

Delayed response to texts

Dear Annie: Recently, a friend confronted me about something that I didn't think was a big deal: Sometimes I forget to respond to texts for a while, and then I reply and say that I just saw the message. Technically, most of the time, it's a lie; I did see the message, and I just got sidetracked or zoned out or didn't feel like replying until later. But I just say it to try to make the other person feel better or to smooth things over. I'm certainly not trying to be deceitful. My friend who always tells it like it is, God bless her, called me out for this behavior in front of a group of mutual friends. A few laughed and agreed that I do this. It was brought up in a joking manner, but it still ruffled my feathers a bit. Am I really in

the wrong here? Is there a more tactful way to handle things when you take a while to respond to someone? — *Delayed*

Dear Delayed: Not responding to a text message right away is understandable — even healthy, as we shouldn't be beholden to our devices 24/7. But lying about the reason for not returning a text is wrong, and it insults your friend's intelligence. The next time you take a while to respond to a message, simply apologize (if appropriate) for not getting back to the person sooner, and leave it at that. No flimsy excuses necessary.

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
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For at least three years now, my neck has hurt on a daily basis. More often than not, it's stiff, and I need to crack it to get some relief. I've heard

that changing to a better pillow can help with neck pain. But when I went online to see what pillow I should get, I was overwhelmed by dozens of options, all claiming to have five-star reviews. Now I don't know what to do! I'm not sure how to make a choice, considering I'm ... — *Neck-Deep in Options*

Dear Neck-Deep in Options: A new pillow might help, but what you really need is to talk to your doctor. He or she can refer you to a physical therapist who can help you protect your neck long term. You also might want to consider using a standing desk, if you work at a computer, because unless you have perfect posture, sitting at a desk all day can wreak havoc on your neck and back. As for the pillow, perhaps the doctor or physical therapist could advise you on the right kind.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Maybe it seems backward, but more practice and preparation won't lead to a better performance today. Doing well has to do with mindset and attitude more than anything else. Commit, believe, trust yourself.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). At your core you are a wise, powerful, beautiful being. You don't always believe it. There are some layers of protection and baggage to shed, and once you do, your spirit will be able to move, stretch and dance.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). While it's been convenient for you to conform, echoing the preferences, interests and attitudes of those close to you, it's not quite what you really want. You're free to honor your true nature whenever you're ready.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Practical matters require attention, especially having to do with the maintenance of what you own. Take care of your possessions so they will be there for you and in good working order when you need them.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You're ready to examine an unrealized past goal to determine why it didn't happen, whether it's still something you want, and how you might do things differently going forward.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). A real friend brings out the best in you, is undaunted by your weakness and unthreatened by your greatness and generally seems to amplify your strengths just by being near.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Remember the time you got what you wanted and somehow it didn't make you happy? Join the club. When it comes to seeking happiness, humans are not the best judges of what will do the trick, but we can always try again.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You know that challenges call out the best in you, as do irritations, annoyances, inconveniences and other obstacles. But can you just have one day when it's all easy, smooth and harmonious? Yes, you can! And this is it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The term "mansplaining" describes the giving of unnecessary explanations out of an incorrect assumption of the other person's ignorance. This sort of explanation is not limited to men, and it can be avoided with awareness.

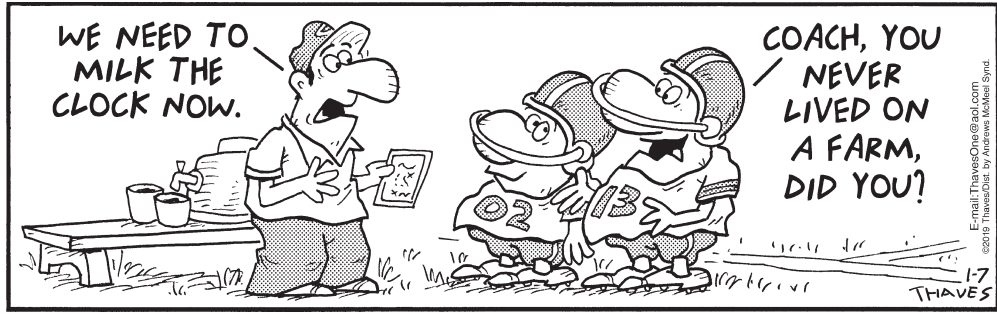
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). There are three C's that will be the guiding lights of your day — clarity, courage and confidence. You see things how they are; you're willing to deal head-on with reality; and you trust yourself to handle what comes next.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're really feeling full today, like you don't need too much out of life to feel good and positive, and what you do need you can provide for yourself. This stable and empowered attitude you carry is a magnet for love.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). A problem is a circumstance that impedes you from completing a task or from getting to a destination or state of being. What a problem is not is an idea about a circumstance. Distinction between real and imagined problems.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 8). It's a passionate year. You'll discover places to invest your effort that will pay you back in a multitude of ways before they pay you back in the way you had in mind. Let your commitment end only when you achieve what you set out to do. In relationships, you'll set the bar higher and quality people will deliver the goods. Libra and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 44, 28, 11 and 4.

