

Mom's house of horrors

Dear Annie: I am a stay-at-home mom with three children under the age of 6. They currently go to their grandmother's (my mother's) day care one day a week to give me a chance to run errands and do extra housework. Lately, I have noticed signs of negligence. Some are minor, such as dirty faces and rear ends not properly wiped. Some are more serious, such as a 2-year-old child's being left unattended outside with a small kiddie pool. Children frequently play unsupervised in a basement with litter boxes and alcoholic beverages within reach. Bathrooms are often unsanitary, and the play area smells of cat urine.

Additionally, I have witnessed my mother calling children names and talking cruelly about them in front of other children. My children also report this happening when I am not around. She has even spanked one of my children out of frustration, which she didn't tell me but confirmed later when questioned. It is not unusual for accidents to happen at the day care without her knowing or men-

tioning them to parents. I have voiced concern about the amount of processed food given for most meals and snacks, as well as the amount of time the television stays on during the day. I have spoken with other parents who have similar concerns.

I could go on and on with my list of complaints. The bottom line, however, is that I don't want my children to spend time at their grandmother's house without me anymore, but I don't want to ruin the relationship I have with my mother. I'm not sure how straightforward to be with her, as she is not likely to change her practices after 30 years. (She most likely behaved the same way when I was a child, and now I'm in therapy.) I'm also not sure whether her day care should be reported to any authorities. Any suggestions would be most welcome. — *Concerned Parent*

Dear Concerned Parent: Act first as a concerned parent and second as a concerned daughter, because it's the children at this day care who need you most right

now. Place an anonymous tip with the relevant local agency (find out what agency that is in your state at <http://www.daycareabuse.com/how-to-report>) and let the authorities confront your mother about her negligence. Encourage other parents to file complaints, too. And if you ever witness a child being physically abused or otherwise put in immediate danger, dial 911.

Dear Annie: I'm writing because I've seen several people write to you to complain of friends or relatives who repeat stories. My elder brother shared this helpful hint with me when I was caring for my 88-year-old father and 90-year-old uncle. Each time you are listening to a repeated story, you must come up with a different question to ask about that particular story. Because you have heard it before, you don't need to listen as intently — and it keeps you from becoming aggravated, as your mind is distracted with trying to come up with a new question. — *Grateful Sister*

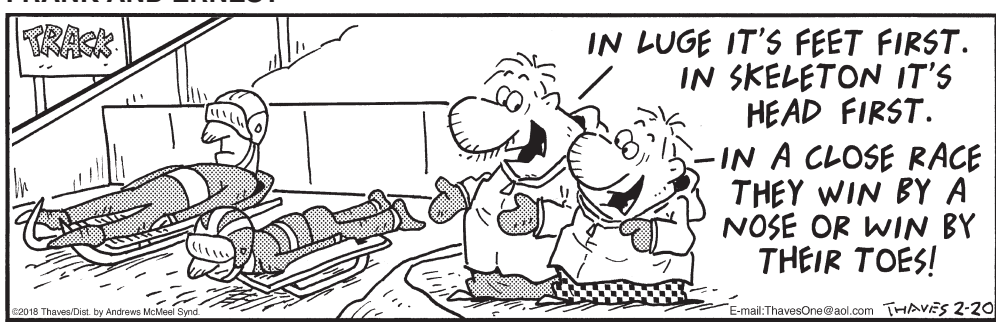
Dear Grateful Sister: I love this tip because it's a way to improve our listening skills and become more compassionate. Thanks for sharing.

