

# Dealing with social anxiety

**Dear Annie:** I'm a freshman in high school, and I'm starting to make friends. I'm always trying to be silly with them. I guess I enjoy the validation when they laugh. But I don't want to be seen as too crazy or immature. I also have social anxiety, which means my interactions with others cause irrational anxiety. That is why I want the validation. But I don't just want to be the "funny person" of the group. I want to have good conversations.

## DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE  
Creators  
Syndicate Inc.

want to be seen like that, and it stinks when the thing I fear most (my flaws being exposed) becomes true.

Should I stop joking around so much?  
— Freshman

**Dear Freshman:** Your letter brought to mind a saying: The mind is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. It's been attributed to many different sources, most commonly Robin Sharma, though it actually dates back further than that, and the original orator is unknown. Whoever said it understood anxiety.

The issue isn't whether you should stop joking around. This is about becoming comfortable enough with yourself to live in the present moment. Once you've nurtured some more serenity within, you'll find yourself interacting more naturally with others — still joking around plenty, perhaps, but not out of a need for validation.

Now, I realize "be comfortable with yourself" is a tall order for someone in high school. But there really are practical steps you can take toward finding some inner calm. I recommend seeing a counselor regularly, if you're not already. I also recommend taking up daily meditation. It might be hard to believe that something so simple could make a real difference, but there is a growing body of scientific evidence that meditation can significantly reduce psychological stresses, including a 2014 meta-study by researchers at Johns Hopkins that found that mindfulness meditation can ease anxiety and depression.

Lastly, know that self-consciousness is as much a part of adolescence as acne. Even though most of your peers don't have social anxiety disorder, that doesn't mean they don't experience social anxiety. I guarantee you that all of them sometimes worry that they seem weird, silly or unintelligent. You are not alone.

## TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19).** There are dynamics at play that raise the stakes for key interactions. Do a practice run in the mirror, in your head, on paper... whatever it takes to work it out and get you ready and confident for the real thing.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20).** Pick a target you can stick with, then aim and shoot. Success does not depend on getting it right the first time (or ever, actually). Success depends on repeated efforts toward the same goal.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 21).** You're a different person than you were last week. That's why, when you revisit work you did then, you can see the problems. And it's also why you should put today's results in a drawer and come back to it a week from now.

**CANCER (June 22-July 22).** Your friends just want to let loose, and prefer your brand of fun. But just because they call on you doesn't mean your own agenda becomes suddenly less important. Keep original plans, especially if they involve only you.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).** You know what it feels like to be a little too afraid, or too proud, to go with the flow, and this isn't that. The flow is wrong. Resistance may be difficult or even futile but it's your only option. What matters to you most is doing the right thing.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).** Pay attention to how you use that powerful tool called your voice. Also, there's much to learn in the the voices of others (though much of it is animal-level information that can't be put into words.)

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).** As a rule, you see incuriousness as a fault, as it signals self-centeredness and possible intellectual stunting. However, today brings an occasion in which you'll be happy not to

be bothered by curious minds poking around in your direction.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).** The importance of your position makes you the object of a sort of attention that you shouldn't take personally. Recognize that it's the nature of the position and not your own nature that engenders certain scenarios.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).** There is no objective way to prove the value of today's interaction. It's all what you make of it. Even if it doesn't lead to the outcome you were going for, you could be better off for the miss.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).** People who are contributing to something often show up differently than people who are asking for something. That's a gap that the smoothest operators close. Show up the same either way.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).** You have been known to take part in such antics as presenting a cheerful mood for no reason and supporting small achievements with high enthusiasm. Today will be a case in point.

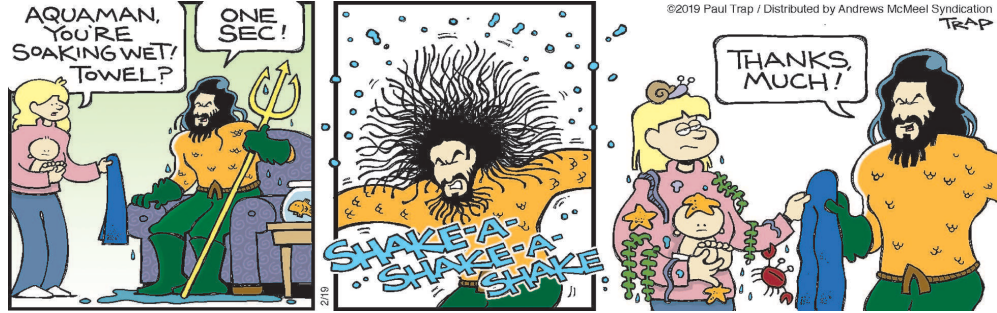
**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).** Squabbling children cry "no fair," believing in a just world. Adults cry "no fair," knowing that justice is human construct that has to be conceived, fought for and enforced. Justice is rare but worth the fight.

**TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Feb. 20).** Over the next 10 weeks, you bring greater imagination to your problems and solve them quickly and with pleasure. June's personal breakthrough leads to new sources of income and a change in your financial style. This affects key relationships. The beauty and new perspective you seek will be found in a far off Shangri-La. Libra and Gemini adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 8, 19, 38, 6 and 50.

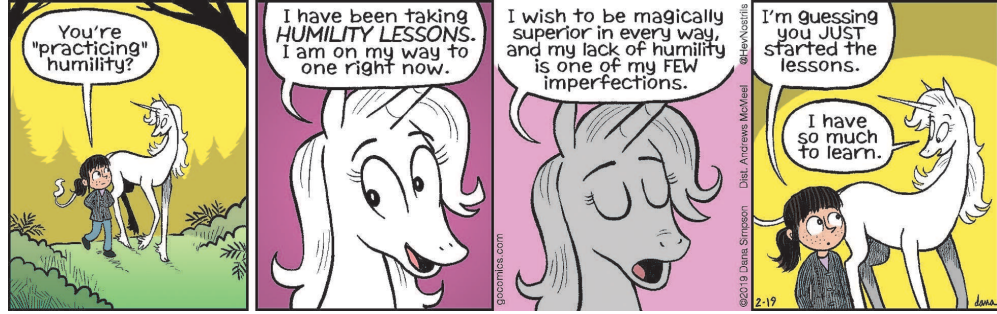
## FRANK AND ERNEST



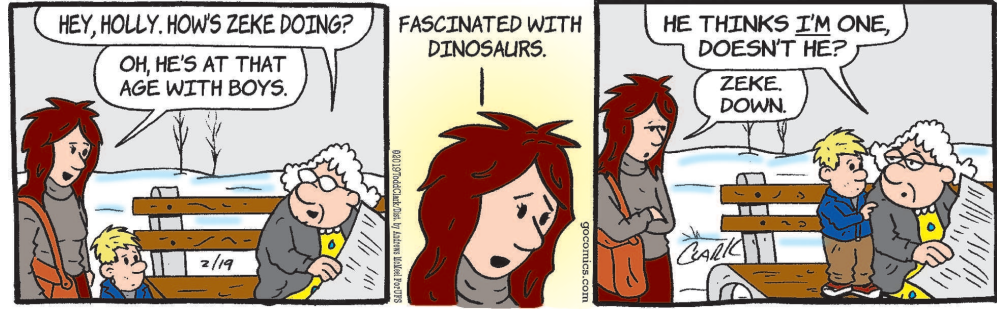
## THATABABY



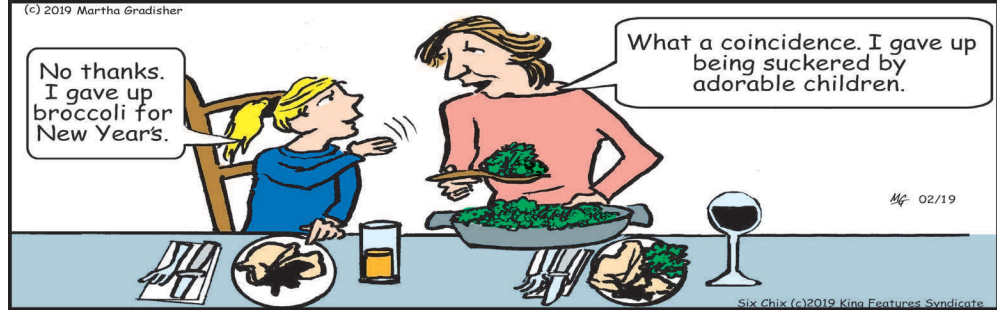
## PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



