

The baby imposition

Dear Annie: I find myself in an uncomfortable situation with a friend who just moved to our town this year with her husband and baby. Besides her two sisters who live here, we're the only friends they have so far. I feel that she's been taking advantage of me by asking for constant help with her baby. Her sister usually watches him once a week but has been tied up recently, so my friend asked me for help watching him last week for six hours. I said yes, thinking it would be a one-time favor. I'm not a baby person, and although this particular baby is very calm, I can't get any work done when he's awake (as I'm sure any mother knows).

Yesterday she asked me whether I would watch him again this week and the week after for the same amount of time. I felt stunned that she was asking again so soon. I didn't know what to say and would have felt extremely uncomfortable turning her down at that moment, so I said yes once again. However, I'm extremely frustrated with her because it feels as if she thinks that her time and work are more important than mine or that because I work from home, she can use me as a free baby-sitting service.

I have other friends who are mothers, even single mothers, yet I've never experienced such neediness or been asked for constant child care favors.

I know that I need to put a stop to this now so that it doesn't continue to delay my work schedule or ruin our friendship. How do I explain to her in a polite but firm manner how I feel about her repeatedly asking for this favor, and how do I express that my not wanting to do this doesn't mean I don't want to be her friend?

— *Not the Nanny*

Dear Not the Nanny: "No" is the magic word that will set you free — free from undue obligations, free from regret and free from resentment. "As adorable and calm as your baby is, watching him is interfering with my productivity." "I'm sorry, but I can't keep baby-sitting" or any other polite variation of "no" will do just fine. Just be simple, direct and, most of all, prompt, because the longer you wait to say no the harder it will get. Don't let fear hold you up. Your friend won't get angry with you for setting boundaries, and if she does, she wasn't much of a friend to begin with.

Dear Annie: This is not a question but just my take on individuals who use

excuses for being rude, being mean or exhibiting overall bad or even dangerous behavior to others or themselves.

I do understand that some people have certain conditions — e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, bipolar affective disorder and schizophrenia — and some blame their parents for a terrible childhood. I sympathize with those individuals.

But do all those people who are rude, are mean or exhibit bad behavior to themselves or others always have to have some "condition"? I think not! We all need to take responsibility for our own actions instead of blaming whatever or whomever. Maybe if they couldn't blame it on something or somebody, they wouldn't do it.

Some people are just mean and rude and show bad behavior because that's the way they are, period. — *Tired of Excuses*

Dear Tired of Excuses: Though I don't know exactly what prompted your letter, I agree that we should take ownership of our behavior. By that same token, though you can't control whether another person is rude, you can control your actions and decide how or whether to engage with a person. When someone's rude, consider it an opportunity to build your character. Walk away and you'll be a better person than you were.

