

Etiquette for requesting time off

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 ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

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.

Dear Annie: Bravo for your answer about setting aside one's personal anguish to be at a friend's bedside when he or she is near death.

Some years ago, I was one of a small group of women who helped care for an elderly widower in our church. While he was bedridden at home, some of his male friends would bathe him and change his bed linens often. We women would bring food and try to coax him to take a few bites. He was well-loved and well-cared-for. It was my turn to be there the night he took his last breath. I was quietly giving him a gentle back rub, not saying anything, and his little cat was curled up on his bed when he left us. I like to think that maybe he knew he could let go because he knew I could handle it. He had many friends whom he loved and who loved him, but I will always feel honored to have been the one with him at the end. — *Peaceful in New York*

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). When your truest desire is to assist, the first step is to get to know the person and understand what needs, wants, fears and beliefs are in play. Only then can you figure out the best way to serve and support.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're in no mood to be told what to do, however well-meaning the other person may be. Even if they are just trying to protect you, show you love or share a skill, they'd better have total respect and manners or it won't go well.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Your pet project is like a friend. You love to spend time with it, speak up for it, go through the ups and downs with it, and do what it takes to loyally see it through. It's not just business or recreation. It's a representation of you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You have no problem delivering on your promises to others. When it comes to fulfilling your own orders, you're not as vigilant. Make your wishes for yourself a top priority. Let your actions reflect this.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You've had enough experience with certain types of social situations to know what you're likely to enjoy. You need a little enjoyment now so you may as well steer clear of anything that's not that.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Subtle, discomforting forces at play make you feel as though you're sitting too close to the air conditioning vent — a cool wind, and too direct. You'll feel better after you pick up and move somewhere warmer and quieter.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). When you feel the sandwich needs a dill pickle, a sweet pickle won't do. Sure, they are both pickles, but the flavor profile is entirely different. Bottom line: You want what you

want. Apply it across the board.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). The fact that human-kind needs entertainment and beauty in order to thrive is nothing new. Even the cave dwellers painted pictures and played instruments. Let yourself relax and have fun. It's part of what makes you human.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). There's a certain urgency to matters, as you're starting to realize that if the job is done right and quickly you just might pull off the feat you've been working on for weeks.

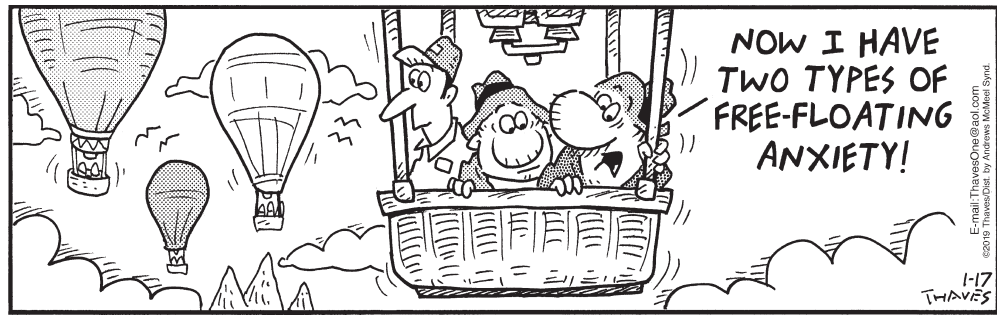
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The feeling behind a deal matters. People spend money emotionally. They react to the situation, go with what feels easy given the circumstance, taking on a "when in Rome" sort of attitude.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). In police work, resisting arrest is a serious crime. There's an authoritative voice in your head that's a little like an officer upholding your own personal laws. It doesn't like to be resisted either.

