

Dealing with grief and loss

Dear Annie: Lord willing, next month I'll turn 67. In a recent column, you solicited seniors to write about issues they are facing. A big one for me is grief.

later. When the children were 7 and 4, we started traveling in a used Volkswagen camper and told people we were growing up with our children. We retired four years before Shirley passed away at age 62. That was 33 months ago.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

I met "Shirley" when she was 15 and a junior in high school. I was a senior. Both of our families relocated the same summer from different states, with us coming kicking and screaming, mad our social lives were being upended. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

She was so pretty I was afraid to ask her out. We became friends, both being the new kids. She would set me up with her girlfriends so we could double-date. After two years, when she was 17, we went out together and were together every day. I dropped out of night school to avoid getting more speeding tickets trying to make it to her parents' house before her 10 p.m. curfew.

When she was 20 and I was 21, we got married, and we started our family 15 months

People give unsolicited kind observations that I am doing so well. I am. To be honest, I am not lonely. I have my children, grandchildren, friends, former co-workers and church members with whom I regularly interact.

But there are times when, for no rhyme or reason, an emptiness comes in and takes over. I've learned to face, even embrace, it so the episode passes more quickly and I can heal from the experience and gain a better perspective. But the emptiness is profound. It makes all of life look like vanity.

When I can talk to people about Shirley, it is the next best thing to being with her. All of our life together seems real again instead of being some wonderful, long dream that

never happened. "How could it be real?" I often think. It was so good for so long. That never happens. —Rob in Jacksonville

Dear Rob: Thank you for your beautiful letter. I'm sure it will touch many others as it has touched me.

Dear Annie: My sister's ex-mother-in-law just passed away. My sister's children were still very young when the divorce happened, barely into elementary school.

Anyway, her mother-in-law thought the world of her, and they got along very well. They saw each other often because of the children.

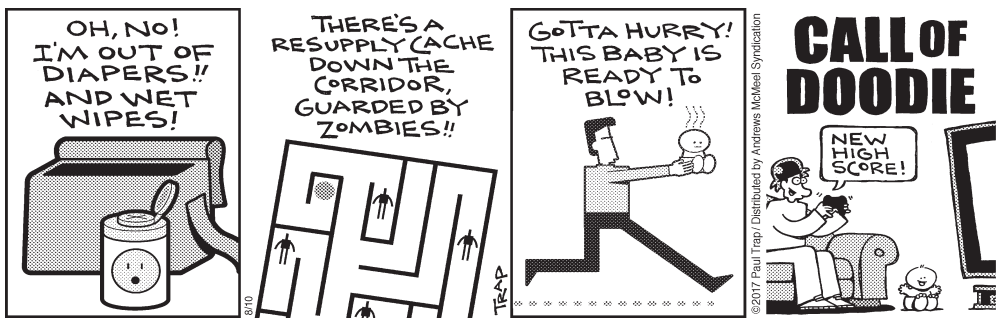
I am sure it is breaking my sister's heart. What is the proper etiquette for me to do something for my sister? I am close to this family also and want to know what I can do for them. —Elle

Dear Elle: If you're looking for something you can do to comfort her, bring over a home-cooked meal. Then sit with her and listen, or just sit with her in silence. When comforting someone who is grieving, it's not about finding the exact right thing to say or do. It's about being there.

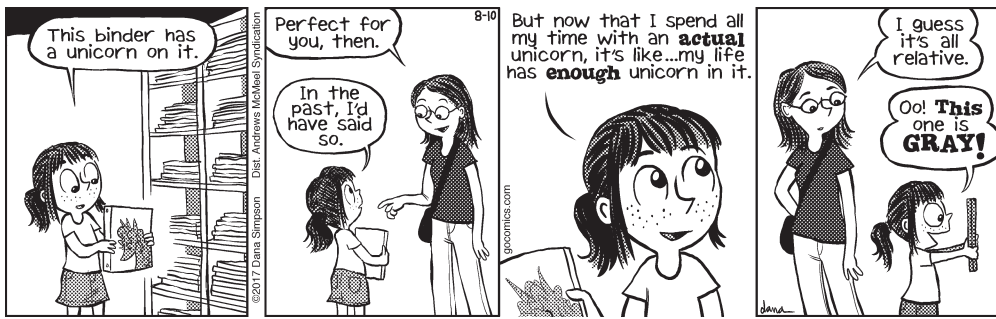
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Despite the fact that the astrological phrase associated with your sign is "I am," you sometimes forget the "who" of you. When it happens today it will be because you're in transition, and it's too soon to tell the outcome.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You have many people who want to be with you through the entire story and won't bail in the scary parts or during the slow exposition. These loyal types won't require you to always be the strong hero, by the way.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Couples who have been together for a long while sometimes get irritated by every little thing the other person does. Everything can't be wrong, though. All relationships will benefit from a little more space and time away.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The blue crayon is the one most reach for to color the sky, and yet the sky is more often other colors. Your eyes will be open to a reality that is different from the agreed upon depiction of it.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It's what always happens: You love someone, and they change. You want to change, so, hey, try it on yourself! Love yourself as you are and then watch as you quickly blossom into the next iteration.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The absence of judgment is a nice thing to claim or to strive for, but it's not realistic to believe that you're not going to make assessments all through the conversations if not the relationship. You judge. But you judge mostly kindly.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). "Look on the bright side," they say, and yet that side only applies to around half of the total day, give or take, depending on the time of year. To know a place