## LOLA



## SIX CHIX



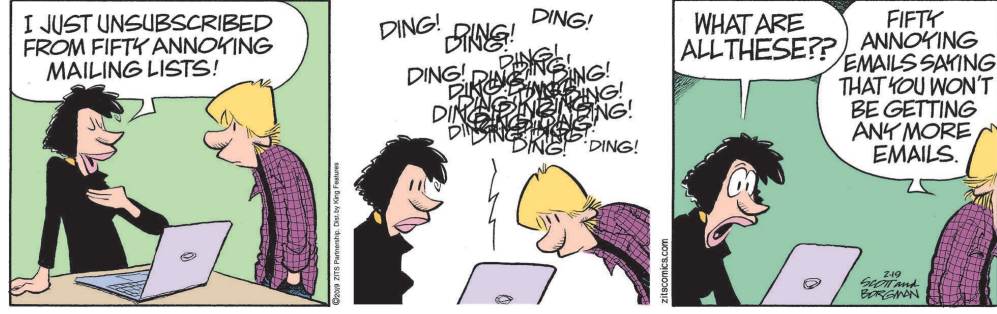
## MUTTS



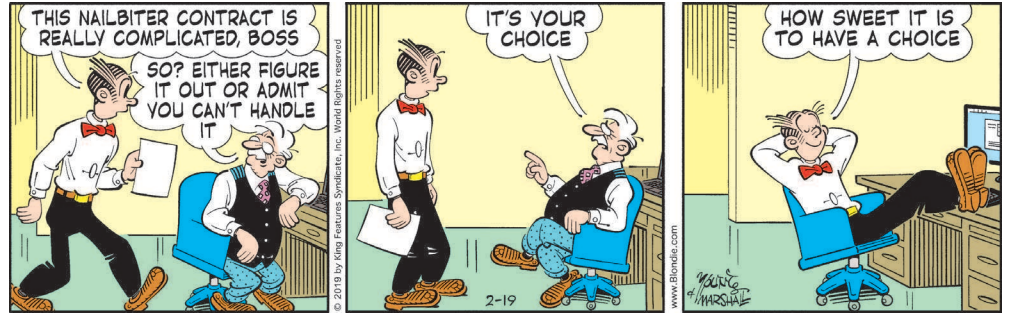
## BABY BLUES



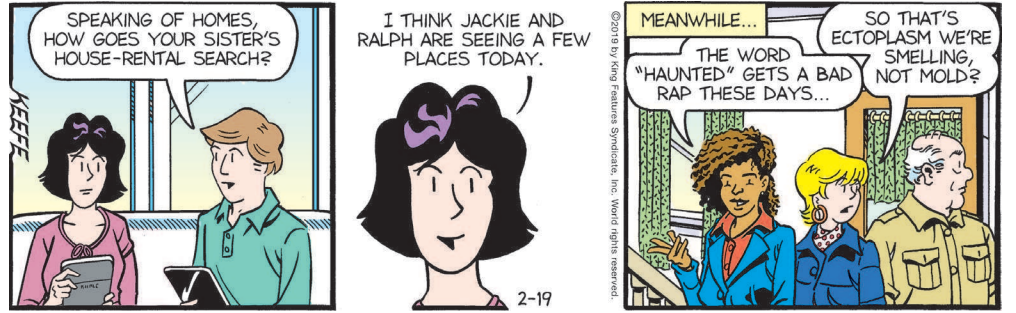
## ZITS



## BLONDIE



## SALLY FORTH



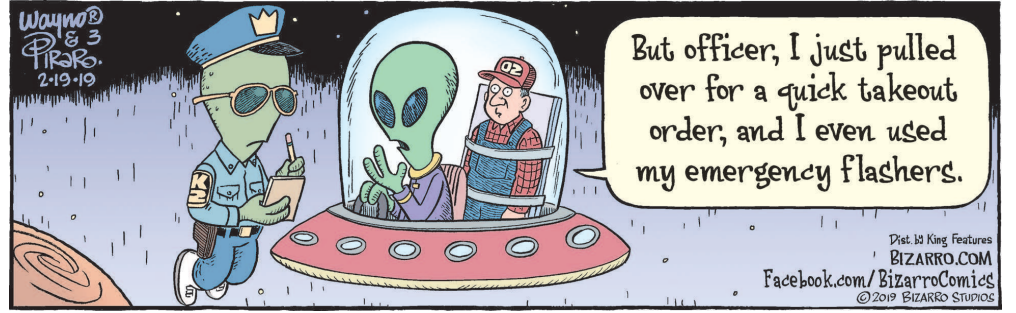
## B.C.



## DILBERT



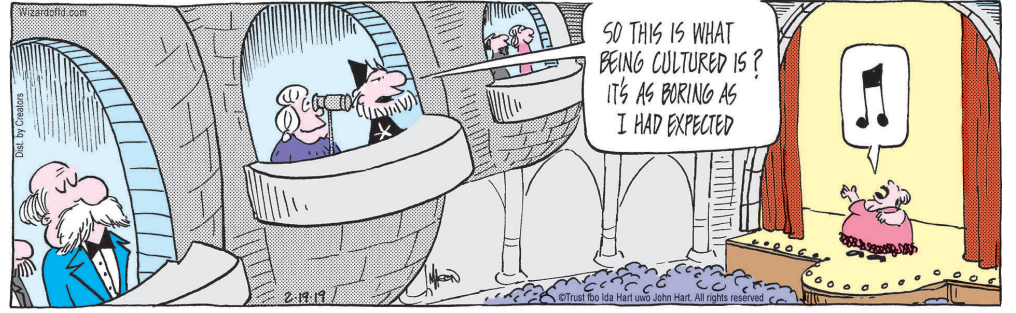
## BIZARRO



## NON SEQUITUR



## WIZARD OF ID



## ROSE IS ROSE

