

Honing your skills to pay bills

Dear Annie: I wish I had listened to my mom when she told me to go to college. I was 18 and didn't want to do it. I really liked working with machines, so I got a job doing that. Also, not everybody went to college back then. Five years later, my girlfriend got pregnant, and I stayed at the same job because I made pretty good money and the company had family medical plans. Now I'm 40 years old, and we have three kids. We need more money, but my company can't give me more.

I'm really good at my job, but I don't have as many different skills as people who went to trade school or went to school for engineering. Looking for another job has been hard, and I feel that people who have less experience than I do have gotten the jobs because they have special degrees. So it's a weird situation. Do I keep going with the job that pays less? Go back to school to get a degree? I would have to get loans, and that doesn't seem smart because we have a mortgage, cars and all that. What do you think? — *Better Late Than Never?*

Dear Better Late Than Never: I am always for getting more education — but it doesn't have to mean quitting your job. See what skills are most in demand in your field and what corresponding coursework could help you develop those skills. You may not need to get a whole degree to earn higher pay. You may just need a certificate. I'd also encourage you to look into getting the most out of your current skill set — for example, by doing freelance work on the side.

Dear Annie: I would like to offer some suggestions to "Desperate in Delaware" and to others who are having difficulties dealing with their children's frustrating behaviors. As a psychologist, I have found that positive reinforcement always works better than negative. Parents can take control again without screaming. The following token economy is an effective system:

Children are told that they will receive a chip when they behave. The chips can be turned in for rewards. If they are misbehaving, they are told that they will get a chip if they stop the behavior. The children are told ahead of time what behaviors will

earn chips. If they continue to misbehave, they should get a timeout. This is the tried-and-true method of behavior management, and it prevents some very nasty interactions between parents and children. — *Vermont Psychologist*

Dear Vermont Psychologist: I appreciate your expert insights, and I agree that a token economy is a really effective and positive method of establishing good behavior in children. Thanks for writing.

Dear Annie: I would like to respond to the woman who is upset about people's use of her surname. My family name also is Gross. There are thousands of other people with that last name. This is a German name, and I tell people it means great, but it also can be used to mean large, many, impressive, grand and several other things.

It is not possible to change the English language on your own, so the best thing to do is to change your attitude and turn a bad situation into something good. Once you learn a bit about your ancestral heritage and learn the real meaning of the word, you will be proud to hold your head high and say to yourself, "I am great." — *Proud Gross*

Dear Proud Gross: Your attitude is contagious. Thank you.