is to know it in the light and also in the dark.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You love a person more than the distance that's between you, regardless of what's causing that distance. It might be time or place or age or lifestyle. When love can't bridge it, more love can.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Because you're the pioneer of the zodiac, when there is a great deal of certainty and knowledge about the path, it won't be your first choice. Lost and Adventure are best mates; one seldom travels without the other.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Forgive yourself for the mistakes that led you to this perfect here and now. How do you know it's perfect? Because it is the current reality, and there is nothing else that falls into the category of "current reality."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). What happens between people can be confusing, but don't worry; your heart will translate events and ideas into its native language, the language of love. Tears and laughter are both in the heart's lexicon.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). The one who wants to know what goes on in your head is (perhaps subconsciously) planning to be around you more in the future, and it therefore behooves that person to understand you.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Aug. 11). You work hard, and you're consistent. Because of your determined and predictable efforts, you'll win a major prize. When you meet someone new in November, it will feel like a reunion. Together you'll quickly accomplish important things. New accounts and big deals will sweeten your leisure in 2018. Sagittarius and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 10, 4, 44, 39 and 16.

BLONDIE



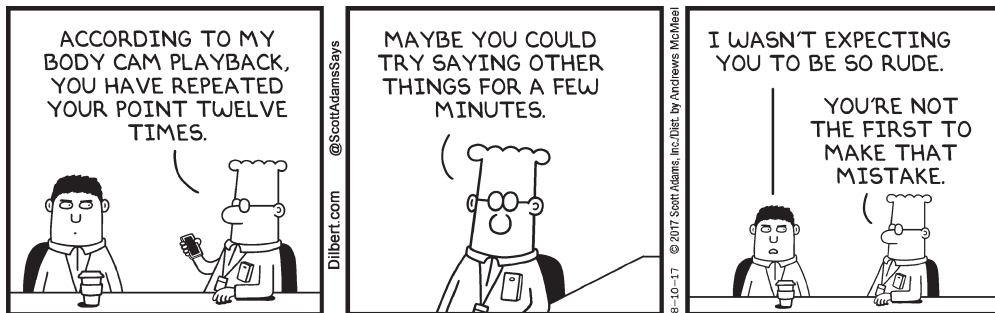
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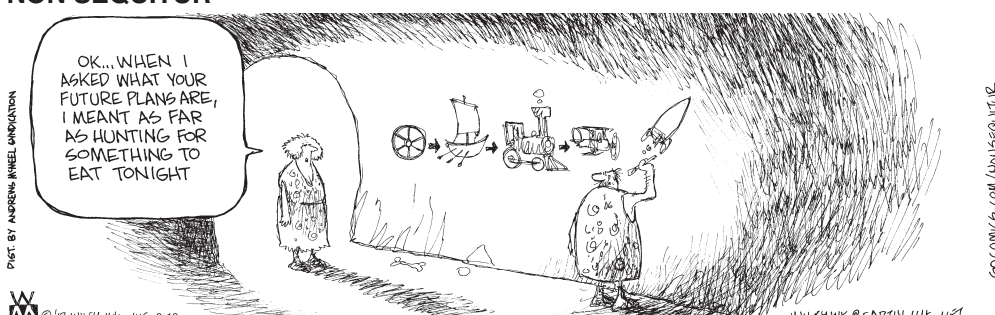
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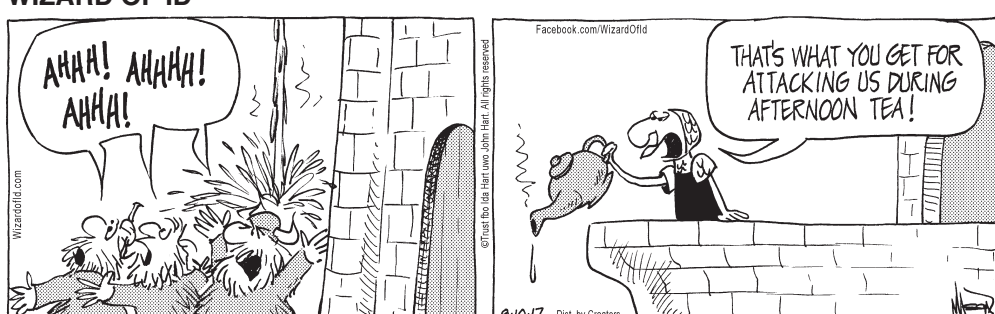
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