

Time off during the holidays

Dear Annie: I'm a bit unclear on etiquette when it comes to asking for time off from work. This became an especially sticky situation recently, when I was requesting time off for the holidays. It seems my co-workers hog the vacation time, and I have trouble asserting my right to a more-or-less equal amount of time off. How do I confidently claim what I'm owed without causing conflict? — *Vying for Vacation*

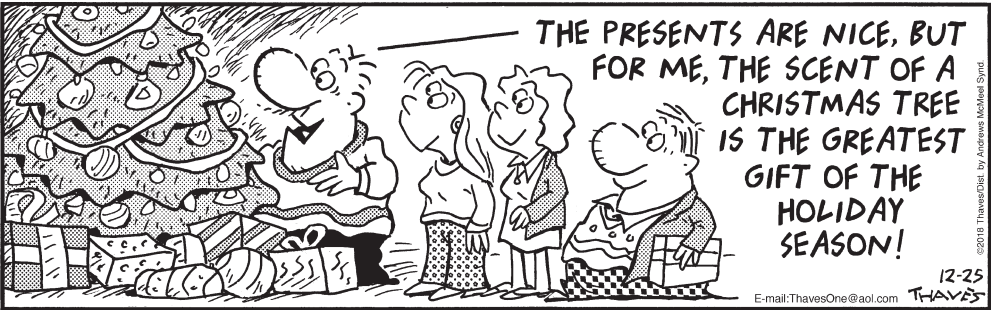
Dear Vying for Vacation: Having a job means having to work around the holidays sometimes. It's a fact of life. When it comes to deciding who in the department gets to take vacation during high-vacation-demand windows such as Christmas week, the factors are generally seniority and who worked that holiday last year and the year before. So if you worked Christmas Eve last year, for example, you might mention this to your boss. When you do end up having to work on holidays, keep your chin up and count your blessings. Being employed during the holidays is much better than being unemployed during the holidays.

Dear Annie: My significant other's family has invited me to go on a cruise with them over Christmas next year. I love traveling, and I really want to go. But I feel guilty ditching my family, especially my sister, on Christmas. I'd love for them to come with us on the trip, and my significant other's family would, as well. But my family simply couldn't afford it. I think I'm going to go on the cruise and celebrate Christmas with my family on another day. Does that make me a terrible person? — *Ditching in December*

Dear Ditching in December: Whether because of work or financial hardship or because we're spending the holiday with a spouse or significant other, there will come a day when we won't get to spend Christmas with our parents and siblings. It's nearly inevitable. So no, missing one Christmas with your family doesn't make you a terrible person. Do something special to celebrate Christmas with your family on another day, as the holiday isn't so much about the date on a calendar as it is about reaching out to loved ones and remembering the reason for the season. Merry Christmas.



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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Nothing gets in the way today unless you let it. With this philosophy, you won't cast yourself in the role of the victim. Why would you? You're able and you can always make a different choice.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You'll get to building a beautiful and different kind of world, maybe only with one other person, but it still counts. It only takes one other person to create a society with you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You long ago came to terms with the unfair nature of life. You'll be reminded how some have been endowed with traits or circumstances that give them an advantage from birth, and you'll do something to help the balance today.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Extending compassion to yourself can be a difficult thing to do. It's tempting to try to find out why this is so. But then again, maybe the reason doesn't matter. Override it. Help yourself out. Forgive and love yourself.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The art of the seating chart isn't just for big parties and events. If there's a way to arrange your life so as to place and group people elegantly, then you certainly will find it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). If you don't get what you want right away, consider yourself lucky. This is where the real gold comes — in having to reach down deep into your own resources and build something out of them to make your situation work.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). There was a time you thought it best to strictly follow the rules; you were young and this kept you safe. But if you continued in this way, you'd miss out on a great deal of life.

Afford yourself some slack.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You came into your convictions over time, slowly forming and testing a belief system that made sense to you at many levels. In many ways you're still assembling it, but what you've got already is certainly worthy of your defense.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). It's possible that trying to be better counts as actually being better, but it's also possible that accepting yourself more fully is a faster route to your transformation.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The more people involved in your vision, the harder it will be to keep it cohesive, but that's OK for now. Pick one or two guiding principles and see what happens.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). There's not a correct way to look at things, but optimism does net different results than pessimism. You do not feel that your interests are at stake, and this allows you to feel effortlessly generous with others.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). There's comfort in playing the old games you used to play, and yet there are new games, too. So while you may visit the glory days of the past, you won't stay there.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 26). You don't wait for experience to come to you, you make it happen and therefore what unfolds gets "so you" stamped all over it in the best kind of way. Also featured: a family expansion matched by your capacity for love and duty; a legal situation rectified; and traveling in a group toward a foreign victory. Scorpio and Gemini adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 3, 35, 40, 10 and 44.