DEAR ANNIE

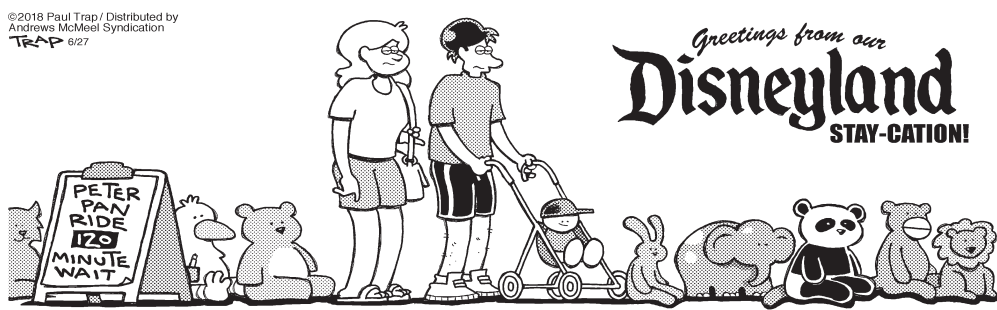


Annie Lane
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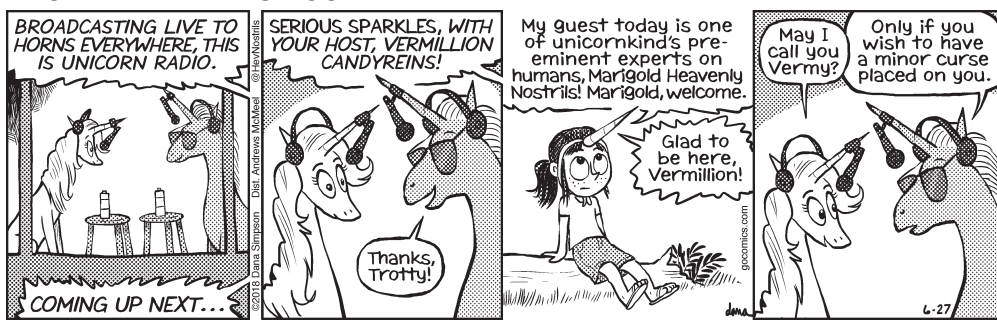
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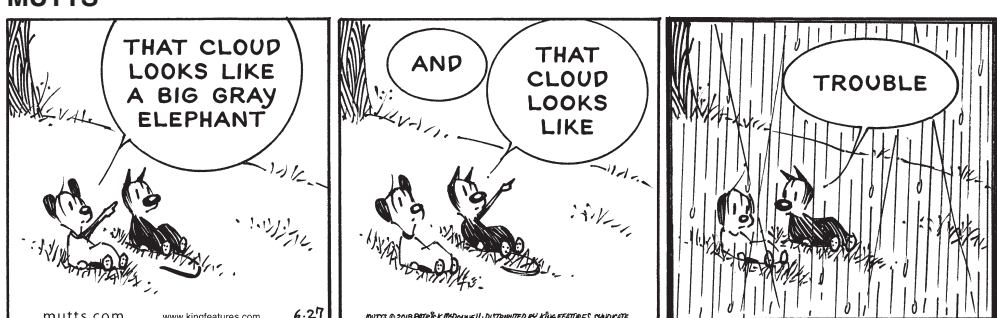
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're in a daredevilish mood. Your invitation to risk will come by way of your heart. Extend it and you'll likely get hurt at some point, as it goes with hearts — and it will also be completely worth it.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The social excitement is like a fire. It might take a second to get it started, but once it catches on it will keep going until all the fuel has been exhausted. Have fun!

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Before you make a choice, it will feel as though you're being weighed down. But once you choose and go, the universe will be like water, getting out of your way as you move.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). In real life, there is no clear first-place winner of anything. Each case is unique. There is no linear judging system. Such a system can be created, just to simplify things and name a winner, but it will be a forced and false construct.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Don't bother with trying to be universally liked; it's not going to happen for you or for anyone else, and it never has in the history of the world. Luckily, it's safe for you to go against the flow and to speak the truth that others don't share.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The energy has been low, and the progress has been slow. Things will pick up after a nice long rest. So if you needed permission to take one, consider this your yellow slip.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You'll be looking for ways to increase your talents, powers and capabilities. Currently, that doesn't require learning or adding; rather, it requires pulling back to assess and organize.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). For you, intuition isn't an alternate form of intelligence. It's always engaged. Today it will be the driver that has you getting ready to take a turn before you could possibly see which way the road goes.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Effective people move on when the project is completed, knowing that nothing will ever be perfect, and good enough is good enough. In other words, get out while the getting is good.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You probably don't want to be the one to break the spell with reality, to point out the problem or to speak the unpopular opinion. And yet, the responsibility falls to you. Use a kind voice and all will go well.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Be wary of advice from those who feel that they've figured life out and now know how everybody can win. It's a mistaken assumption. There is no "everybody" when it comes to life paths. The wins happen on a case-by-case basis.

