

Tired of hosting Christmas

Dear Annie: Though the holidays are behind us, I'm left with some lingering resentment. My problem is that we host too many guests. I married into a family of seven. This family has since grown to 30 people, even with the deaths of the mother and father. My wife and I took on the hosting of the annual Christmas get-together for the family, but it has gotten out of hand, in my opinion, over the past 17 years. With the exception of one year we spent in Hawaii at Christmastime, we have hosted the gathering, even though others have the ability and a home big enough to do so; no one else has ever offered to host. To add to my perceived problem, there are some 16 to 19 other people who come to my home each Christmas Eve who are invited by others and by my wife.

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

I will not go into all the mess they leave behind or the fact that I have, for the most part, funded this for all these years. (My choice.) It's beginning to be a royal pain to me — so much so that I'm at my wits' end. My wife refuses to even consider cutting back on this out-of-hand party. Relatives, I can deal with, but

all these uninvited-by-me guests are beginning to be a pain in the rear. My wife seems to think that once invited, always invited. I might add that I also have a large family on my side, whom we never entertain, at least not on the scale we do for hers.

Am I just an old curmudgeon? — *Crowded House*
Dear Crowded House:

You're tired of hosting 30 family members and 20 people you hardly know every year. That doesn't make you a curmudgeon; that makes you human. Talk honestly to your wife about your feelings. Find a compromise — such as limiting the event to family and close friends only or alternating years and letting one of the other 30 relatives take a turn. If you're frustrated that you don't often host your side of the family, tell your wife that, too. The good news is you've got all year to work out a plan that works for you both.

Dear Annie: A friend of mine died recently. She went through a terrible time during her last weeks, but the trauma was from her living arrangements made by her children, not from the pain. They say you learn a lot about life through

death, and it is certainly true. I want to share some of the things that she and her nurses shared with me.

Remember that even on hospice care, your loved one is living. Place the hospital bed in the living room, where the patient can still have access to life. Do not relegate the person to the bedroom. You have no idea how long he or she will live. Your loved one will still want to smell scents coming from the kitchen, view the TV and have access to all the normal routines of life.

Keep all of your loved one's favorite foods and beverages on hand; you don't know when something might sound good to him or her. When you come to visit, bring some of those things, and please don't forget to bring some along for the caregivers; they are physically and mentally exhausted.

Finally, let the patient make the decisions when it comes to visits from family and friends. If your loved one was an extrovert in life, there's good reason to suspect that the same will be true until he or she has no life left. — *Betty*

Dear Betty: I'm sorry for your loss. Thank you for passing on the wisdom of your friend and her nurses.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). There's usually a need that goes lurking beneath the request that's being made. You sense what it is in yourself and in others: for instance, when they ask for advice but really want corroboration.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). There may be tension between people of differing generations. The way to get around it is to tune in to what the other party finds relevant and to steer clear of topics and manners that may be difficult for others to relate to.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). All of life is an experience: the good and the bad, the exciting and the tedious, the struggle and the triumph. Don't worry so much about whether you're on the right path. Today, the point is just that you're moving.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's a venture in the back of your mind that is starting to push its way to the front. Will people pay for your special talent? Could you make a living with this? Toy around with the idea more seriously.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). There's nothing that influences you more today than the scary example someone else sets forth. You don't want it to be you. You've better ideas about how you want your life to go.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Being comfortable with yourself is insurance against loneliness. Your own friendship is truly the cornerstone that anchors all the other relationships. So be nice to yourself.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Reading and writing — all well and good, but conversation is the very best mental exercise you can get today. It's an intellectual game of catch. The bouncing around in the moment is what

keeps you sharp.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Take on the challenge of extrapolating accurate nuggets of truth out of the stories you'll hear today, because people are likely to make exaggerated claims — part of the fun of the day!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Strike out on your own and the adventure will be noteworthy, though it will lack the conflict and compromise that inevitably makes for a better story.

