

Breakdown on Facebook

Dear Annie: Recently, I've noticed that a "friend" on Facebook has been making very erratic posts, sometimes going on religious, political and metaphysical rants for hours on end. No one else is commenting on the posts or interacting with him. One person did ask, "Are you OK?" He proceeded to reply 50 times, going off on tangents about his no longer being part of this world, his being diagnosed as clinically insane, how he changed his name to better fit with the church he's created for himself and how everyone needs to join.

Though we were somewhat friendly about 10 years ago while in college, I have no contact information for this guy, and none of our mutual Facebook "friends" still talks with him. Though he hasn't been threatening self-harm directly, there are some very concerning posts, and he's mentioned past abuse. It also appears as though he's moved out of the country, so I can't call the police for a wellness check.

There are recent photos with friends, so I assume other people are aware of what's happening. So part of me wants to just ignore it all and mind my own business. However, part of

me is concerned that I'm passively witnessing a mental breakdown and thinks I should help in some way. What do you think, Annie? — *Witnessing an Online Breakdown*

Dear Witnessing an Online Breakdown: I think you're not the only person who's been nervously watching his troubled behavior, but you may be the only one to do something about it. Start by sending a message to one of the friends with whom he's recently been photographed. Ask whether he or she has seen his posts, is aware that he seems to be experiencing mental illness and is taking any steps to help him. If neither that friend

nor others seem to be taking it seriously, research some mental health resources in his area and share them with him directly. You can also use Facebook's reporting tool. Simply click the three dots in the upper-right corner of one of his troubling posts and then select "Give feedback on this post" and "Suicide or self-injury." Someone from Facebook will reach out and attempt to connect him with help. Of course, if he ever mentions suicide or any intention to harm himself or others, call 911. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-

8255) is also a great resource.

I understand your inclination to mind your own business. But you have nothing to lose by speaking up, and you might end up making all the difference.

Dear Annie: I would like to respond to the letter from "Wondering in Massachusetts," who was frustrated with your recommending therapy. As a therapist who's also been in therapy, I'm always glad to see you refer people to therapy. Many towns and cities have low-cost counseling centers. I volunteer at one whose low-fee fee is \$5 per session, which most people can afford. I myself have a sliding scale that is very reasonable. There is absolutely no substitute for therapy in which someone trained in psychology, various treatment modalities and objectivity can help you resolve current problems, whether they are just about the present or they stem from the past. — *Karen, LCSW*

Dear Karen: Well said. Therapy is more accessible than one might think. I encourage people to look for low-cost counseling centers or, if that's not an option, to try websites such as Talkspace and BetterHelp. Thank you for writing.

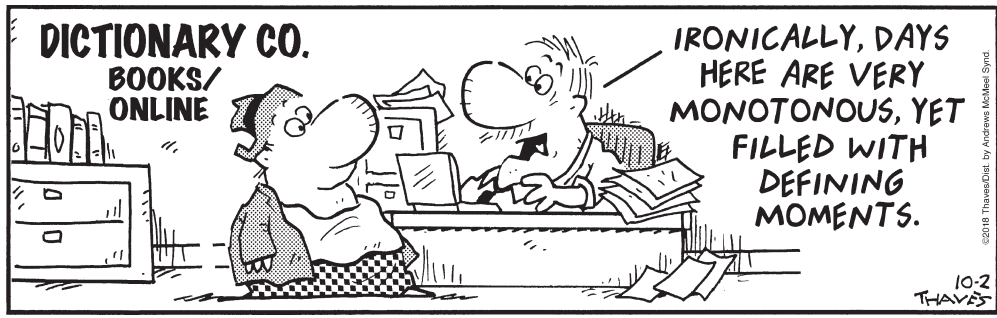
Dear Annie: Please consider physical activity as an alternative to therapy. — *Happy Walker*

DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

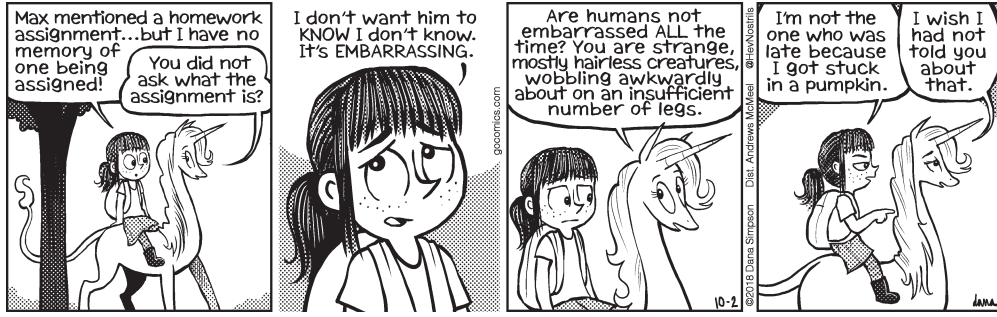
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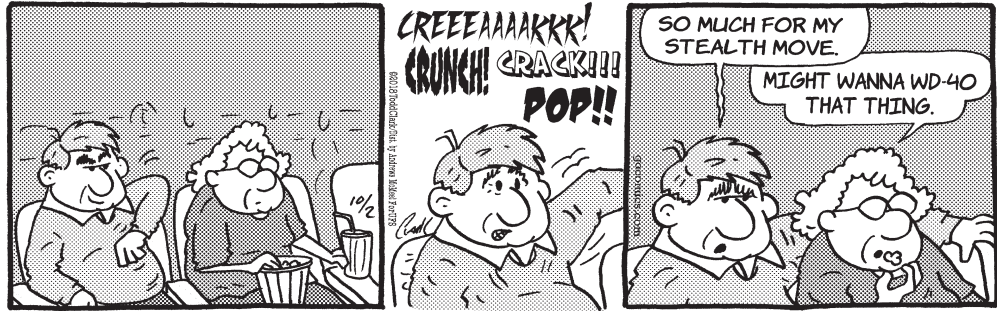
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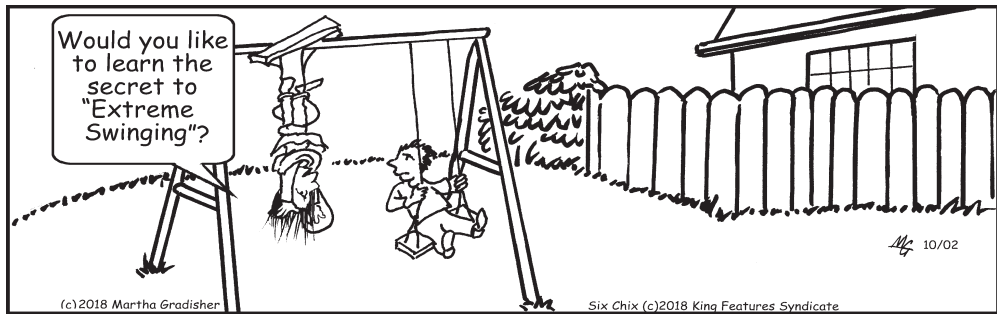
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your mind can either be your ally or your enemy. Choosing helpful thoughts is the habit to cultivate at this critical juncture. Don't expect such thoughts to come naturally. Write them out. Repeat them. It's forced, but it will work.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). There are no free passes for what you want to experience. You'll be glad for this. Hard work forces you to confront and ultimately develop a better connection with your core character.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). There's something you don't want to do, and yet you really must. So do it first. This will improve the overall quality of your day. Otherwise you'll spend the whole day cooped up to a nagging feeling. **CANCER (June 22-July 22).** People don't learn with their arms crossed. Learning is a posture. It's a receptive way of being. The learning mind is open and curious, willing to do the things that reinforce the assimilation of knowledge.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You're capable of deep self-reflection but timing is key. For the most part, you'll keep it light and do what you need to do today. Then tonight, you'll choose your moment and go deeper into your own motivations.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Any feeling you have of being constricted will go away once you reduce your spending. Lower the expenses so you can show a profit, minimize your stress, and have the freedom you've longed for.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The path to success will be built from long strings of kept promises. Of course, the easiest way to keep your promises is to make promises that are

easy to, and maybe even a pleasure to, keep.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Neatness will make a difference in your work. It won't make it inherently better, but it will make it more user-friendly, which will lead to more people making use of it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You've been drawn to both virtue and vice, and sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. But down deep you know who is good for you and who isn't. Stick with the people who are good for you.

