

Life without a partner

Dear Annie: I am 56 years old. When I was 44, my wife and I divorced after 17 years of marriage. I think we were lovely parents to two amazingly independent and strong daughters. They are now 22 and 26.

I feel that I was married at the perfect age, 28, and my wife was 25. We had a very good run, and we did a good job of co-parenting after we divorced, when the girls were teens. We always tried to take the high road. I always tell people to try to be courteous to their ex-spouses.

Anyway, the funny thing is I have not dated once in those 12 years, because I sense pitfalls and know about age gap problems, and sometimes I do that goofy formula that says the appropriate age to date is half yours plus seven years (or older). Women that age have actually asked me on dates, but I've refused. Other women have drama and kids, and I know I don't want to mess up entire families' dynamics with my desire for finding a mate.

I am wondering whether we live in an age when I can get my

social fill in my time at the Y, swimming and in coffee shops, socializing as the extrovert that I am. Could that be the new norm?
— *Happy Bachelor*

Dear Happy Bachelor: If all your issues with dating have been related to age, why not date someone in the same stage of life as you? Match.com, eHarmony and other dating sites allow you to set age ranges, and OurTime.com is a dating site exclusively for people over 50.

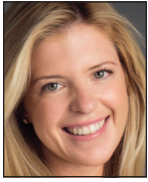
If dating simply doesn't appeal to you, that's fine. There's nothing wrong with enjoying life without a romantic partner. What matters is that you're happy and that you have a healthy social life, and it sounds as if both of those things are true for you.

Dear Annie: Why can't people bother to spell my first name correctly? I have a fairly common name, six letters long, that happens to have about seven different usual spellings. What gets me is that even when the proper spelling of my name is right in front of people, they will still misspell it. It

will be on the envelope, at the bottom of a card or letter, on the front of my file, in my email address, in the church directory, etc. That does not seem matter, because people proceed to write my name however they want, using one of the other possible spellings. When that happens, I correct the misspelling on the paper. Even people who have known me for a long time, such as cousins and friends, will misspell my name. Furthermore, sometimes folks mispronounce it by saying it as one syllable instead of two. This has been a lifelong problem. How do I get through to people? — *Joanne*

Dear Joanne: I had to laugh when I got to your signature. I was expecting something much more complex. I don't know why people have such trouble with your name. When it comes to strangers, even if you tried every trick under the sun (spelling it out, even wearing a name tag), the fact is they might still get it wrong, so all you can do is try changing your outlook. Friends and cousins, on the other hand, have absolutely no excuse for getting your name wrong, and you should tell them so.

