

Polarized political climate

Dear Annie: I need a pep talk, and I imagine millions of others do, too. I am an informed and involved citizen, and I care passionately about this country. I'm glad to call it my home. But lately, with the polarized political climate, I've been coming to blows (not literally) with neighbors, friends and even family members over issues I never realized we disagreed about before.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Without getting too much into the specifics, I just can't understand how these rational people can hold these beliefs. I've read that one mustn't allow politics to affect friendships, but how is that possible when a "friend" or neighbor believes and parrots false truths and reveals herself to be a total hypocrite?

Limiting how much "news" and media I take in only makes me feel like an ostrich with my head in the sand. I feel that I'm contributing to the problem if I don't stay involved and informed. But how do you stay involved, voice concern and not feel utterly helpless and completely stressed out? — *Political Stress Case*

Dear Political: It's easy to get into a tizzy when we're debating ideas. But if we focus more on

actions, on the good we can do and the good others are doing, I think we'll find we have more in common than we believe. For instance, before you learned that their politics were so different from yours, you probably considered your neighbors to be decent people. That decency is still there if you look for it.

I'm not saying that ideology isn't important or that it doesn't have real-world consequences. But focus your energy on effecting change where you can do so without driving yourself crazy. (Read: not in a shouting match with your uncle.) Volunteer in your community. Canvass for a local politician whom you believe in. And if you want to stay sane long enough to make a difference, occasionally give yourself a break from the news for a day or two.

Dear Annie: I'd like to respond to "Tired and Exhausted," the mom whose son is struggling with addiction. I was in her shoes 15 years ago, when my son was 23 years old. I was emotionally and financially drained. I was a prime candidate for a mental health intervention myself.

I went to an addiction counselor, who recommended that I go to Nar-

Anon meetings. I resisted the idea for three months but finally went, vowing just to listen, not share my story. Everyone was so nice and welcomed me, and there was no pressure to speak. Much to my surprise, I knew right away that I was in the right place.

I talked about my son, his addiction, the ways he was using me, his swinging door at the jailhouse and my depression. Long story short, I learned that I cannot help my son and I needed to stop enabling him. I got a Nar-Anon sponsor and eventually got my peaceful life back.

"Tired and Exhausted": If you want to live your remaining years on your son's roller coaster, keep doing what you have been doing. If you want to live your remaining years in peace, get to a Nar-Anon meeting ASAP, continue going to meetings even if your son is clean and sober, get a sponsor, and follow the Nar-Anon program for the rest of your life. Nar-Anon saved my life and my sanity. — *Thankful*

Dear Thankful: I'm sure your letter will resonate with many readers who have been made desperate by a loved one's addiction. Nar-Anon is a great organization. Visit <http://www.nar-anon.org> for more information.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). If it's meant for you, it will happen for you. You can certainly make things happen that aren't a good fit for you, but why would you? It's a wasted effort when there's so much wonderful stuff that suits you perfectly.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Don't have a good plan? Don't have a plan at all? No worries. You'll have an adventure. And if your friend is in this with you, you'll also have a bonding moment for the ages.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You're a fan. You don't expect anything in return for the veneration. In fact, you believe you're richer for giving it. Nonetheless, you'll get some love back from the realm of your admiration.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You love the truth. It doesn't always love you back. In fact, sometimes you wonder if it was worth pursuing. In the end, you're better for knowing. This is all adding up to something important.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You quest to see what the sun sees. All of it. You want to know what's fully, brightly illuminated above the clouds, and you want to play in the shadows under the sea. In every way, you're ready to know and experience more.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The speedy solution happens because you need it to. The most important thing is that it gets done, not that it gets done in any particular way. Much relies on your flexible approach.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Today's situation is ideal not because of what it has but because of what it lacks. Creativity and resourcefulness will be born out of grave

necessity.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Those who drive and those who go along for the ride will end up in the same place. A break from ambition will be healthy. A lazy mood might be just the thing you need. Insights emerge from a relaxed mind.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Those with big egos will fight when challenged. When you come up against someone's pride, be careful. Note that some people feel like their pride is all they have.

