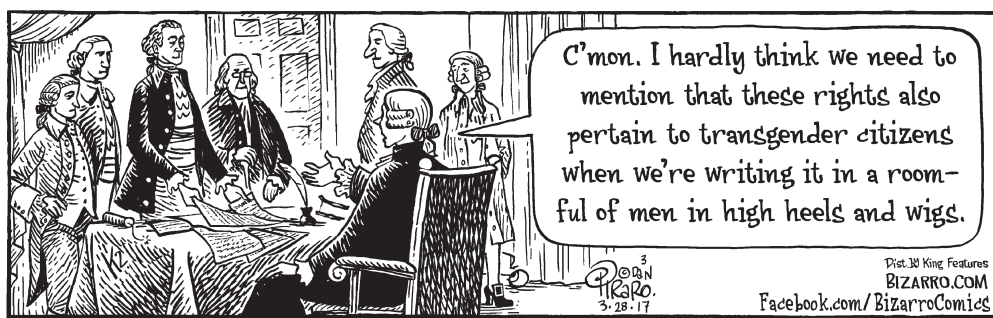
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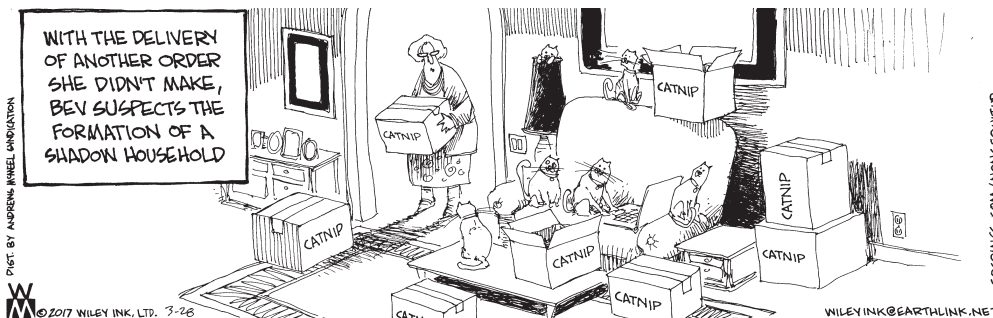
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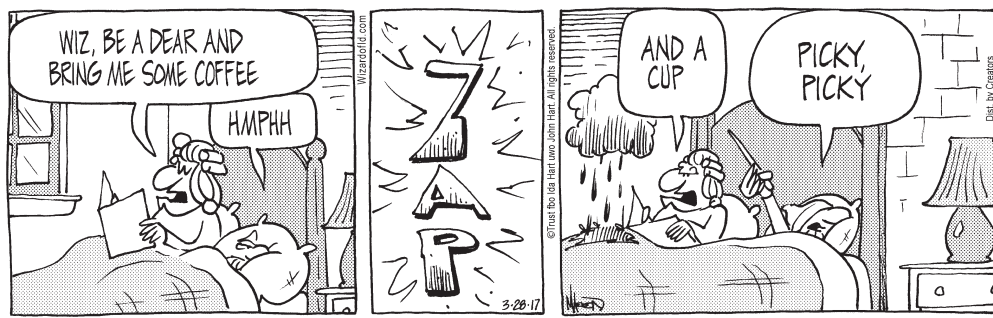
BIZARRO



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WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