DEAR ANNIE

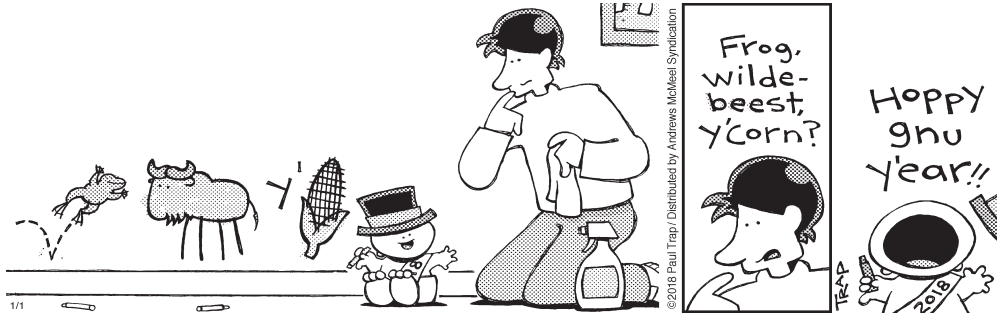


Annie Lane
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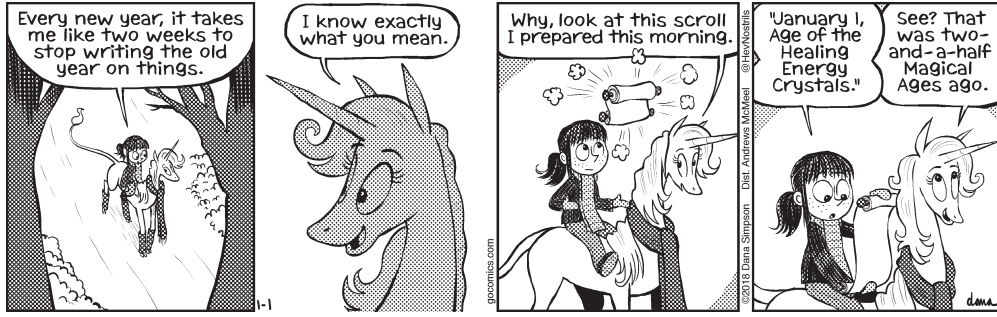
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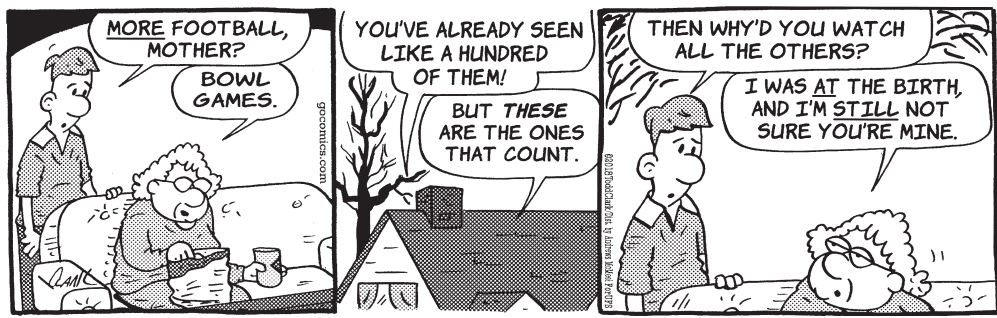
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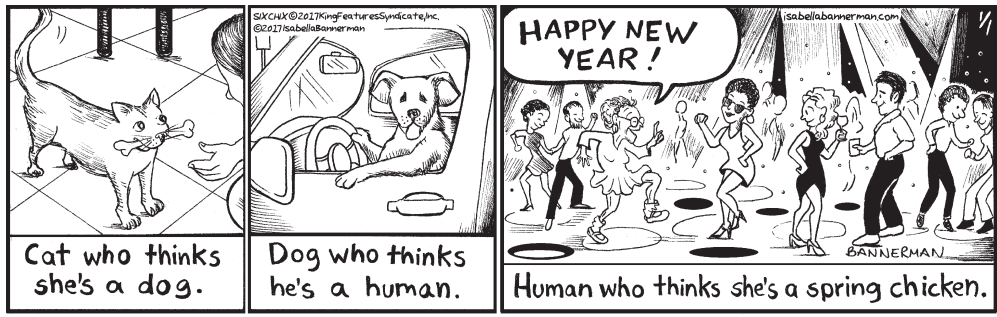
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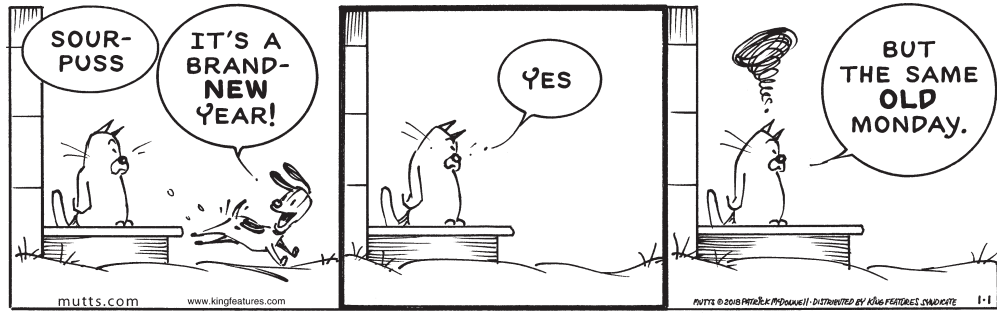
LOLA



SIX CHIX



MUTTS



BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). People may not immediately wrap their heads around what you're doing if it's something they've never seen before. Be willing to show them again. Space it out. Do this gently and over time. This is the price of being a trailblazer.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). It's not an acting job: You really are just as enthusiastic over the success of others as you are of your own. Maybe it's because we're all in this together. One person's win is the sign of a rising tide that will carry all ships.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). While others seem perfectly satisfied with what's happening, you sense that there is something wrong with the system. You're correct. Something's amiss. Get to the bottom of it.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Small things do matter, but they don't make a definitive point. Details can mislead. A single event will only tell part of the story. More of the story will be revealed in a pattern of events. All of the story is impossible to know.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The worthiest goals are basically anti-goals today. For instance, a goal not to do things that are going to embarrass you later, or not to spend time on things that won't matter in the long run, will be a worthy goal indeed.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Because you calculate risk differently for yourself than you do for others, and because you're protective by nature, you'll take certain shortcuts alone that you wouldn't lead others along.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You don't always have to feel passionate to be effective. Though you may not feel like working, going out or spending time with a certain person,

you'll show up anyway, and good results will come.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your willingness to submit yourself to a certain amount of social awkwardness in order to make a connection is admirable. And awkwardness will ensue! So will the connection.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Because you see things how they are and you do things the way they ought to be done, you'll be admired and promoted. Hard to say why these abilities are so rarely demonstrated these days, but this works in your favor.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The problem is wrapped around an opportunity, and all you have to do is tear away at it a bit and you'll get to the good stuff. In fact, this little nuisance could be the start of a huge enterprise.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'll have double the energy of yesterday, and it will show in all you do. If you walked a mile, you'll now walk two. If you made a friend, you'll make two more today.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). There are two sides to the story, and you'll benefit from hearing them both. Actually, there are many more than two sides, but if you listen to too many sides you'll begin to get tired of this story.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 2). Because your needs are met so beautifully and abundantly you'll be moved to help others. This only grows the bounty coming your way this year. A study helps you pick up more work. Your fan base includes someone who wants to give you special care: You don't need it, but it's wonderful anyway. Aquarius and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 13, 38, 32 14 and 18.

