

Cutting off a conversation

Dear Annie: One of my elderly relatives is a real sweet-heart, but she also is quite a talker. Our phone conversations go on and on — for 45 minutes or longer. I do not want to hurt her feelings, but her conversational skills far exceed my listening skills. The only way I can get a word in is to interrupt her from time to time. How can I diplomatically shorten those interminable phone conversations? I recently had the same problem with our new plumber. He is really a nice guy and a good plumber, but he continues talking long after his plumbing job is done.

I guess that my being a bit introverted makes me less tolerant of extroverts who like to hear themselves talk. I did not mean to make this letter sound hostile, because I do genuinely like my elderly relative and my plumber. — *Enough Said*

Dear Enough Said: With folks who take every conversation into overtime, the best defense is a good offense. Start the call by saying, “I only have 15 minutes (or however long) to talk.”

Your relative will have been given fair warning, and even if you still have to interrupt her midsentence, you won’t feel as self-conscious or bad about doing so, having already established the expectation. This approach could also work for the plumber. Let him know you have things to do right after the appointment. If he turns on the chatter faucet anyway, don’t be afraid to jump in and say, “You know I always enjoy talking to you, but I just really need to take care of some things. Thanks for coming by. I’ll show you out.” And don’t worry too much that you’ll hurt anyone’s feelings. I get the impression from your letter that you’re an especially courteous person, and it seems in your nature to go to lengths not to offend.

Dear Annie: I read your column every day, and I’m always amazed by the unusual dilemmas people write to you about. Now I am hoping you have an answer for me. Anyway, we have a dear friend we’ve known for many years, and she has a problem with dogs of all sizes. She

is extremely afraid of them and reacts in an almost childlike manner towards them. It seems to stem from her childhood in Sicily. One time, when she was 5 years old and walking in her neighborhood, a large dog barked at her and charged the fence around its house. It must have scared the bejesus out of her.

We recently got a puppy, and she doesn’t want to be around the puppy. She even cringes at photos of the puppy. Is there anything that can be done to help her without losing her friendship? — *Dog Lover*

Dear Dog Lover: You have to take puppy steps with your friend. Each time she comes over to your house, make sure your puppy’s just had a nice long walk, and put your puppy on a leash. Ask your pooch to go into a sitting position so that she can pet the puppy calmly. The first time, she may pet your puppy only once or not at all. But if she sees — through repeated exposure — that your dog is not the dog that terrified her when she was 5, she may be able to reprogram her fear. If she really can’t even try and be around a small puppy, she should seek professional help.