DEAR ANNIE

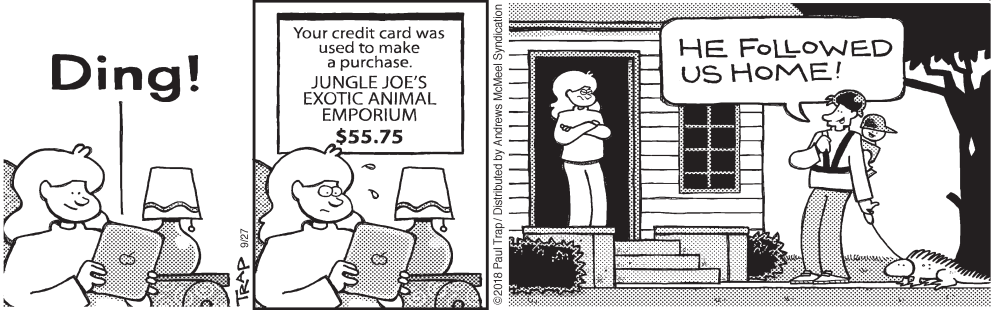


Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

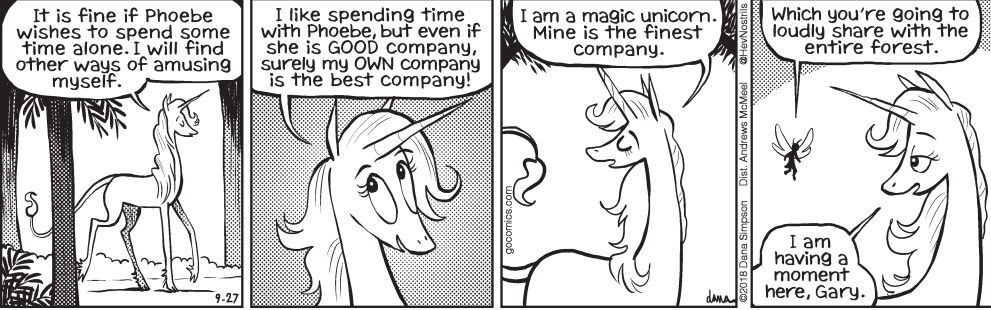
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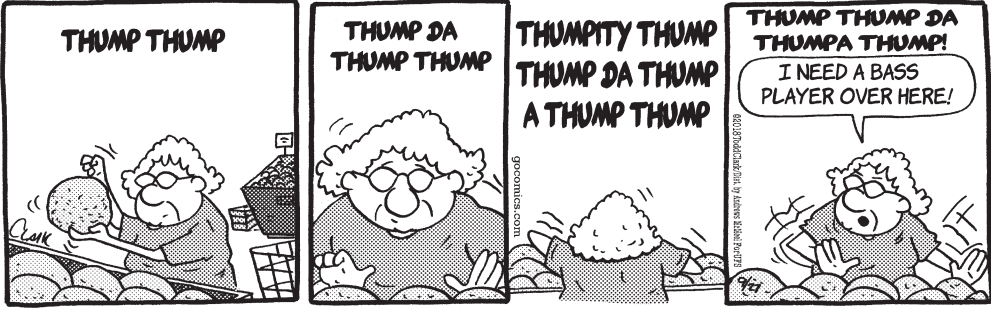
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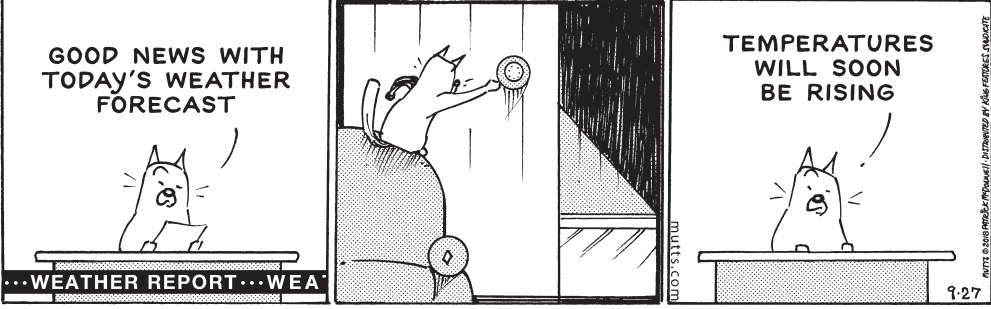
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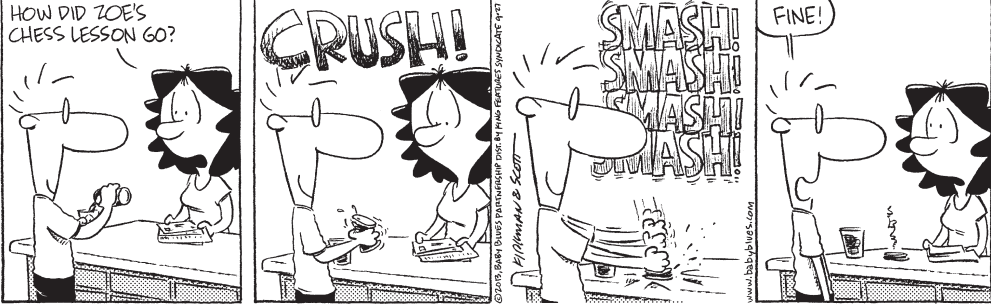
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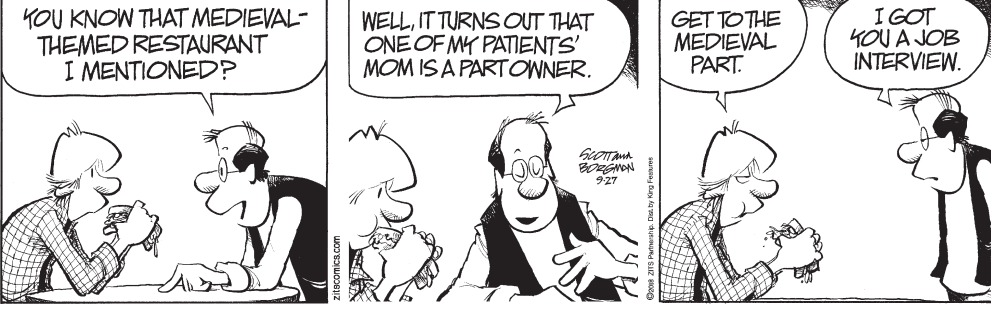
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). There's a standard cost for one kind of work and quite another cost for work that includes anything custom, super-quick or in any way unpleasant. Because this is only fair, you'll either pay or be paid more today.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Dealing with people will be a forte of yours today and you'll enjoy it. This is what makes you a great manager — of others, and also of your own playful spirit, which sometimes needs a little reigning in to be effective.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). In order to surround yourself with the right people, you must first understand your own strengths and weaknesses. Then you'll know who can fill in where you need help, and whom you can serve with your strength.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's not a single area of life that isn't improved today by your clear vision of what it should be. People understand your expectations. You'll give them feedback as to how everyone is doing and what is next to come.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You'd rather not have to figure out the complexities of a nuanced political situation before you roll up your sleeves and get to work. The best scenario is one in which the talking points are the same as the doing points.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're someone that others consider to be a good and caring person. Don't underestimate the value in this. It's a detail that, on paper, may seem insignificant or cliché, but is, in actuality, is all that really matters.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). While most people open their eyes in the morning recalling what they must do, you'll take a different approach today. You'll think, what fun can I get into?