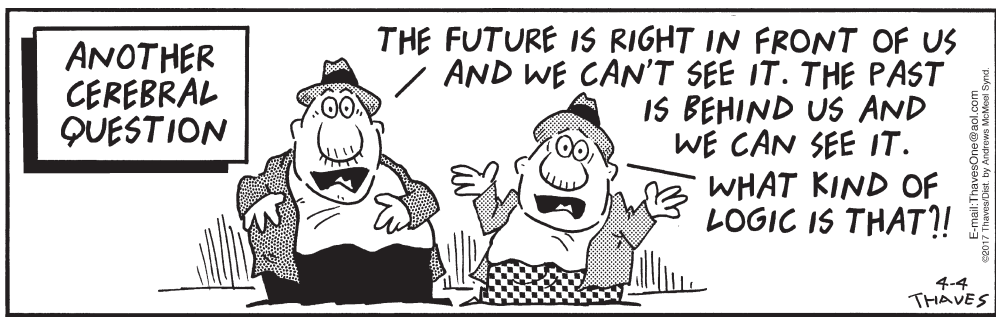
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You know where you're going and you know how to get there. In fact, you know several ways: the main road, the alternate roads, the scenic route and the shortcut. Choosing is the hard part!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). There's a review process underway. You can't always make sense of the past, but you can live right now in a way that makes sense to you and hope for the best.

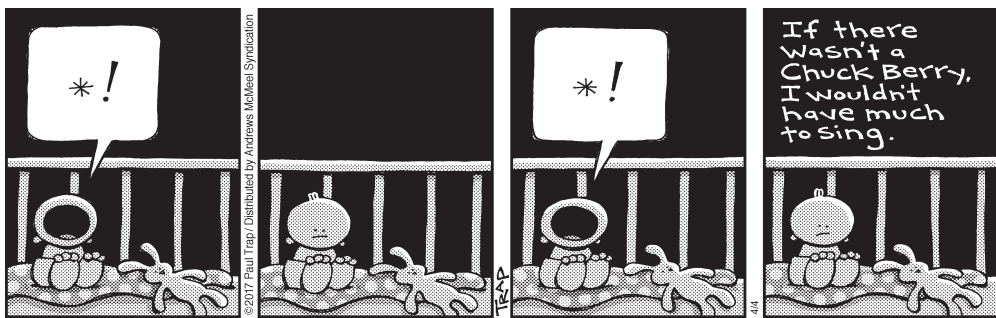
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You live to entertain. Today this includes not talking about what doesn't pertain to the people around you — although you might be surprised what people find relevant.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (April 5). Take your time in love. You'll never regret the hours of getting to know another person. A less-than-optimal situation will turn around in May. Freedom at last! June brings financial good fortune. July is your chance to risk and learn. This will require you to leave the safe confines of home. Capricorn and Scorpio adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 16, 44, 28 and 45.