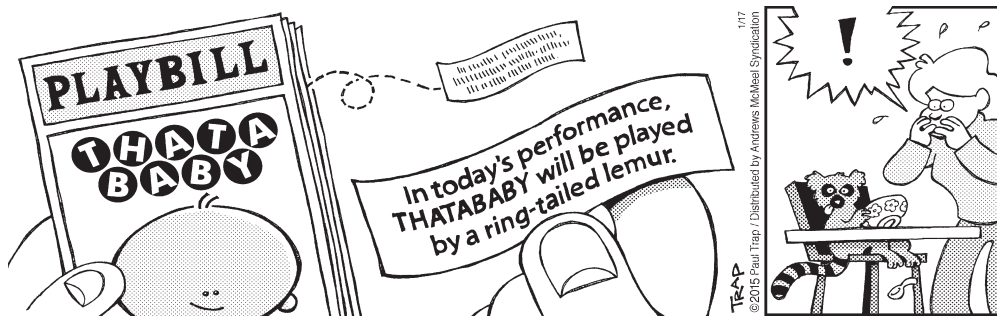
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). As your signmate Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, "All things must change, to something new, to something strange." You agree and look forward to the new day, though it may feel like it's not coming quite quickly enough.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 18). Soul nourishment is coming to you, and you will become spiritually healthier than ever this year. It's right to be a little commitment-phobic in the early part of the year because you need to be free to investigate and experiment. Your options are exciting! By May, you'll be ready to sign a stellar deal that will hold for years to come. Aries and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 30, 27, 1 and 40.