How can I maximize this day's potential for enjoyment?

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Spend an hour early in the day handling all those small details that have been bugging you. It will keep your mind from flitting around to unfinished tasks later in the day when you'll really need to concentrate.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Because you do what it takes to get the favorable outcome, people who understand power dynamics will finger you as the leader whether or not you actually have the title.

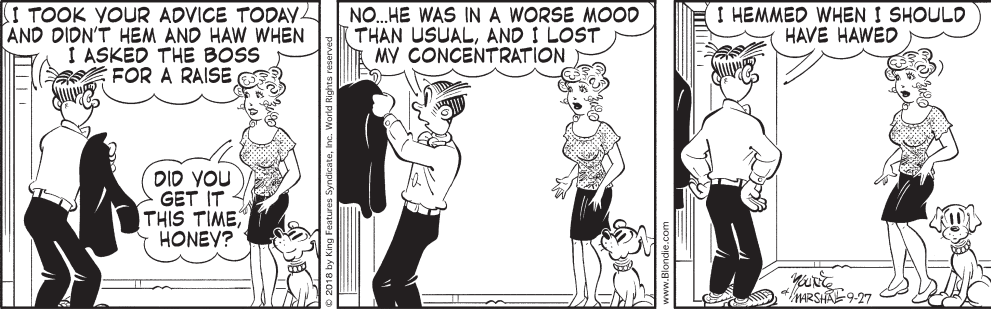
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You and a certain someone share a language that, when spoken between you, creates a series of mental and emotional shortcuts that outsiders won't begin to understand. Cherish this. It's super special.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Oddly, you'll let go of the controls and then things start to happen for you. This is partly because you set things up so well in earlier stages, and partly because key people feel freer to perform once you take a few steps back.

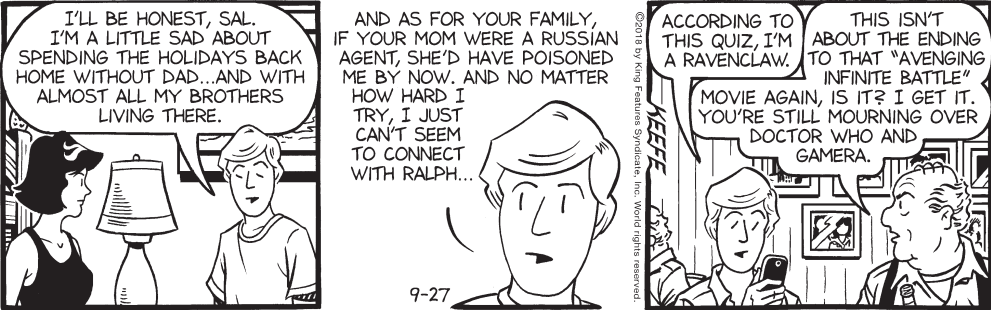
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). What happens today will definitely help you hone your critical ability to recognize the difference between superb, mediocre and shoddy work. Mastering this will ensure you continue to gravitate toward excellence.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Sept. 28). Your optimism will prove warranted; magnificent things are starting to happen for you, the first sign of which will come with a new arrangement you make in the next five weeks. More highlights: money in the mail, confessions of love you longed to hear and perfect timing for the sale of a large item. Cancer and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 22, 9, 37, 10 and 16.