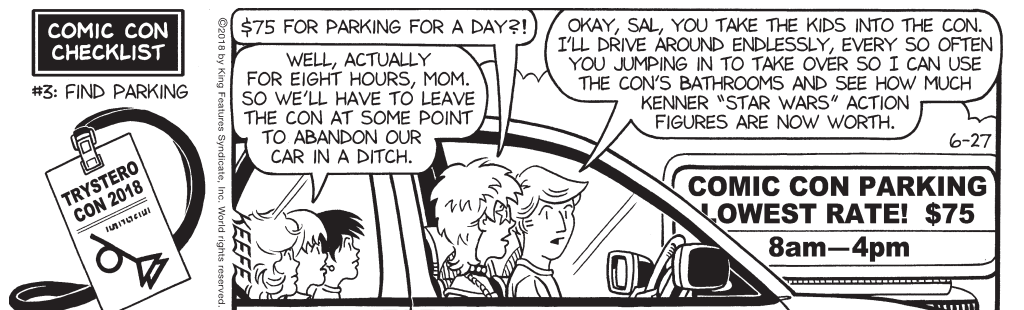
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). A break from routine will be an energy-restoring, soul-satisfying luxury, no matter what the break is. As long as it's out of your ordinary pattern, and also out of your alternative pattern to that, it will revitalize you.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (June 28). Your elastic heart will expand to include more people. Joy will double up inside your world. Anger and compassion cannot coexist. As you become increasingly compassionate, fewer things frustrate and irritate you. You'll get a power surge in September and change something that's been bothering you for a long time. Leo and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 30, 33, 37 and 42.

BLONDIE



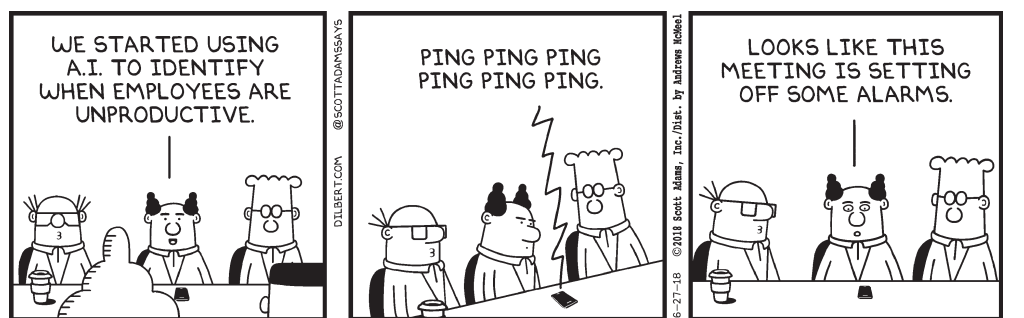
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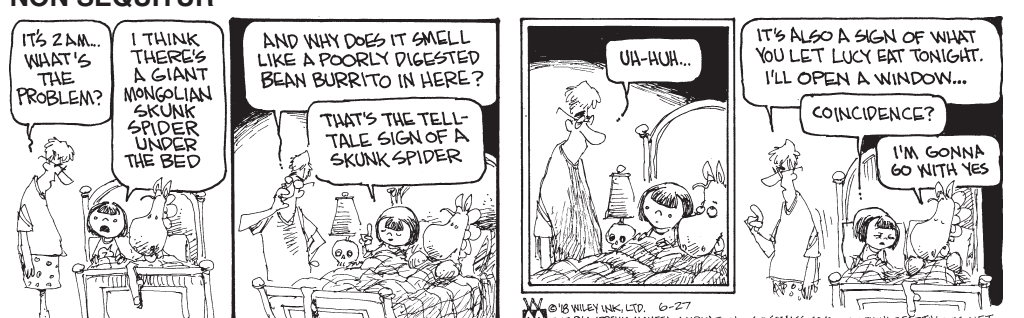
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ROSE IS ROSE