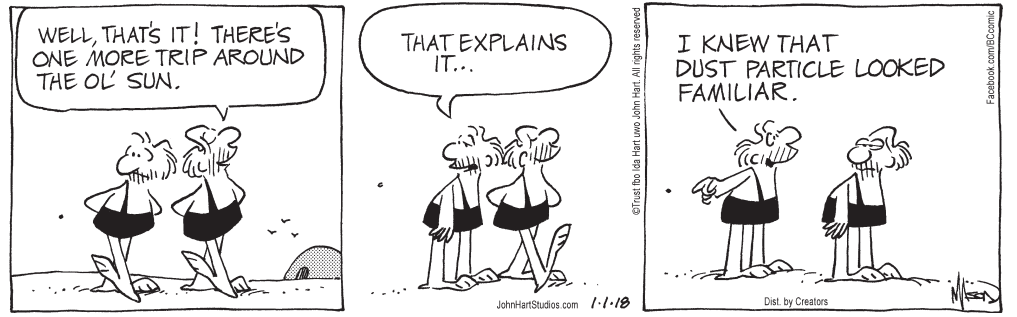
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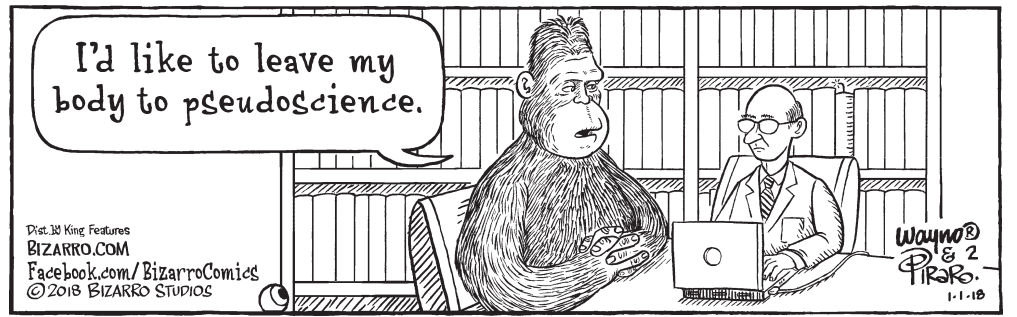
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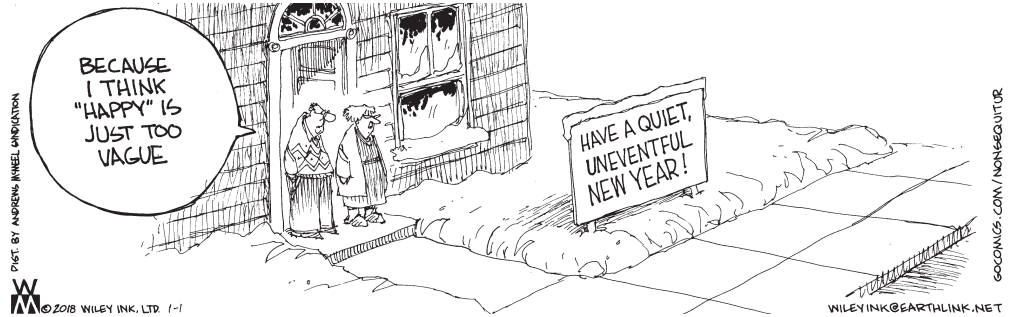
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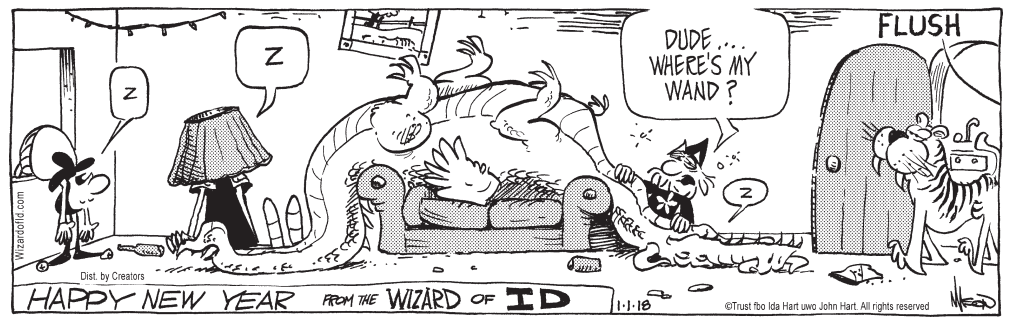
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ROSE IS ROSE

