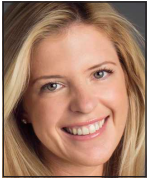


Discussing relationship issues

Dear Annie: My boyfriend, "Hector," and I have been dating for four years. Like any couple, we've had our ups and downs. We used to argue a lot about things that were, in retrospect, petty and inconsequential. The beginning of last year was especially bad. We had each hit a wall professionally. We were always frustrated and stressed out, and though it was for reasons that had nothing to do with each other, it inevitably affected the way we treated each other.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

During this rocky time, I talked to my good friend "Michelle" a lot about the problems Hector and I were having. I'm not one to brag about my relationship when things are going well, so this was the first Michelle was really hearing details about my relationship, and they were all bad. As good friends do, Michelle immediately took my side in the fight (even when I was wrong) and built me up and told me I deserved to be treated better.

Fast-forward a year. Hector and I have hugely improved

our communication skills and are happier than ever. We talk about marriage regularly. I really think he's the one.

The problem now is that Michelle still hates him. OK, maybe "hate" is too strong a word, but she's definitely not a fan. I tried talking to her about it. I told her that I know she got a bad impression of Hector from things I said but that we have worked on our communication and are doing much better. She said something like "that's great," but I knew she didn't mean it.

I feel that I should never have opened up to Michelle about the problems we were having. How can you talk to friends about your relationship problems without their judging your relationship? —*Foot in Mouth*

Dear Foot in Mouth: You can't. That's why the only person with whom you should discuss your relationship problems is the person with whom you're in that relationship. It's not just the most respectful option; it's the most constructive, because he or she

is the only person who can help solve the problem.

I must note that abuse is an important exception to this advice. Readers, if you feel unsafe, reach out to friends or call The National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233.

Dear Annie: Parents would be wise to suggest that their children go home and discuss their problems directly with their spouses. After many years, my mother-in-law clued me in what she had been doing. Whenever my husband talked to her about a problem in our marriage, she told him she thought I was right, even if she really thought I was wrong. This was to encourage my husband to talk to me directly about the issue and try to reach a compromise. In hindsight, I believe it really helped. —*B.F.*

Dear B.F.: Humility is a virtue the best parents instill in their children from a young age. Even when kids are grown, parents can continue to model humility, forgiveness and empathy, especially when it comes to marriage. No one is perfect; it would be wise to encourage your children to see things from their spouses' point of view.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your mind is working on something important. Cut out artificial noise and false imagery. Solutions are more likely to be inspired from weathered wood, cracks in the pavement and clouds than from a glowing screen.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Today's problem will bring minds together. There's a riddle to solve, a code to break or a puzzle to piece together. Good teamwork will open the gates to a wonderland.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Most people are afraid to admit what they don't understand, for fear of being alone in mystification. Be courageous enough to speak up and you'll not only learn; you'll enlighten others who are too timid to voice their confusion.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). How can you keep from being led astray by charismatic leaders acting out of greedy self-interest? Question everything. This isn't the same as cynicism. Cynics assume the worst. Be a fact-checker, not a cynic.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Our minds run on images. Images change thought; thoughts make real things happen. Illusions may not have the same properties as things that actually occur in the physical world, but that alone doesn't make them unreal.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Because you care about helping things grow, you'll go to great lengths to learn the unique environment conducive to growth for each thing you want to help. It will take patience, an open mind and an enthusiasm for experimentation.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). When the foundation is strong, the building will weather the storms and changes. You can apply this to a project

you'll start from scratch. Unfortunately, it won't help the one with the foundation laid long ago.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Marcel Proust suggested that the only paradise is paradise lost. But was that paradise really so idyllic? If it seemed so heavenly at the time, you wouldn't have risked it all for the proverbial apple.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You look at the same thing as the next person and see something entirely different. The world needs your point of view. Maybe you're not ready to share your thoughts yet, but work on them so you can share soon.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Be kind to their dreams. If they've given up hope, hold on for them. To keep the light of faith for another person is a rare and precious gift of friendship. It also reminds you to hold on to your own dreams.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Don't defer it until tomorrow. Yes, tomorrow will come, but how do you know you'll suddenly be in the mood to do the thing? You won't. Do it now, while you're also not in the mood. Show "the mood" who's boss.