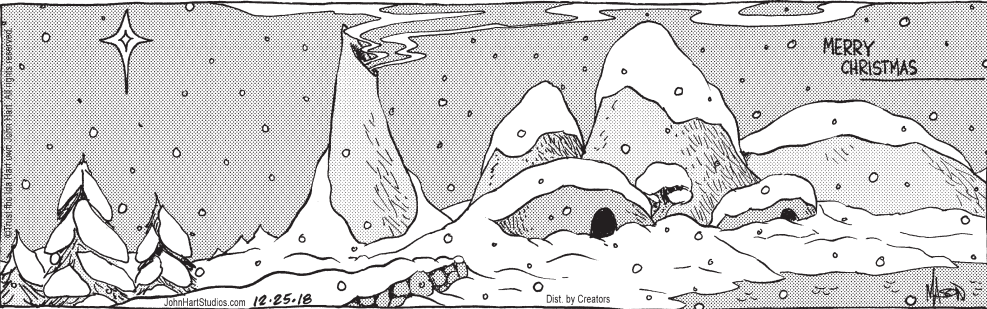
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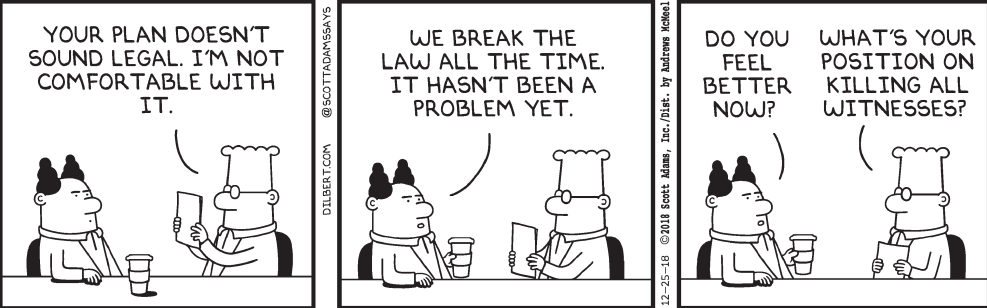
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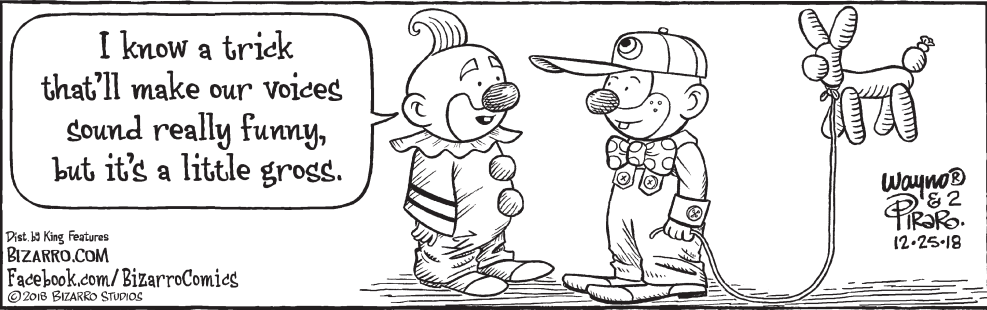
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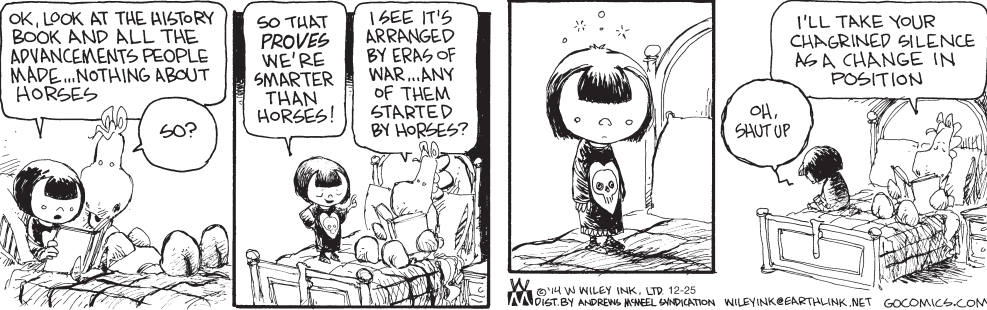
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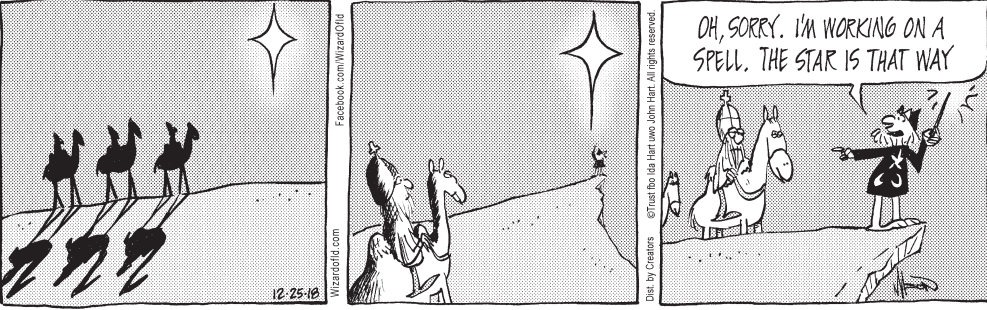
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ROSE IS ROSE