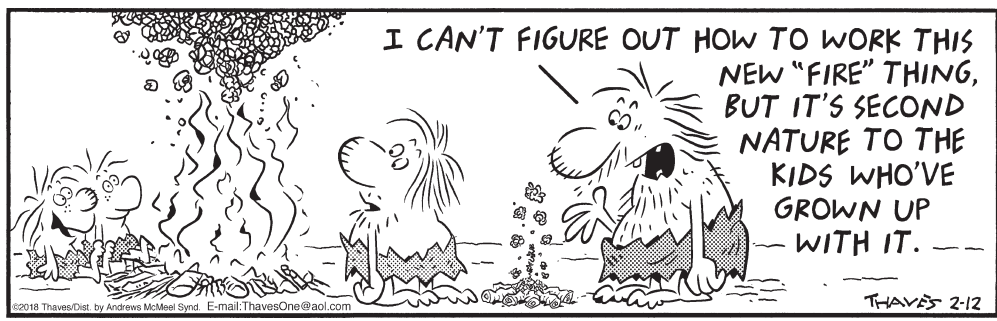
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The mind-body connection is getting stronger. Every time you decide on how you want to move and follow through with this, your body will become increasingly receptive to your command.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It seems to you that someone always loves more, sacrifices greater and gets their way less often... and that someone always is you. Well, today you feel like a victim of love, but distortions abound. Later you'll feel differently.

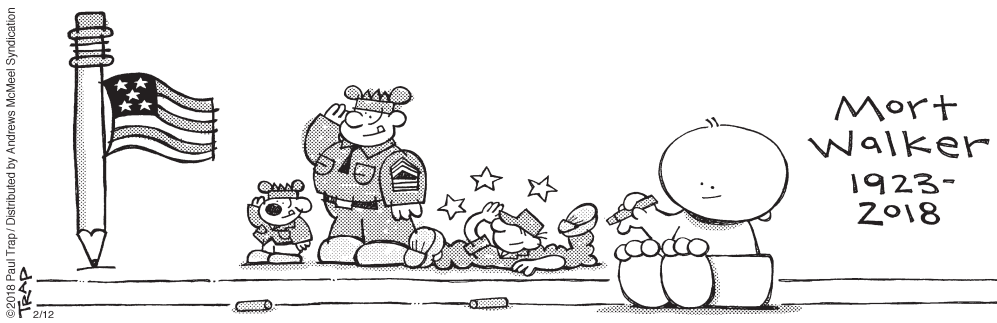
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). People lie when they are afraid to tell the truth. You make it safe to say the truth, and the truth is what you'll get. Perfect because you hunger for honest and intimate conversations.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 13). A shower of financial good luck starts things off. You'll be able to feed your own goals and projects and still help a loved one out. Your powers of charm will be amplified the first three months of this solar return and you'll have to be careful not to set up expectations you won't want to fulfill. July brings a quest. Pisces and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 20, 28, 43 and 17.

