

One-sided conversations

Dear Annie: At the family gatherings on my spouse's side, my brother-in-law "Albert" wants to loudly dominate any conversation by either talking about his life or showing his "great" knowledge and opinions on other subjects. He rarely inquires about how anyone else is or shows much interest in listening to us. He can be totally oblivious to what is happening with others.

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
Creators
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A good example happened about a year ago. Four of us met at a restaurant to celebrate a birthday. A few weeks prior, my spouse had missed Albert's birthday lunch because my spouse was hospitalized for some worrisome medical problems. Albert sat down at the table with the three of us, didn't say "happy birthday" to the birthday person, didn't ask how my spouse was doing and didn't inquire about why I was on crutches. We spent most of the evening

listening to him feel sorry for himself because only one person had been to his birthday lunch.

He has been very gradually getting worse over the years. I know he is lonely and wants to connect, but our listening to him just seems to encourage more of his annoying, one-sided behavior. Plus, no one in the gathering wants to get cornered by him and

have to listen to him going on and on about the little details of his life. I have suggested counseling or finding a close friend when he's been going through one of his rough patches, but he's had excuses. My spouse and Albert's other siblings do not want to talk to him about this because he gets angry and defensive when they try to bring these sorts of things to light. It's as if his life details get pent up and he has to unleash it all at family gatherings. None of the

family spends time with him except for holidays because a relationship with him is so one-sided and draining.—*Annoyed by Brother-in-Law*

Dear Annoyed by Brother-in-Law: Irritation is a natural response when someone is behaving narcissistically. Yes, he might act this way because he's lonely, but that doesn't give him carte blanche to act like a bully without consequence. You and the rest of the family shouldn't hesitate to put him in check. If he's dominating the conversation, redirect it by asking another family member at the table about something going on in his or her life. If he interrupts someone, politely but firmly stop him and say, "I don't think (insert name here) was done talking." If he corners you and monopolizes your time, excuse yourself after a few minutes to mingle with the rest of the guests. And do encourage your spouse to (again) let Albert know how his behavior is impacting the rest of the family. Maybe it would spur him to get help.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). In order to take care of other people, you have to first take care of yourself, which is what you'll be doing with a healthy swath of your day. If something makes you feel cared for, then do it. There's really nothing too frivolous.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). When your heart and brain are out of sync, there's a jagged energy pattern represented in your day. So unify your mental and emotional states and make a conscious choice to come from love to smooth out your own way.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Those who bring out your playful, lighthearted, creative side are people you need in your life for the long term. They'll strengthen your resilience. You'll be healthier for knowing them.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's power in anger and a practical use for fear, so you wouldn't want to eradicate those feelings from your life. But a little goes a long way. The antidote for fear and anger is gratitude.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). When you think about the great art of the world, much of it is focused on small details — sunflowers, animals, the sky, food on a table and the like. If all you get excited about is the big things, you're going to miss most of life.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Your mental, emotional and spiritual muscles need a workout just like the muscles in your body do. Once you fix yourself to a purpose and live it boldly, these faculties will engage and begin to get the exercise they need.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Just as movies are better when the casting director gets things right, and companies run better with skilled workers in jobs that utilize those talents, your personal life improves

with the right people in the right roles.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Is what you're asking of yourself reasonable? Would it be polite to require it of a family member? Is it more than you'd ask of your best friend? Be kind to yourself. Be fair.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A smile can mean a lot of different things. It can mean the interaction is over. It can be an invitation, or a dare. You'll get a wide variety of smiles to read today, to the point where you might consider yourself a connoisseur.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Because so much private information is made public through social media, people feel like they know one another when they don't. Public image is never the whole person. Avoid mistaking the person for their homepage.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Before you can hunker down and get to work, certain things have to be in place. You need a full tummy, a rested body and a mind that's not racing to solve some personal problem.