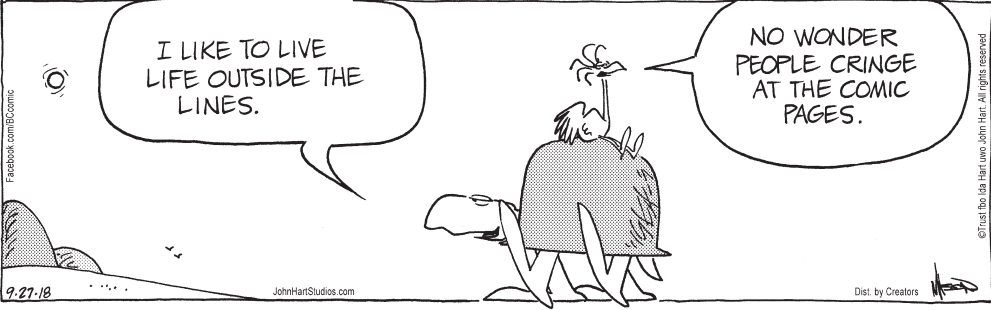
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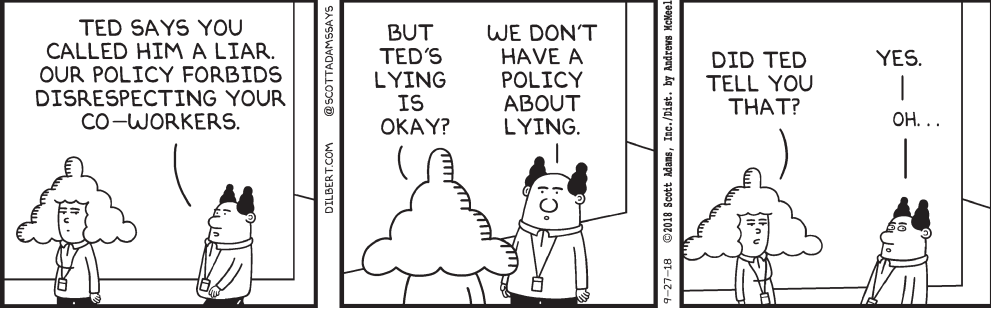
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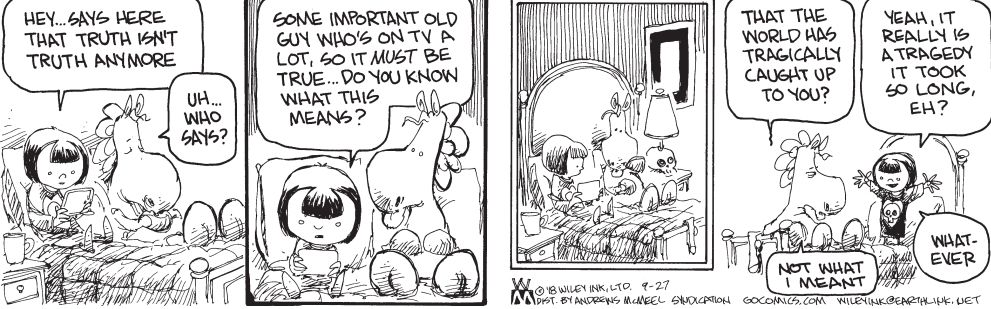
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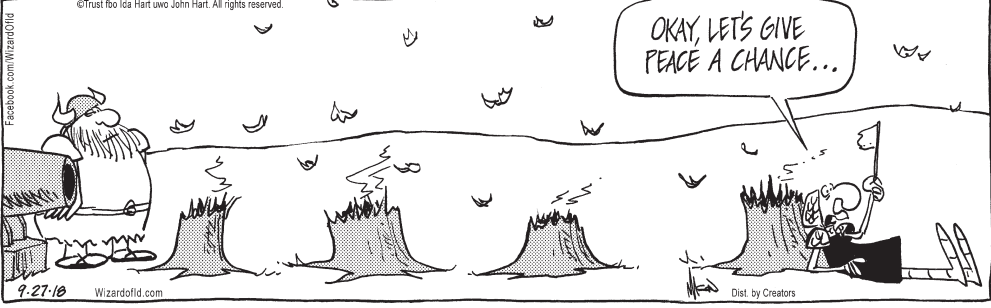
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ROSE IS ROSE