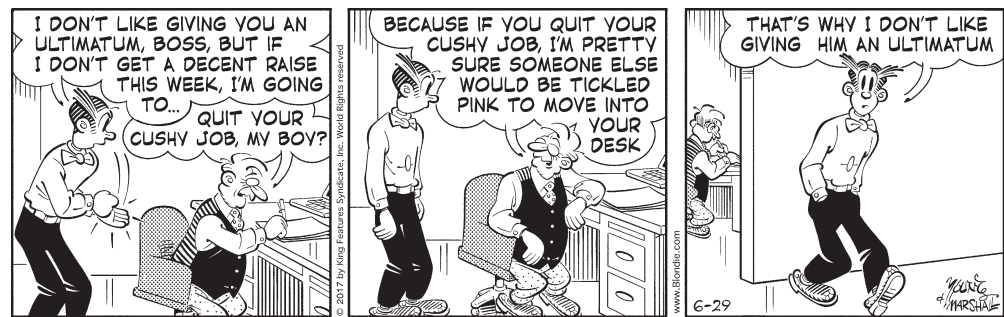
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). If you're not worried about it, it means you're wise, lucky or both. "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone." — Henry David Thoreau

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (June 30). It's a pivotal moment in your story. In a country of opportunity, much is possible. Reasonable health is all the good fortune you need to create five exciting outcomes over the next 12 months. Some you've been working on for years; two are brand new. Helpful partners will share your stellar attitude. October brings a windfall. Libra and Leo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 2, 22, 28 and 15.