DEAR ANNIE

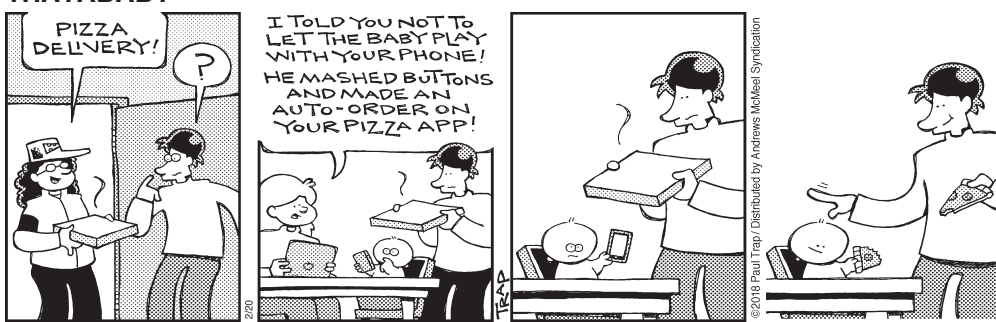


Annie Lane
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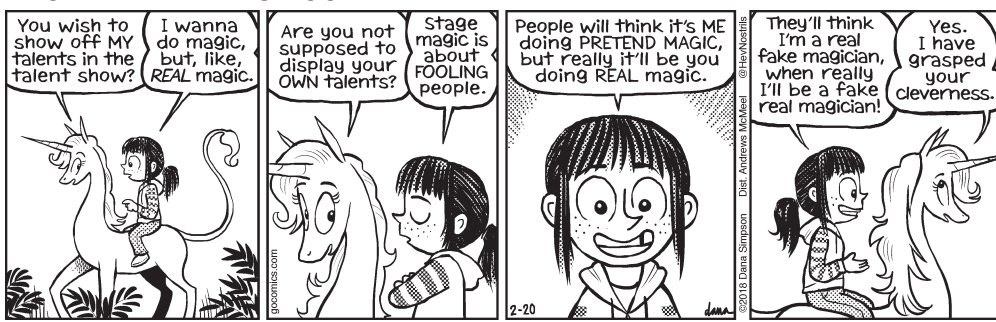
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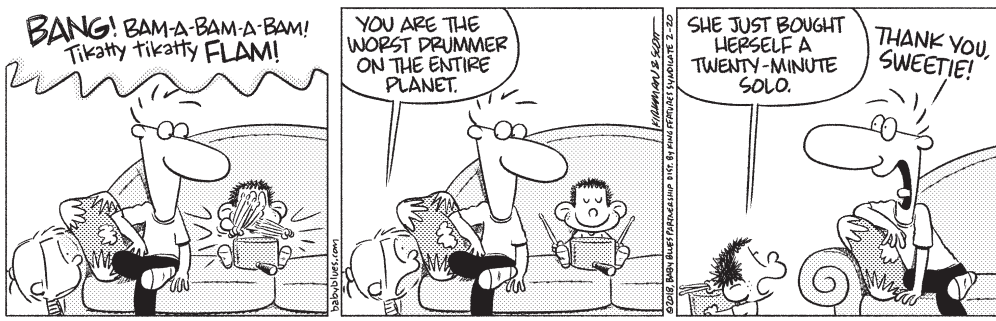
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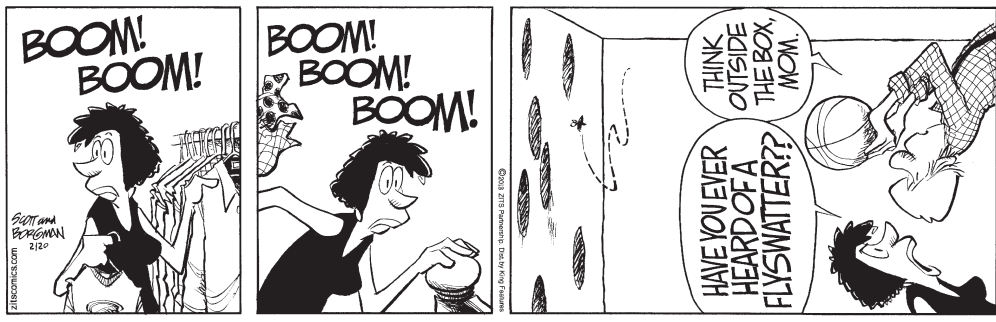
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You tend to put pressure on yourself. Some of it is appropriate and is absolutely what you need to succeed; some of it is totally unnecessary. Today you'll figure out the difference.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). There are three kinds of luck: the kind you are born into, the kind you stumble into and the kind you make by putting yourself in situations with great potential. Of course, you can only really control the last kind. And you will today!

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Happiness doesn't always make you smile. Sometimes it makes you holler, sometimes it makes you cry and sometimes it dumbfounds you into a state of perfect, blissful neutrality.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You figure out that you simply don't need as much as you thought you would, so you can let go and watch your energy level rise. Also, your connection with a fire sign (Aries, Leo or Sagittarius) will raise your energy.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Thinking back to your behavior from your younger days will make you cringe. Years from now, you'll cringe about something you did just yesterday. But it's all growth, trying and learning. Stay light, laugh, forgive and keep going.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Friends and stories will be the great treasure of your day. You'll be surprised by what some people remember about your times together and this will add to your own recollections.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Time can seem like a bully. But bullies can be stopped. Stand up to time — show it who's boss. Take control of your schedule by filling it with what you want to do instead of reacting to every petty demand that's

made of you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You know when people say they're ready, but then it turns out that they are not ready at all? It irritates you so much that you'll take extra measures today just to make sure you're not "that person."

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Sometimes the conditions are perfect for slipping into a sweet spot of productivity. Then there are days like today, when you have to practically bribe yourself to get your head in the game. Hey — that's not a bad idea!