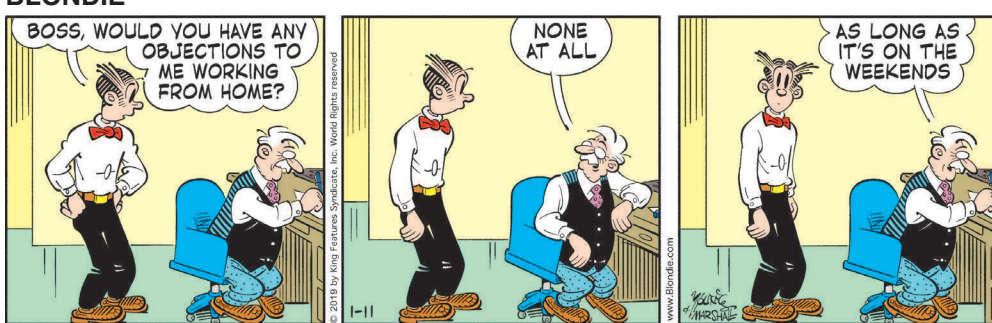
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You don't have to be religious to recognize that there's a power in love. Rituals that center around love will channel that power very effectively today, regardless of individual belief systems.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 12). In the past, you both failed at and succeed in doing very difficult things, which made you resilient and prepared you for the next three months of ... nary an external challenge! You must therefore ambitiously create your own, a most satisfying pursuit, though not at all easy. But don't worry; the fortunes will lavish you in their favor. Libra and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 10, 8, 6, 18 and 37

