

Young adult looking for love

Dear Annie: I am a college-age male and in desperate need of your advice. There is in my class a wonderful young woman, someone with whom I have talked often, but never deeply. I want to get to know her better but simply do not know how; in fact, I do not even know whether she is as interested in me as I am in her. This is made worse by my autism, which prevents me from detecting emotions and social cues.

What should I do? I seek someone whose hand I can hold and whose eyes light up when they look on me. That is all I want and all I need. — *Forsaken*

Dear Forsaken: There are a great number of books that go into more depth about the unwritten rules of dating than I ever could here, and some are geared toward people with autism — Kerry Magro’s “Autism and Falling in Love” and Joe Navarro’s “Ten ‘Must Know’ Body Language Secrets for Dating,” to name just two.

But I will say that the best romantic relationships start as friendships, so you’re off to a good start simply by talking to this young

woman often. Perhaps you could ask whether she’d like to get coffee sometime. If she says yes, take the opportunity to build a connection by asking about her background — where she is from, whether she has any siblings, what she’s hoping to do after college, etc. Tell her about yourself in equal measure.

And if she turns down your invitation, don’t despair. I promise, everyone has felt the sting of rejection at some point or another. Simply take it as practice for asking out the next girl who sparks your interest.

Dear Annie: After reading today’s letter from “Frustrated,” whose cousin is constantly getting angry over minor things, I was compelled to write. The cousin’s behavior could be symptoms of a mental illness, specifically borderline personality disorder or paranoid personality disorder. The National Institute of Mental Health defines BPD as “a serious mental disorder marked by a pattern of ongoing instability in moods, behavior, self-image and functioning. These experiences often result in impulsive actions and unstable relationships.”

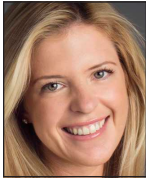
There were several red flags “Frustrated” used to describe her cousin that made me think she may have BPD: She’s always confrontational; she always quits jobs because of confrontations and blames the employers; and she has been like this for years, with the behavior getting worse.

Your advice to stage an intervention and express concern was good. “Frustrated” should also encourage her to seek help from a mental health professional.

I learned about BPD two years ago after my son fathered a child with a woman diagnosed with BPD. It has been a difficult journey, but recognizing that she has a mental disorder has helped us cope with the situation. Most people in the general public, including family court judges, have never heard of BPD. The National Institute of Mental Health is an excellent resource for information about personality disorders and other mental health issues. — *Advocating for Mental Health*

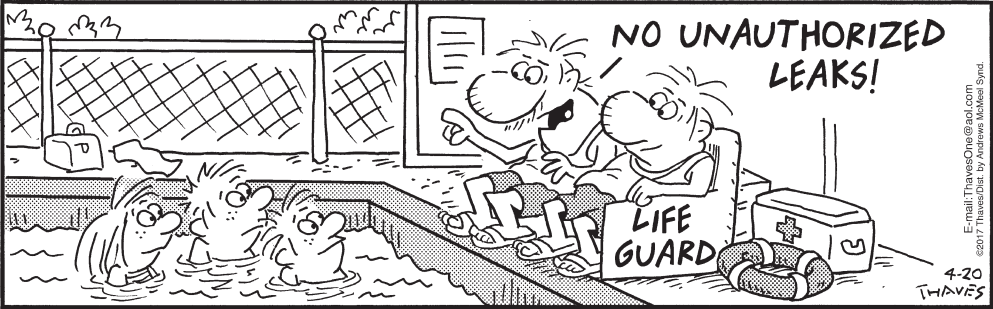
Dear Advocating: Thank you for raising awareness about this commonly misunderstood disorder. Interested readers can find more information at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>.