DEAR ANNIE

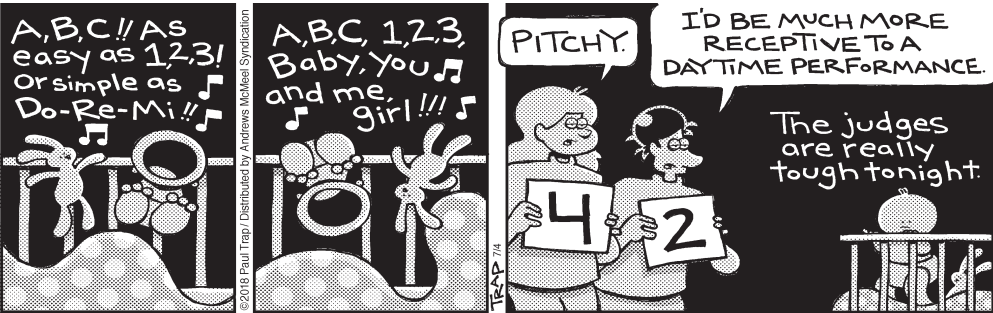


Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

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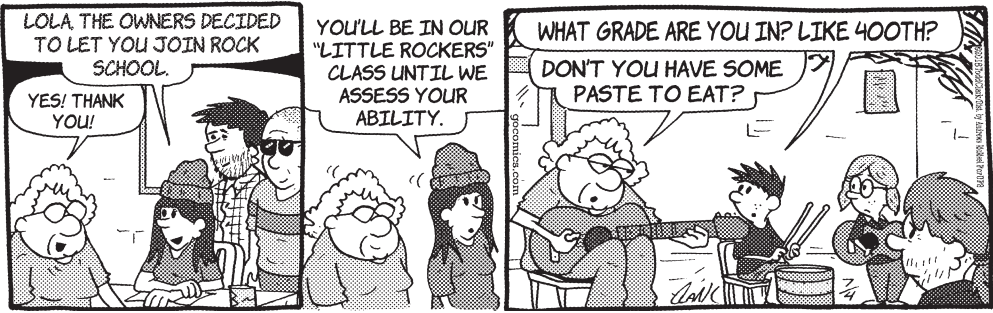
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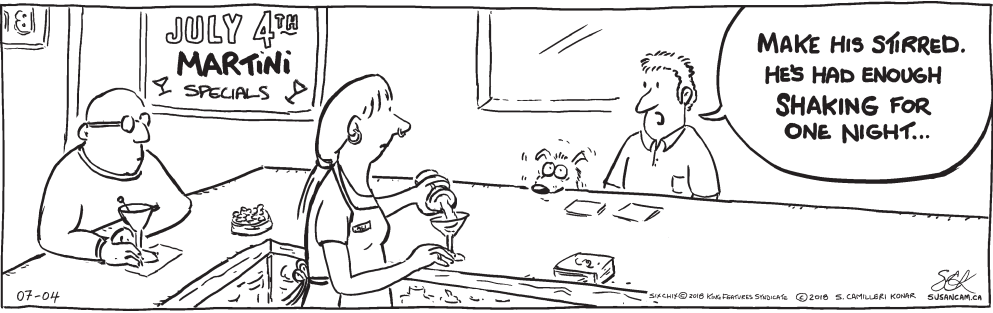
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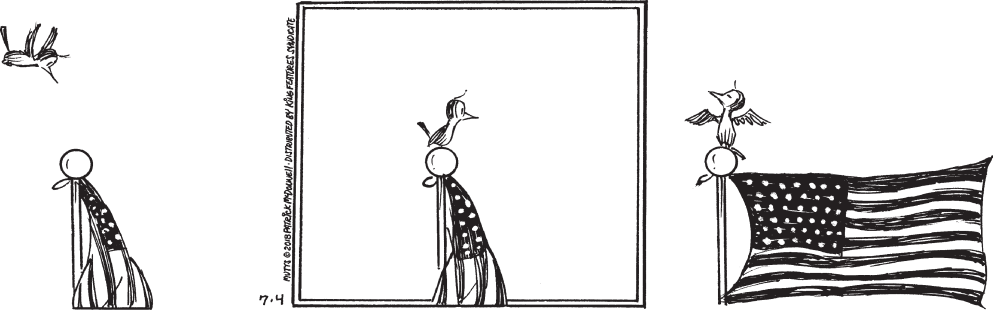
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You'll be asked to work on a job that you don't know the first thing about. Maybe you'll have to bluff a little just to get things rolling, but don't pretend to know everything. Stay receptive. Ask questions.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). If productivity is your only goal, you might miss out on the real pleasures of this day. The goal of being present without requiring any particular product of the moment will result in beautiful times.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Don't think you can do it? Then you must try. No ... do better than try. Make a mission of it. Taking on extraordinary challenges will make you brave, strong and better in all the ways that count.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Tell them too much and they'll recoil. But tell them a little less than they really want to know and you'll have them leaning forward in their attempt to sate the appetite you've whetted.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). A situation will heat up, causing you to go into hyper-observant mode. The more details you can notice, the better you'll be able to take advantage of the opportunities here.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Worrying does have a benefit. It causes you to be aware of possibilities and choose your course carefully. But don't agonize over heavy stuff. You're supposed to climb the mountain, not carry it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Heartache isn't a problem to solve; it's a healing process. Relax and accept the feelings you've been running from. When your heart is peaceful, you move better, feel healthier and have more vitality to work with.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). People decide one another's value based on how much benefit the other person brings or could bring to them, which is totally subjective. Decide your own value, because any assessment others make will be wrong.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). On days like today, you're better off not calling it a success, a failure, or even a wash. All that matters is having the courage to continue, and you have that abundantly.