FRANK AND ERNEST



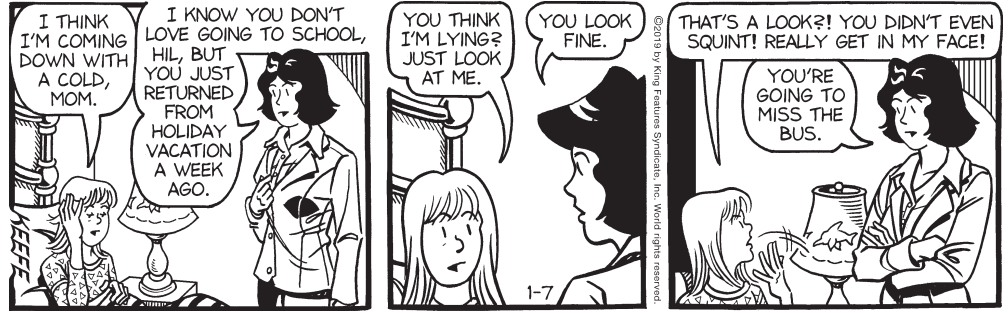
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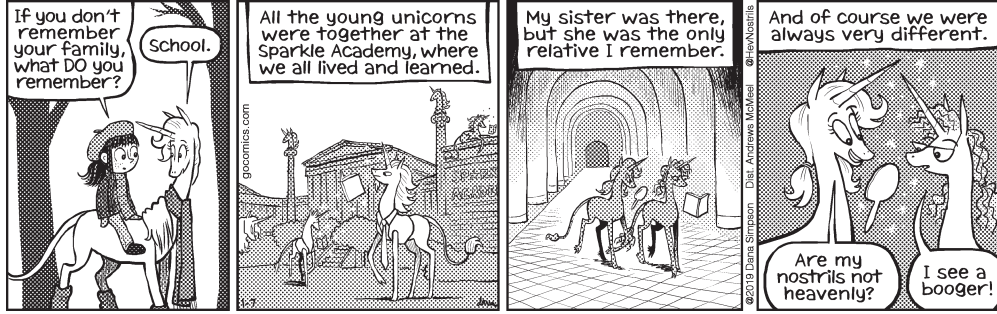
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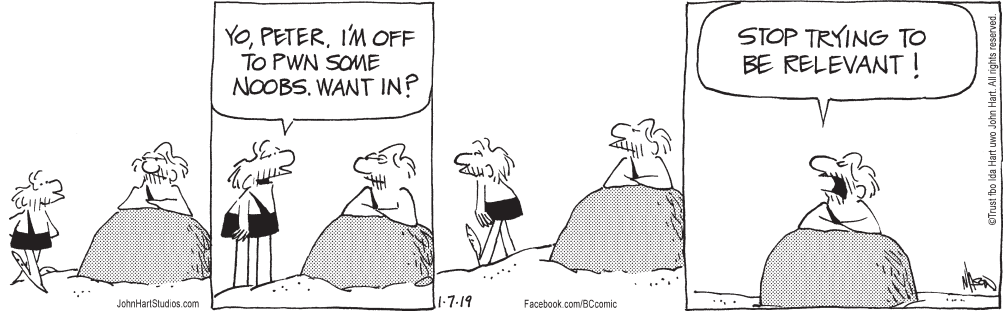
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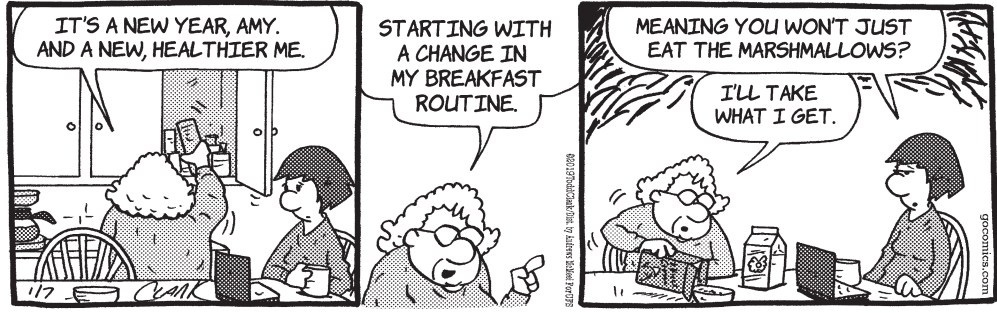