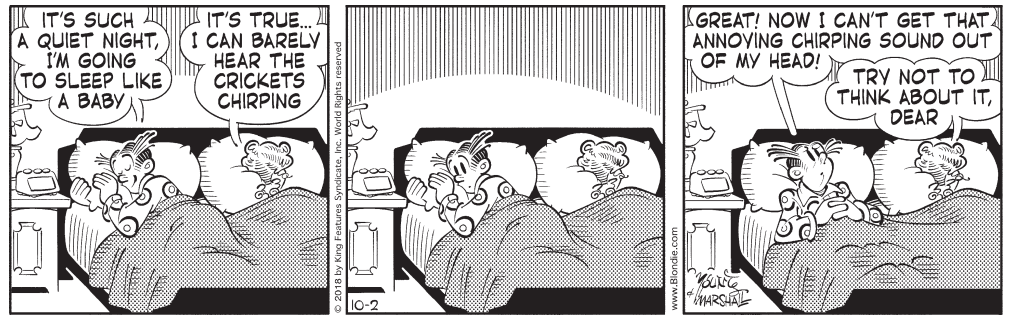
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Not long ago it was you who needed guidance. Now you're the one giving it to others. You'll do this with great patience, thoroughness and heart.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're a bit of an impresario today, creating a "show" and selling tickets. On a deeper level, what you're doing is helping others to see what's extraordinary about that ordinary thing that's been there all along.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). The past is messier than it looks in the history books. The story we tell looking backward already has an ending. All we have to do is connect the dots in a way that leads up to it. The present has no ending. The story is up for grabs.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Oct. 3). A surprising turn of events happens this month. You'll be mentored by one who sees your enormous potential and can help you realize it. More highlights: a spontaneous trip that leads to love, a bargain catered just to you and the chance to perform before your colleagues and raise your position. Capricorn and Aquarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 33, 38, 25 and 17.

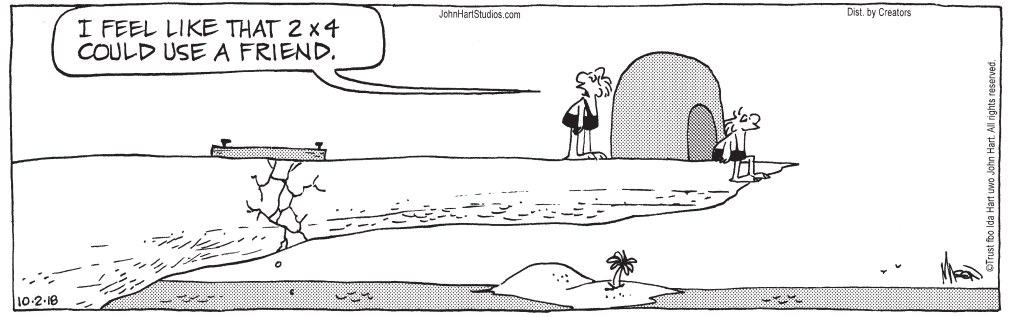
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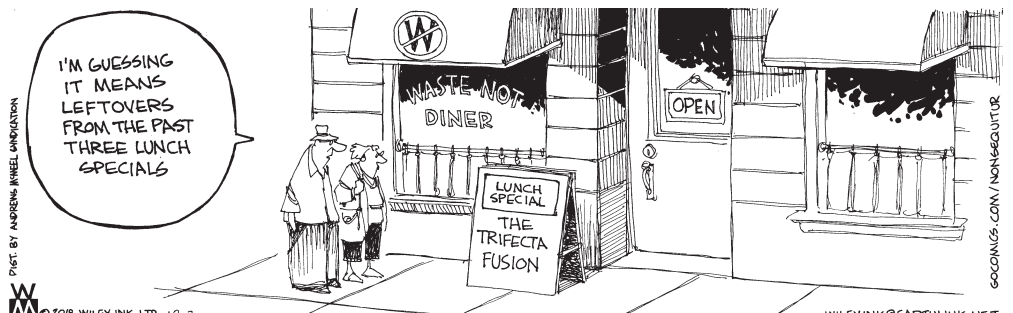
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ROSE IS ROSE