DEAR ANNIE

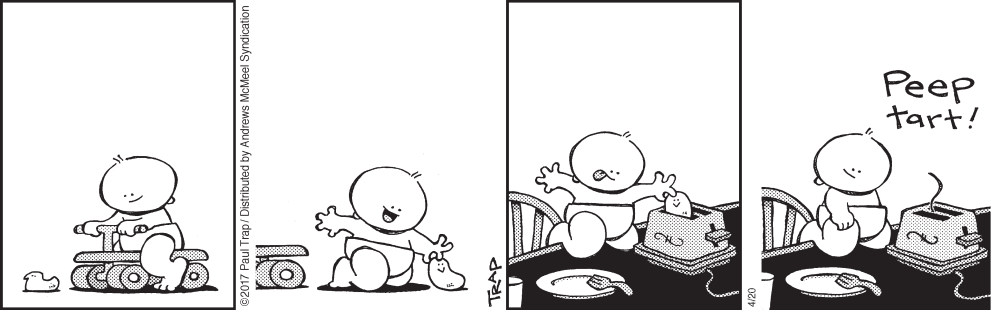


Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

FRANK AND ERNEST



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PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



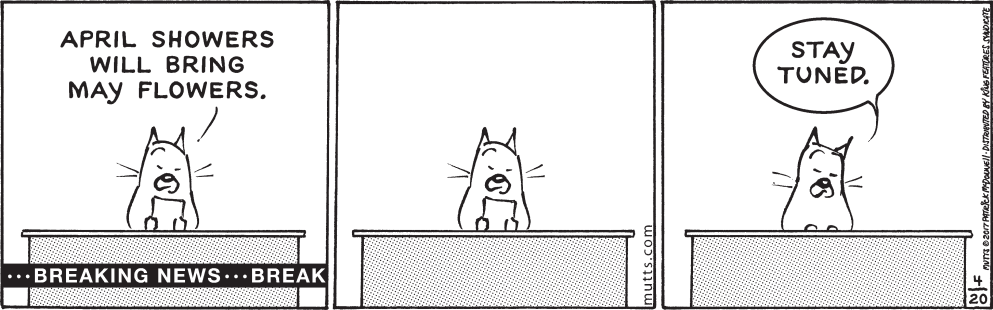
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Recent stress-es have you craving a little more reassur-ance that all is well. You may have to ask for it, as people will be so into their own parts of the story that they may not realize what others need and want.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). In your mind, if relationships are a lot of work, it's a sign that the fit isn't good. Regardless, we can't always choose with whom we'll be interacting. Attaining new and better social skills will help matters greatly.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Meetings are on the agenda. They may not feel all that productive, but the point is to show up, see and be seen. This is about understanding the roles involved and the people who are going to play them.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's a new project or person on your mind — how ex-citing and irresistible! You are convinced that you are better off pursuing this than doing what you used to do for fun.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). A little complaining between friends or colleagues can be a bonding experience, venting the bad energy and uniting the team. But constant complain-ing just compounds negativity. Steer clear of it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Love is not something you can talk yourself into or create with an intellectual exercise. You may feel that you should love, but don't force the issue. It just doesn't work that way.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The day is marked by an increased sense of purpose. Perhaps this is because many will be affect-ed by your work. As you act on behalf of the

group, you find success.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your vessel will be affected by the wind and currents, but you're still ultimately the pilot of this ship. Grip the wheel and do your best with today's stormy seas.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The first step to restoring the peace in your world will have to do with temperance. Go easy; do the things that contribute to your health. If there's a problem to clear up, you'll have the strength for it today.

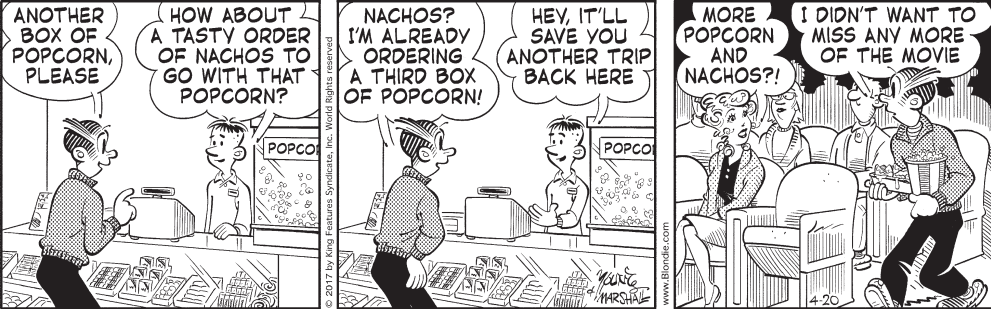
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You've had the kind of life turning points that were unexpected and out of your control, but mostly change happens because you make it happen. And here you go again!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It's as though today pulls back the stage curtain just enough to give you a peek at what's to come in a brand-new phase of your life. You'll like what you see.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're not always your best counselor. In fact, you wouldn't even make the top-10 list today. Listen to many opinions. Right now, you're too close to (yet also, oddly, somewhat naive about) the subject.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (April 21). Wanting well is an art. You want the highest and best for all involved, not just yourself. The year is marked by an attitude of flexibility that will allow you to make the most of cir-cumstances and use the energy available in-stead of fighting against it. New work comes in July. Romantic love plays out like a dream. Scorpio and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 50, 12, 14 and 32.