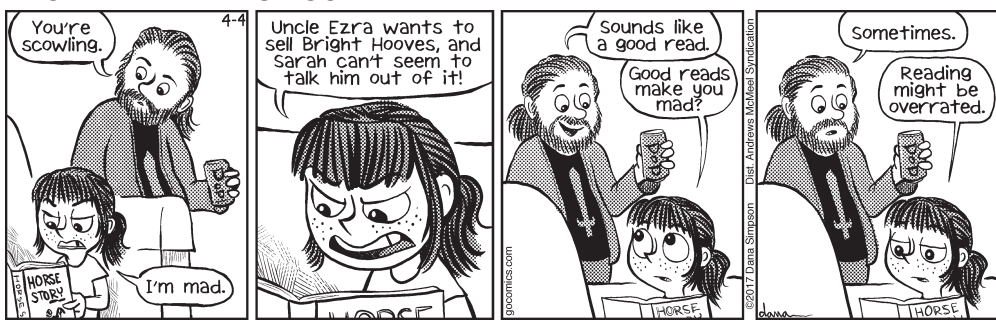
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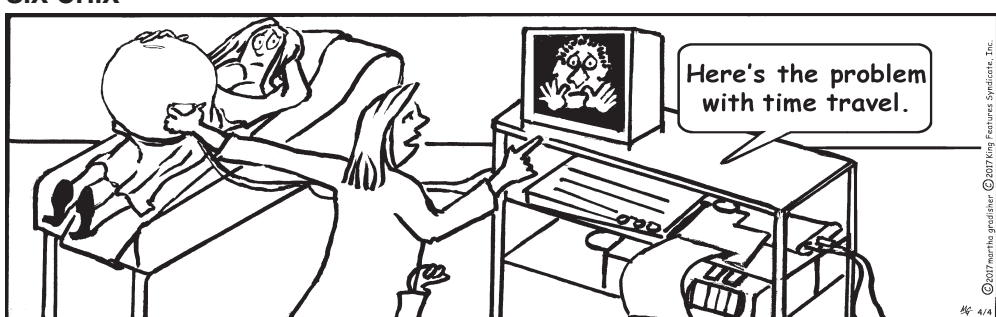
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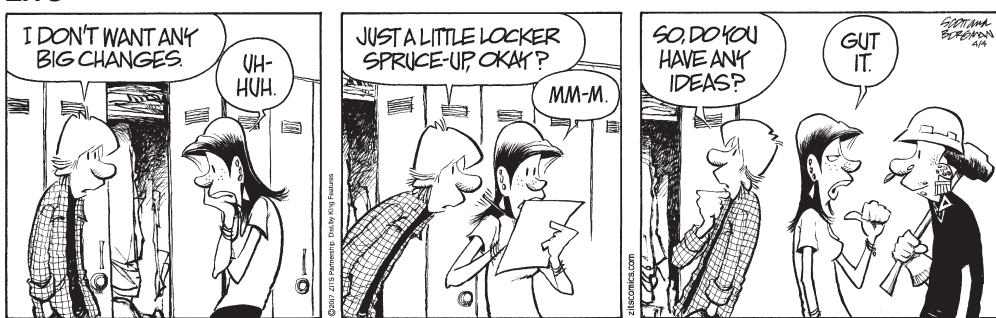
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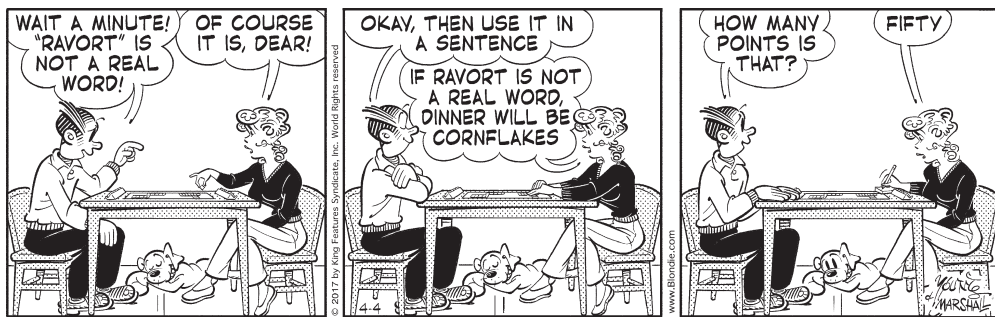
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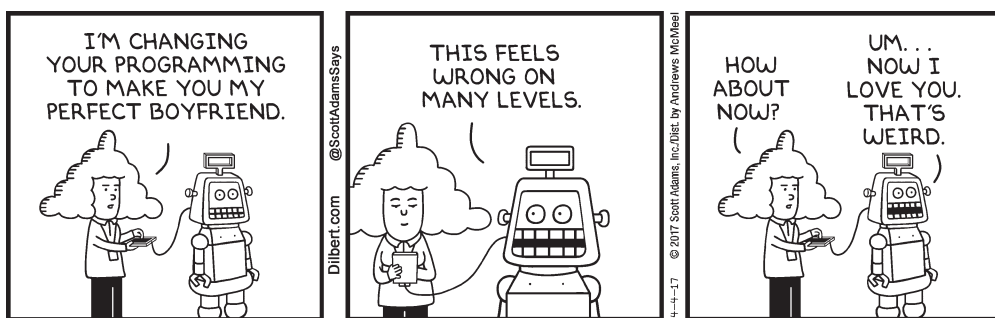
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