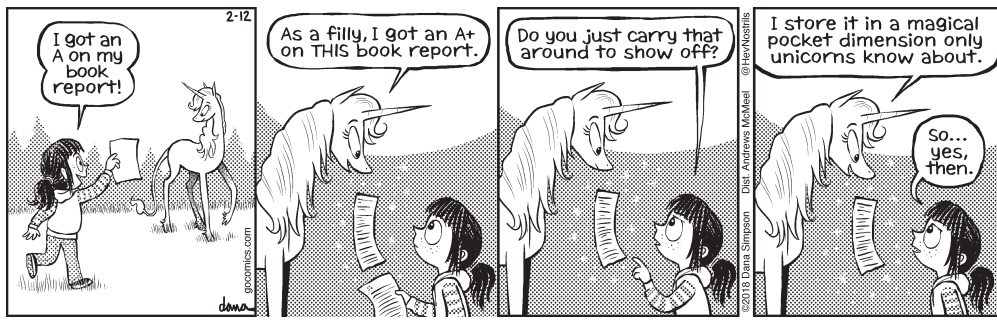
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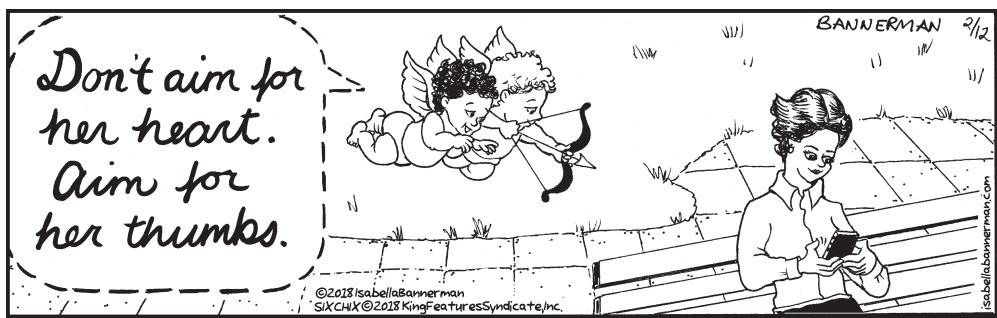
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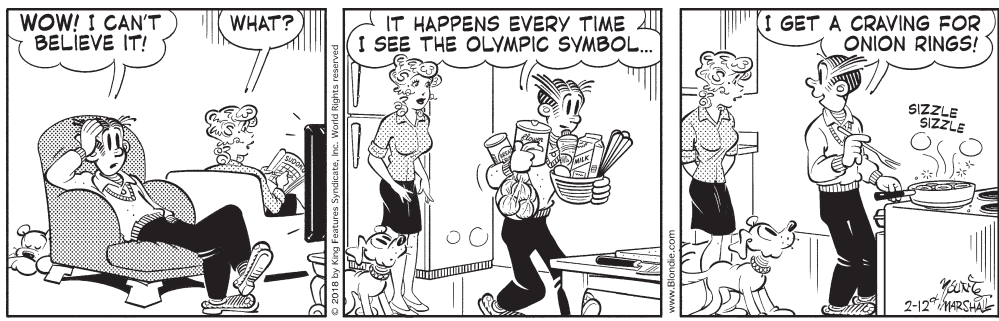
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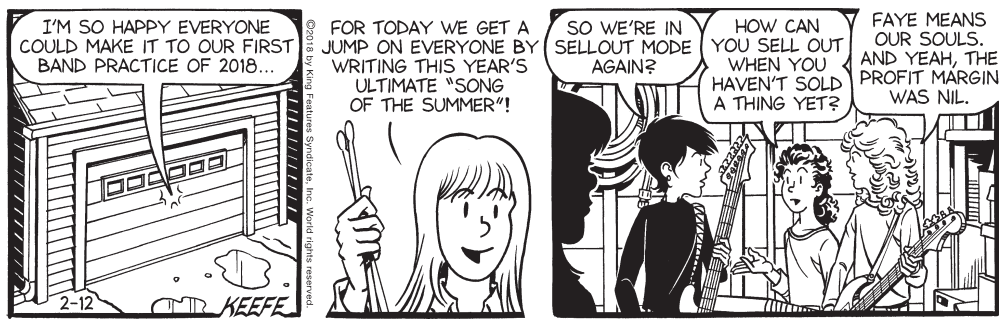
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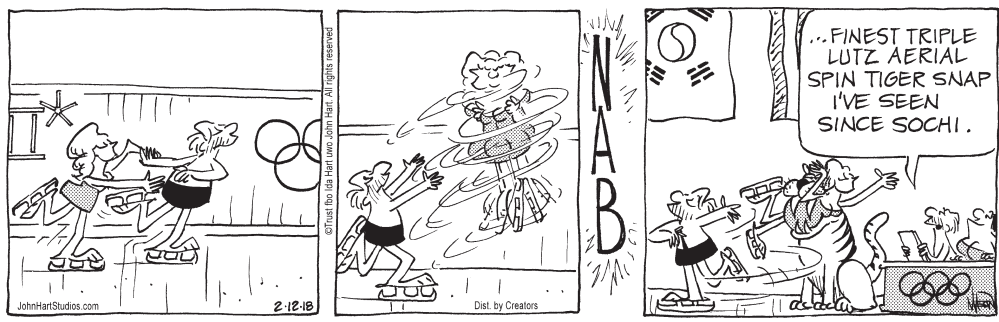
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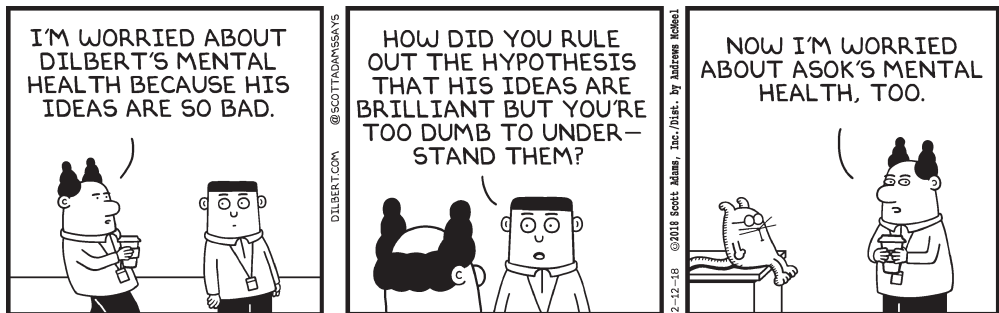
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