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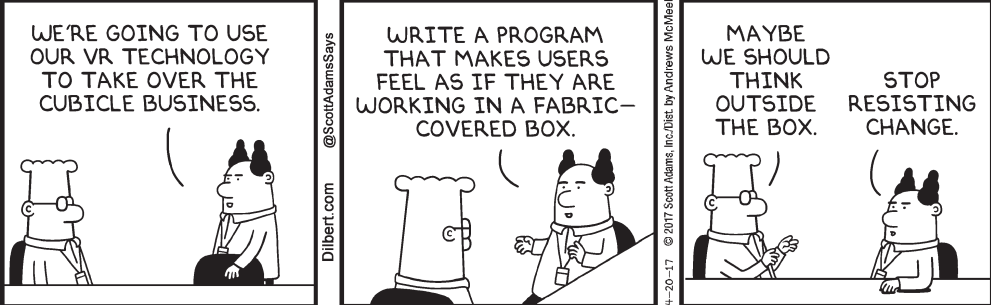
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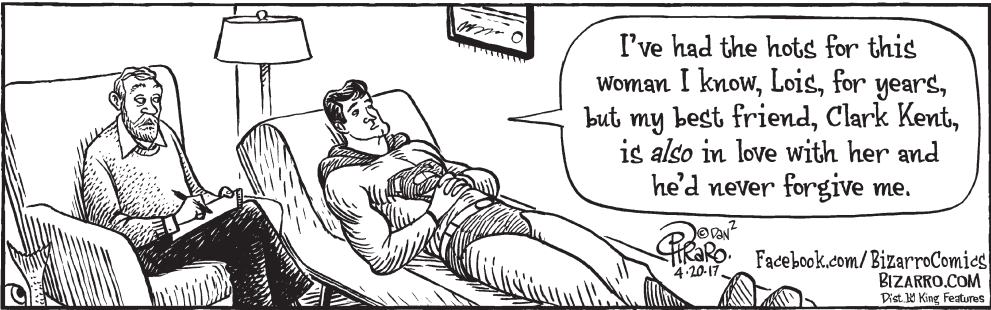
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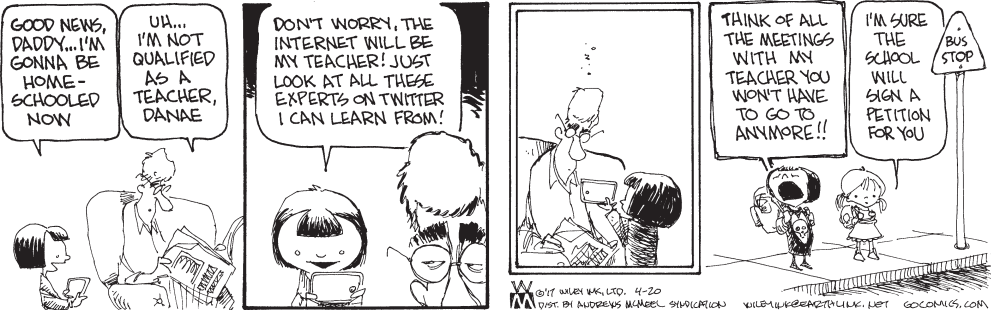
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ROSE IS ROSE