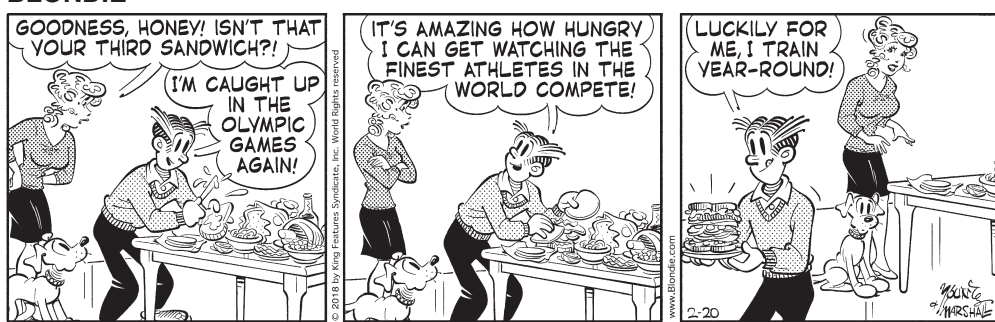
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You've seen time and again how apparently small and trivial events can have disproportionately influential consequences. Today will present another instance of this, though it will take you months to detect the moment.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're really not sure where the next lucky break is coming from — the last one was so long ago that you're starting to forget it. This is a fine time to arrange for yourself to be in as many potential hot spots as you can foresee.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). There's a point in which trying too hard to change a negative behavior becomes an even more negative behavior. Obsessing over improvement is not improvement. Try self-compassion and acceptance.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 21). You have changed your definition of success. Because of this, the wins you create this solar return will favorably affect more people than ever before. Your investment in learning will transform your work picture. A faithful companion is along for the adventure come June. November brings domestic improvements. Libra and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 30, 2, 28 and 10.

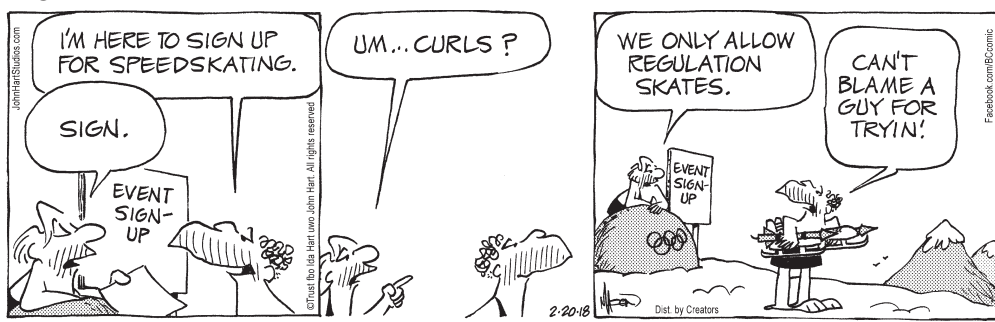
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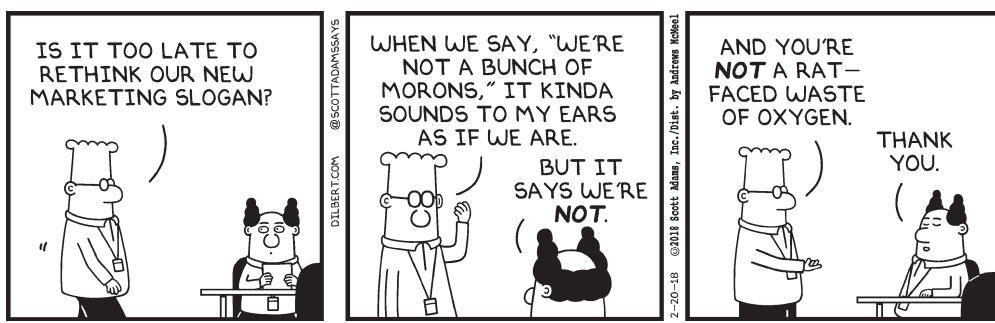
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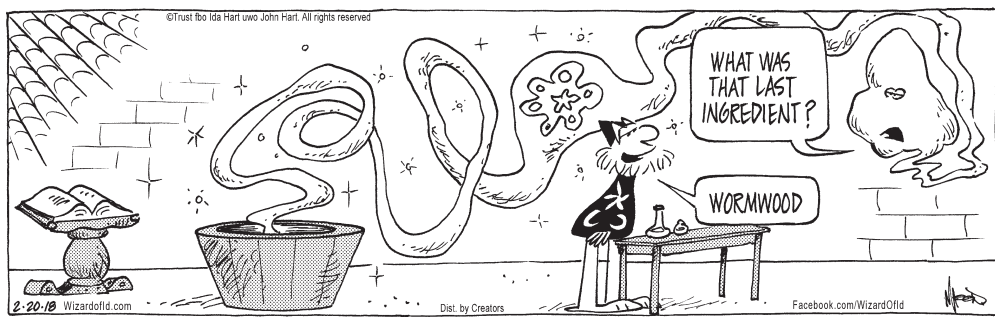
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