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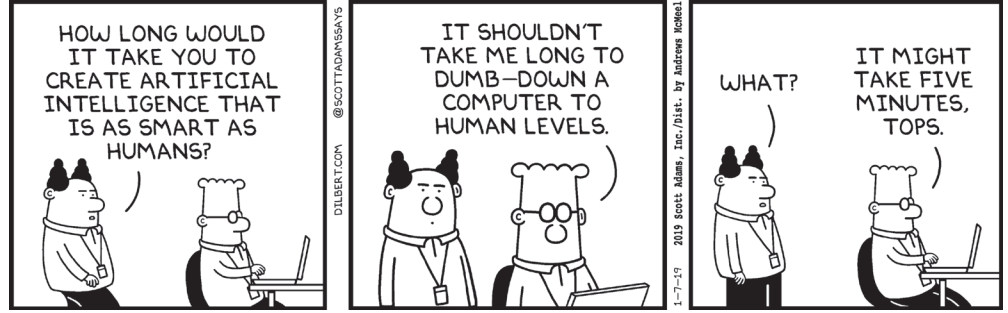
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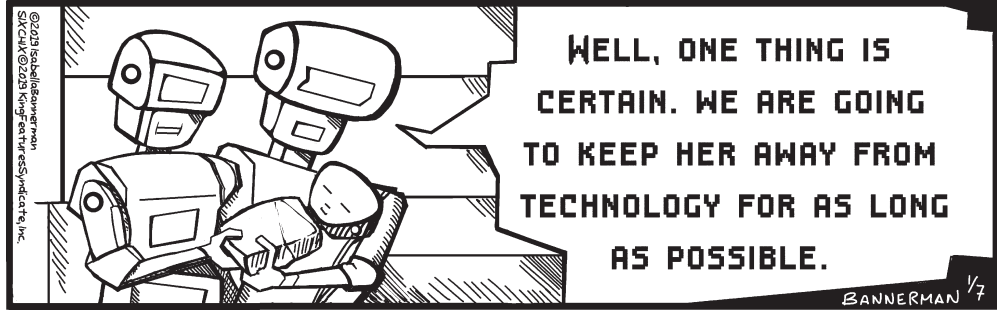
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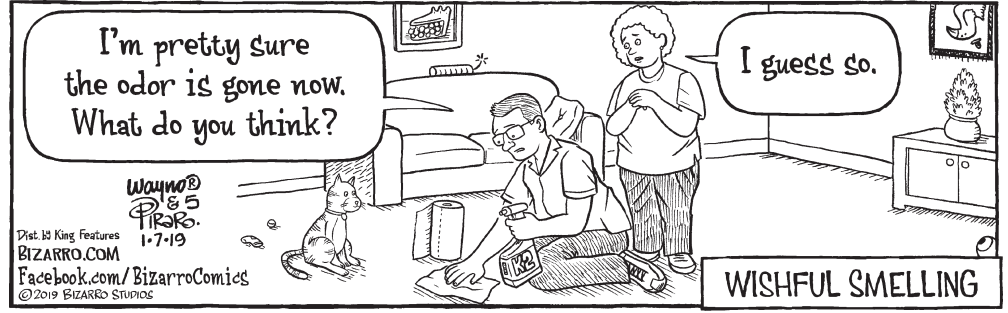
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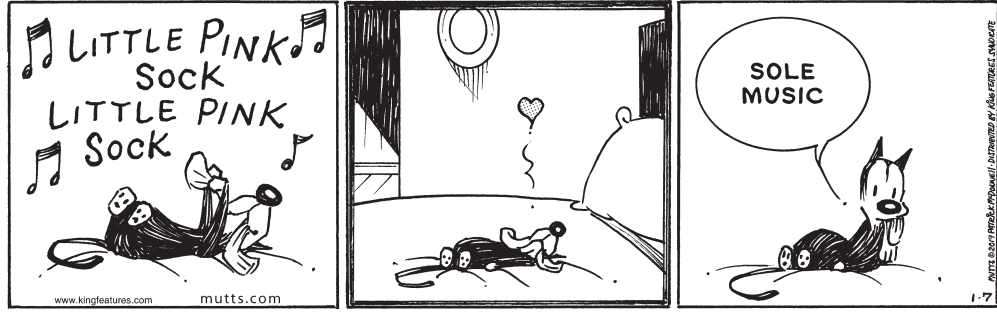