FRANK AND ERNEST



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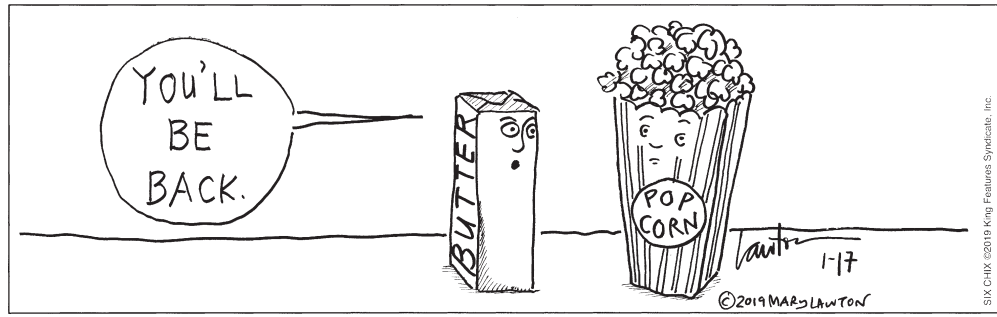
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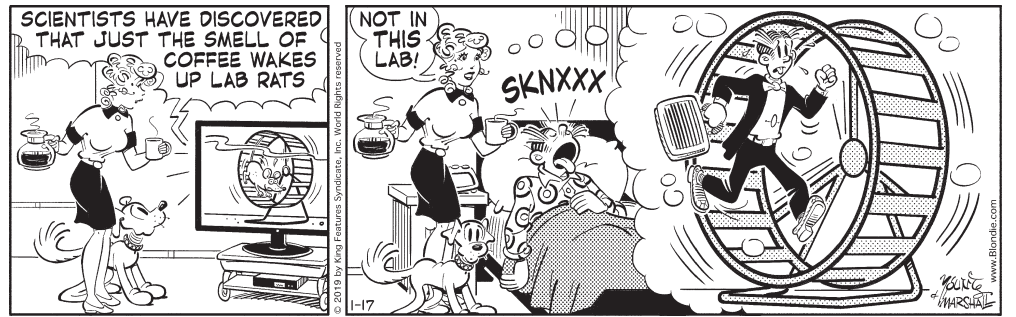
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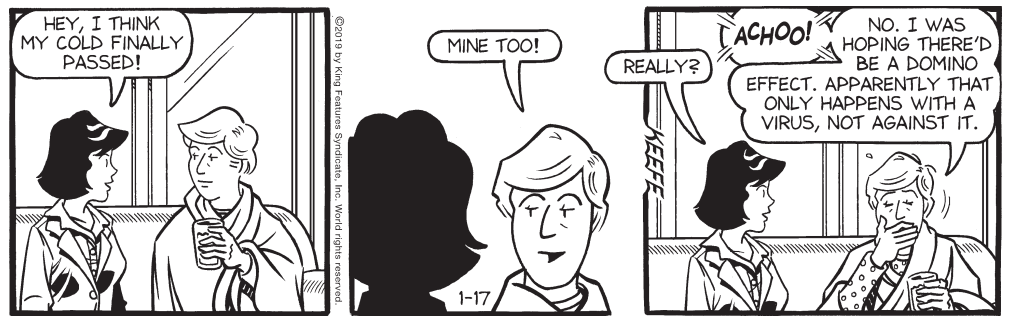
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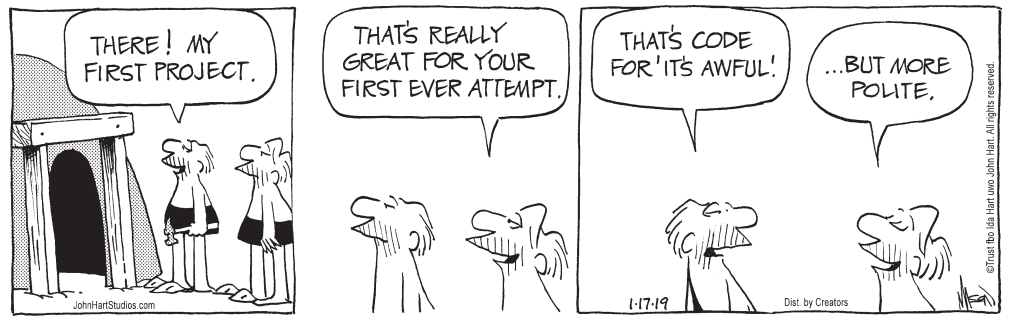
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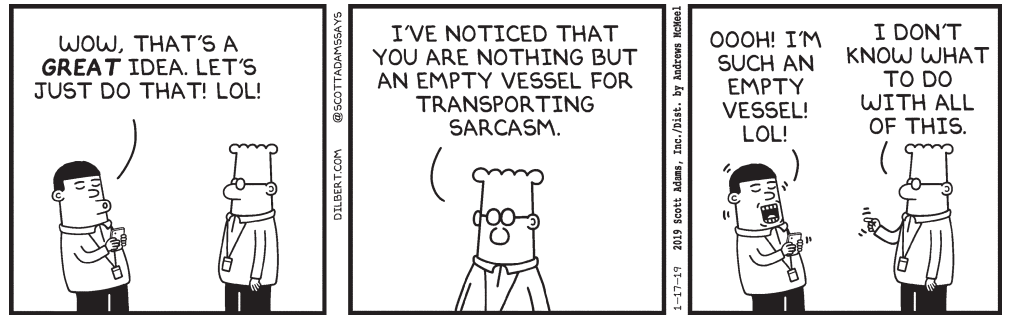
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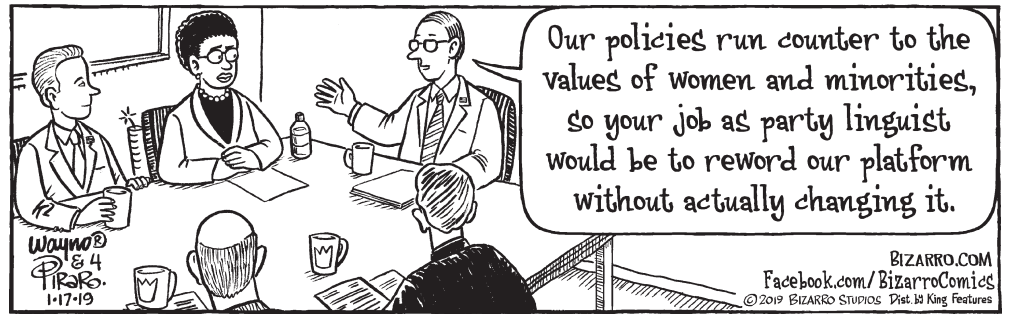
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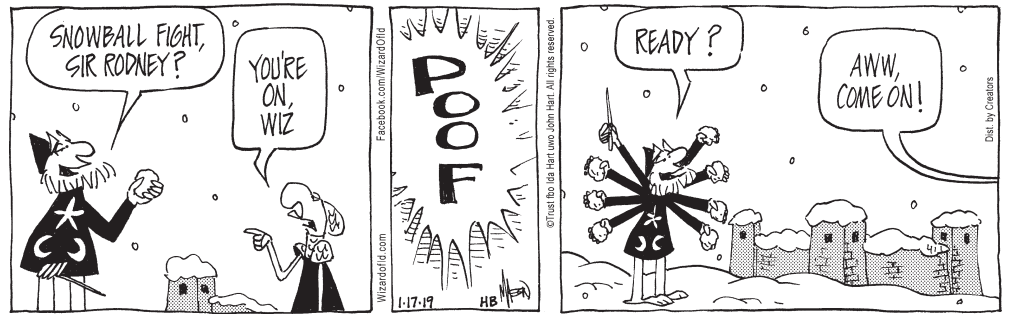
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