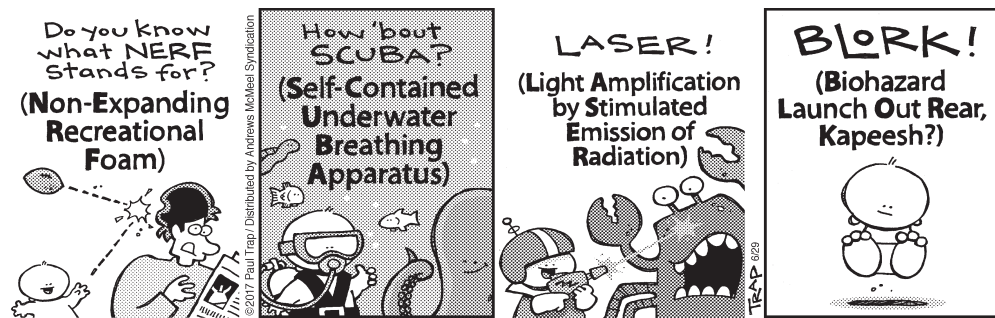
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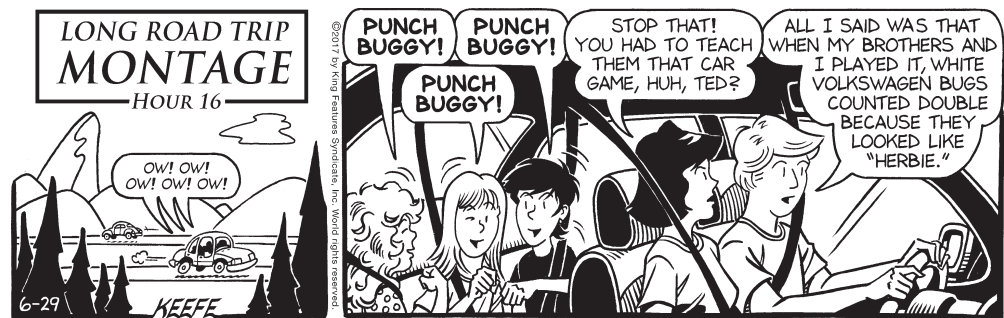
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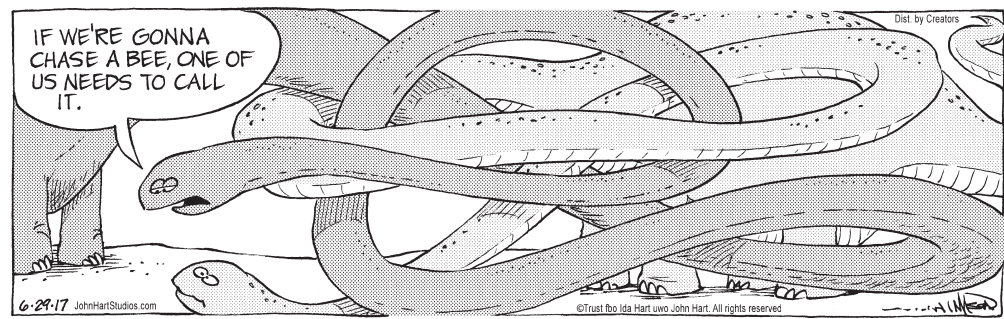
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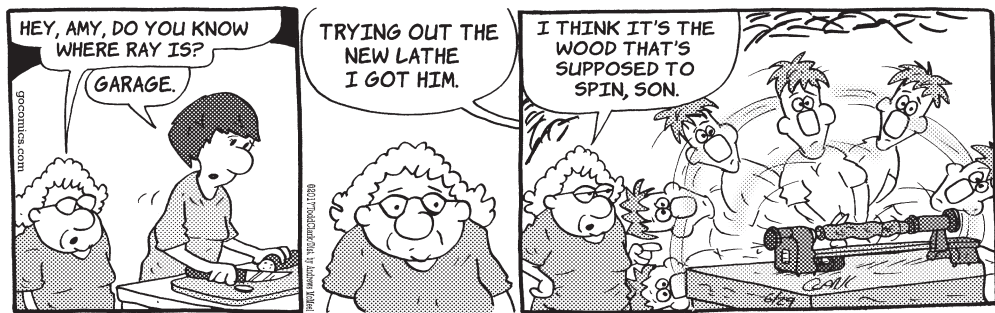
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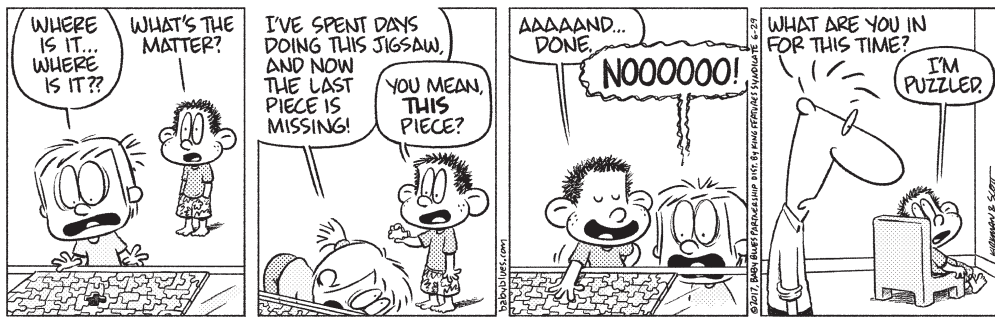
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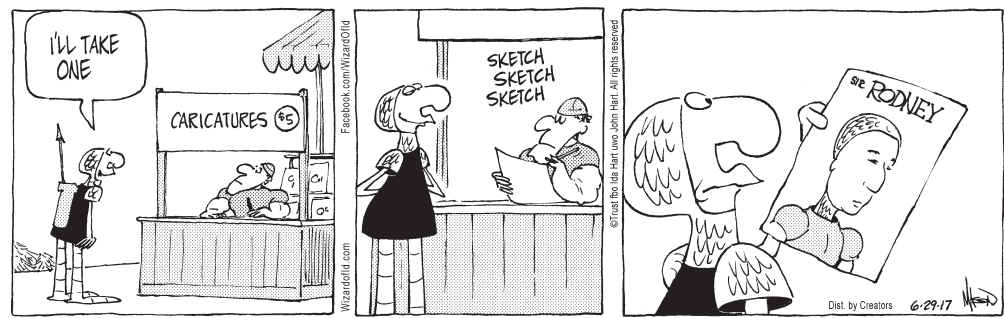
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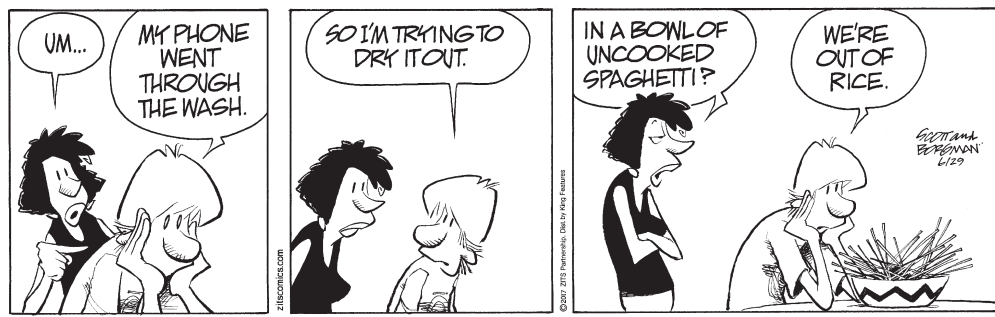
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