

Friend's annoying social habits

Dear Annie: Over the past six months, a wonderful friendship has been developing with a potential friend who enjoys the cultural and outdoor activities that I do. We are both exchanging viewpoints, backgrounds, likes and dislikes freely. However, I have two problems: When I share my experience about a difficult health situation or maybe a familial situation, she has to top it or go one better with her own personal experiences. I don't ever feel as if she's really listening in a compassionate way. And sometimes her response doesn't even relate to the actual topic at hand. The other difficulty is that she repeats and repeats her own stories. I respond — kindly, I hope — with "Yes, I remember you telling me about that." How can I bring about changes without hurting feelings or losing the friendship? — *One-Upped*

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
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Her serial one-upmanship may be an attempt, however misguided, at impressing and connecting with you. You can try gently raising the subject: "Have you ever noticed that when I tell a story, you seem to have a tendency to tell a similar but more extreme story? I think you're trying to relate, but sometimes it makes me feel as though what I had to say wasn't important." She's probably annoyed other people with this habit, too, and you'd be doing her a favor by bringing it to her attention so she has the chance to correct the behavior.

But the one-upmanship and repeat storytelling could also be a case of pure self-absorption. In that case, calling the issue to her attention would do little to change it, and you'd have to look for close friendship elsewhere.

Dear Annie: I'm writing in to sound the alarm bells. I just read the letter from "Problems in Pennsylvania" — about her husband's porn habit, as well as his sudden interest in connect-

ing with friends on Facebook — and it could have been the story of my ex. He had become more and more interested in sexual fantasies and looking at porn online, and when I realized his interest in our marital intimacy had diminished, I discovered long letters and conversations he was having with old girlfriends on Facebook, in which he expressed a desire to hook up again, with some very suggestive language. I subsequently learned that some meetings were taking place, and I moved out. When he begged me to come back, promising he wouldn't continue, I foolishly did. Not a month later, I learned he was in a new affair, and this resulted in our divorce. I do believe, looking back at other behaviors, that he was a sex addict. Don't overlook the warning signs. — *Been There*

Dear Been There: No voice is wiser than that which speaks from direct experience. Thanks for sharing your cautionary tale.

Readers, if you think your spouse may be a sex addict, visit the S-Anon International Family Groups website for resources: <http://www.sanon.org>.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Doing things right takes twice as much time as doing them wrong, except when you take into account all the time you'll spend fixing and redoing. When you include that part in the calculation, doing things wrong takes three times longer.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You'll be entertained by your own subconscious. The ideas that pop into your head will surprise and delight you. Your wild imagination is a talent that the best people around you will celebrate.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You want to focus on the basics — work and relationships — but the non-essentials seem so much more fun. Why resist? There are silly adventures to be had and bits of ridiculous fun to grab.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Usually when the tug of war is over, someone has been dragged through the mud. When you feel the first resistance, consider bowing out of the game. You may not win, but you'll stay clean.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Poor communication is never the problem of one person. The "co" in "communication" gives it away. It's as much about what's expressed as it is how that expression is received.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). It's more fun to visit places you've never seen with people you know well. The shared excitement of exploring builds bonds. If this dynamic isn't in your immediate future, plan something.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You know a lot. You also know not to say all you know, because as interesting as your wealth of knowledge is, people prefer it in brief doses. Instead you'll focus on listening and encour-

aging others to play along.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Here's a counterintuitive remedy to stress that will actually work today: Increase your task load. That's right: Take on even more responsibility. Everything will magically fall in order, and you'll get it all done.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Someone wants to leap into your world, but don't let it happen. It will be far more effective to slowly envelop them. Create a journey you both can enjoy.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). When it comes to love, today you're dangerously unguarded, opening your heart based on nothing but an intuitive notion. Ultimately the rewards will more than match your risk.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It will feel really good to handle what isn't working. Get repairs. Mend the tears. Fix whatever needs it. And if it still won't go, it will feel even better to cut your losses.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). When two people have more or less the same conversation over and over again without understanding each other's needs any better than when they started, this is an illustration of poor communication.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 6). Your solar return begins with a flurry of activity in your personal life. You'll be making an important commitment, too. You'll find it easier to make money with what you learn in April. If you need a fresh start, May brings renewal and a clean slate. You'll acquire property or a new vehicle for a great price in July. Virgo and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 48, 1, 13, 33 and 50.

FRANK AND ERNEST



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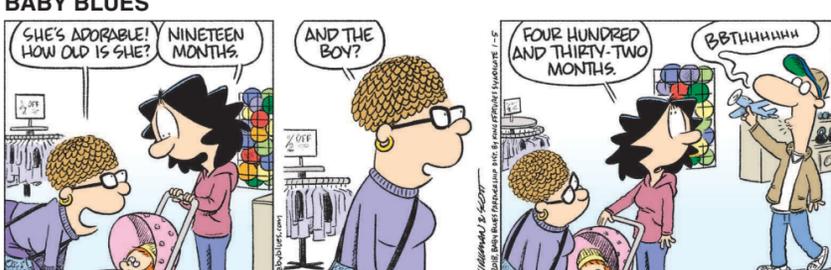
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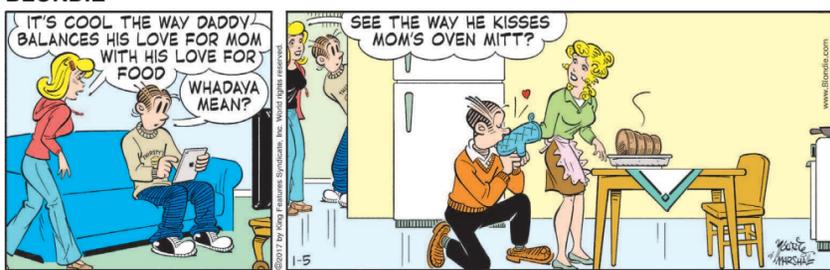
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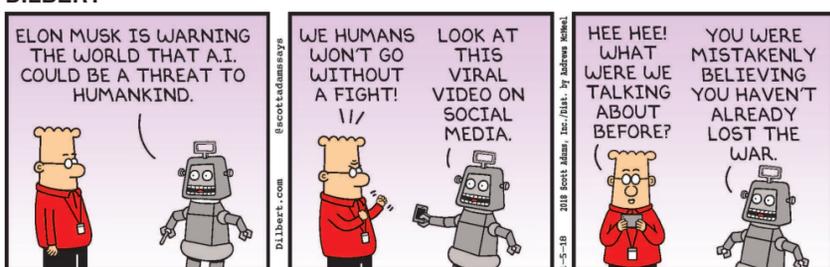
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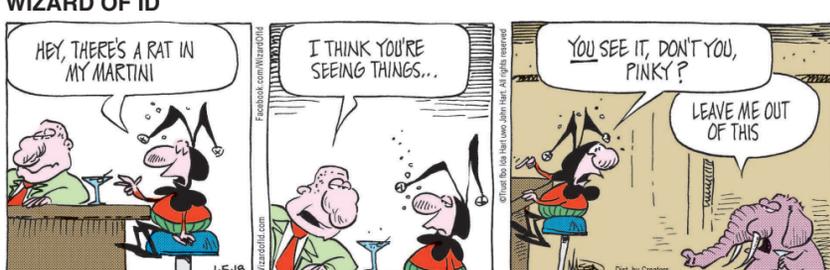
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