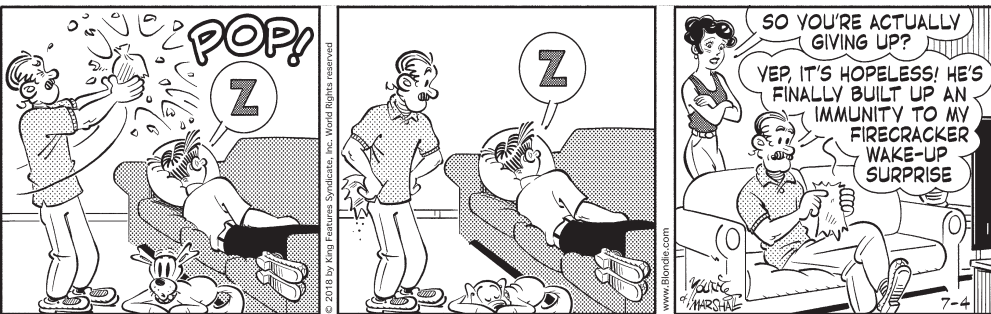
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). As serious as you are about work, you may choose to socialize instead of hunker down. There's much to learn from others, and you won't be sorry if you put companionship over business, but that's just for today.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Time and attention are not renewable resources. The moments and focus you give to other people matter, maybe more than anything else. You value what you give, and appreciate the value of what others give.

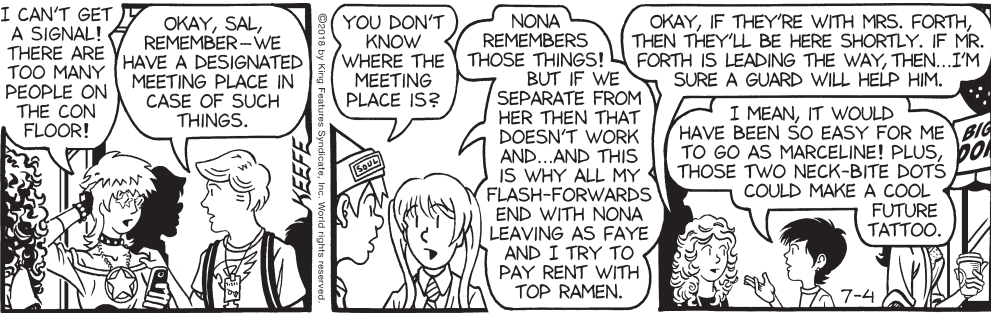
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Just because you're an old soul doesn't mean you can't be naive, silly and surprised by fresh life. Today you'll be wise and awoken. You've seen it before and yet experience it as brand new.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (July 5). You'll love the swirling dance of this solar return, but this is more than a whirlwind of activity. There's a real purpose to accomplish here. It used to be about getting your goal, but now it's so much more. There are many who will work and live better when you get what you want. You can't let them down, and you won't. Taurus and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 7, 30, 25, 8 and 39.

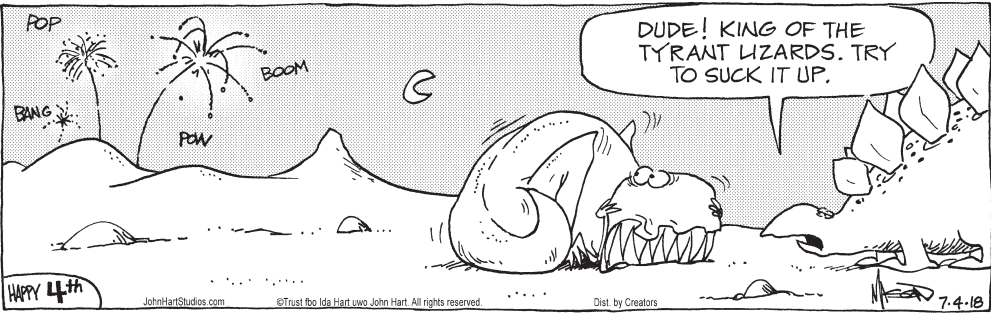
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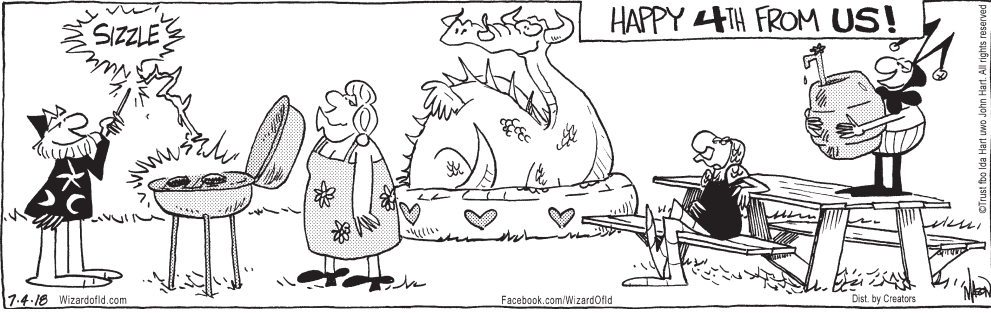
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