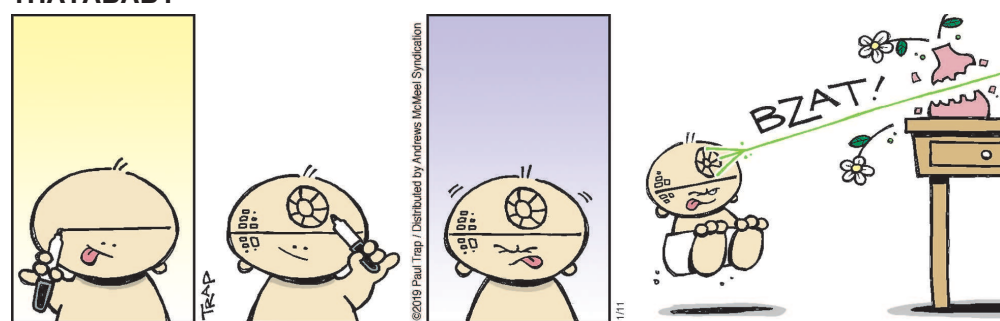
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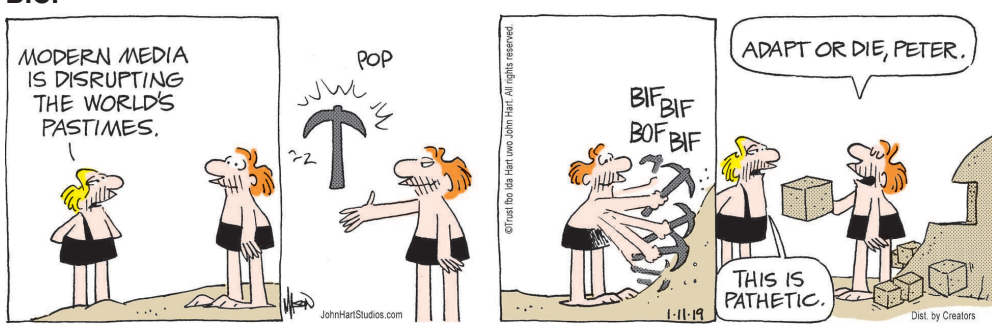
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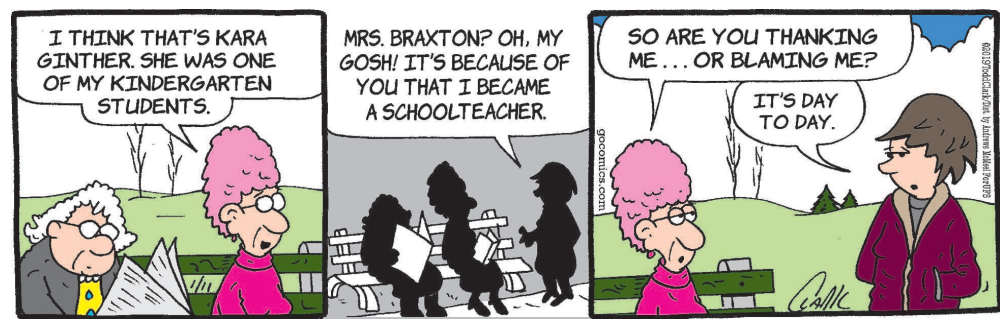
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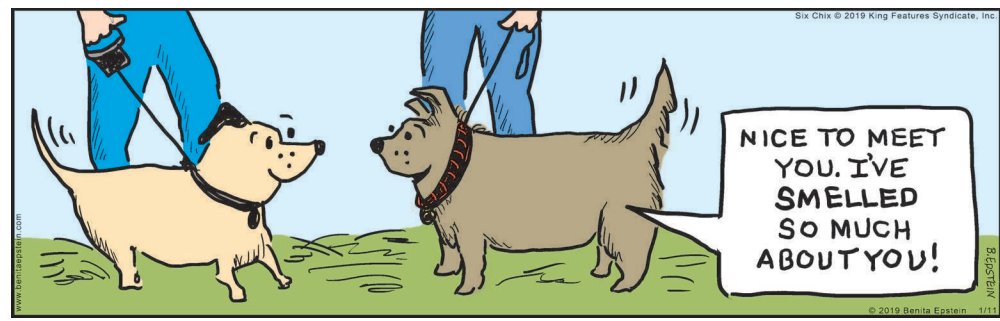
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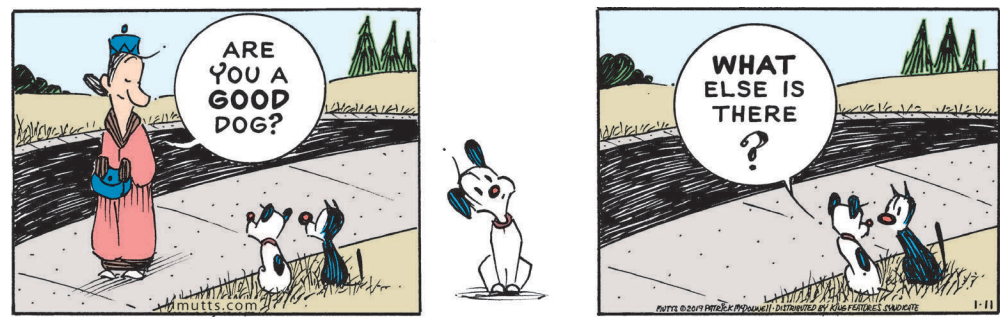
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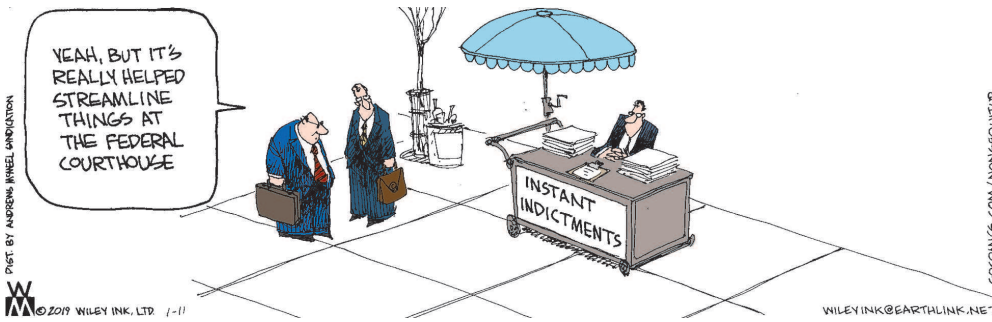
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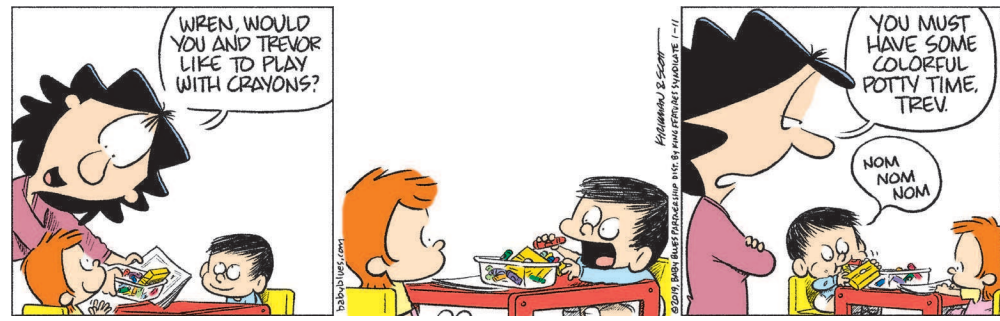
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