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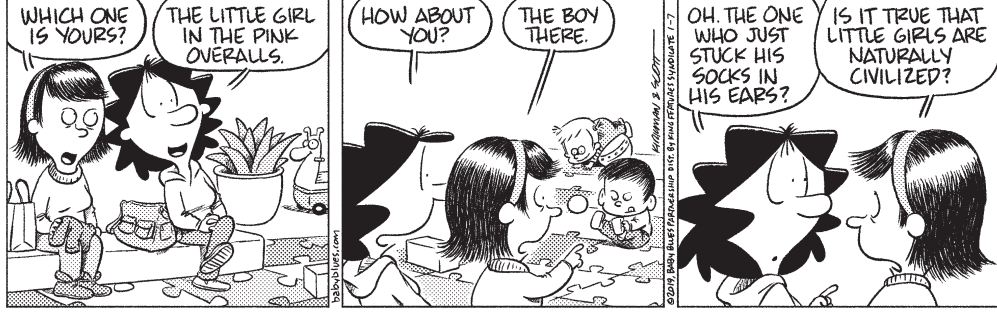
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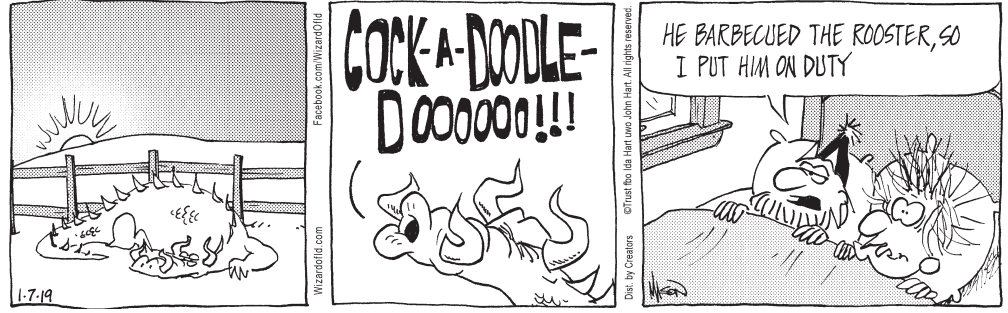
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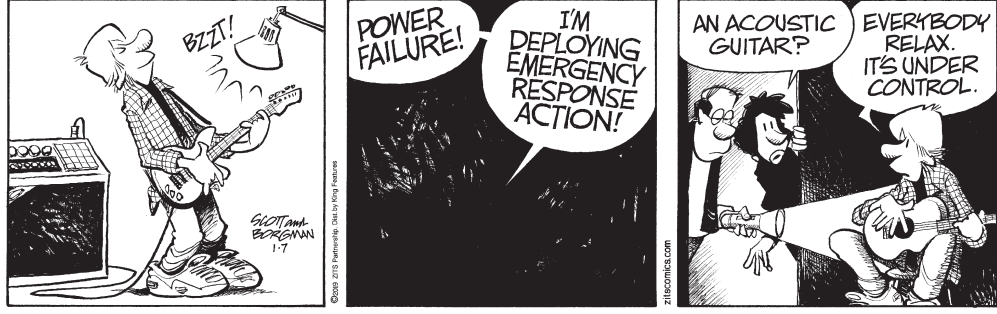
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