

Feeling overwhelmed

Dear Annie: I pride myself on being an empathetic person. I'm known in my friend group and family as a person who "has it together" and is a comforting shoulder to lean on. I am also someone people can turn to at work to get things done and remain positive and professional. However, increasingly, I find myself wanting to curl up at the end of the day and just watch TV or zone out. I don't want to reply to messages from friends who want to meet up, and I'm also avoiding chores and other responsibilities. Just taking out the garbage feels like a herculean task.



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

and yes, you are at risk of burning out. My homework for you is to try being as empathetic to yourself as you are to others. The best gift you can give yourself is time to engage in activities that give you joy and pleasure.

There is an old Zen story called "The Overflowing Teacup," which you might find helpful. You sound like a much kinder person than the gentleman in this story, but the message is the same: In order to help others, you must not let your own teacup get overloaded with other people's burdens.

"Once, a long time ago, there was a wise Zen master. People from far and near would seek his counsel and ask for his wisdom. Many would come and ask him to teach them, enlighten them in the way of Zen. He seldom turned any away. One day, an important man, a man used to command and obedience, came to visit the master. 'I have come today to ask you to teach me about Zen. Open my mind to enlightenment.' The tone of the important man's voice was one

used to getting his own way.

"The Zen master smiled and said that they should discuss the matter over a cup of tea. When the tea was served, the master poured his visitor a cup. He poured and he poured, and the tea rose to the rim and began to spill over the table and finally onto the robes of the wealthy man. Finally, the visitor shouted, 'Enough! You are spilling the tea all over. Can't you see the cup is full?'"

"The master stopped pouring and smiled at his guest. 'You are like this teacup, so full that nothing more can be added. Come back to me when the cup is empty. Come back to me with an empty mind.'"

Dear Annie: Quick question: Do you cut crispy bacon with a knife and eat it with a fork? Or do you pick it up with your fingers and eat it? — *Fork or Hands*

Dear Hands: That's my quick answer. Assuming the bacon is served crispy, whole and dry, it should be considered finger food. On the other hand, if it is really thick, you could cut it into pieces and use a knife and fork.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Dress well and remember names. It's not for them; it's for you. When you're not feeling self-conscious, you can read others better and your flirting skills tantalize.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). If you do something because you should, then the action will be joyless. Find what's in it for you, and then do it for you. Suddenly, it's not drudgery but an expression of your spirit.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). People adopt beliefs without investigating them all of the time. Social conditioning requires this, in fact! That said, you have more freedom now and are ready to backtrack, to put certain beliefs to the test.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Family is important to you, but that doesn't mean you have to acquiesce to every request (and demand!) of your clan. In fact, it's time to consider a style of family interaction that suits you better.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The world has its tools for assessing the success of others, but they're usually crude and impersonal. You get to choose the metrics by which you judge yourself.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). What you do to strengthen your voice will also strengthen your position. This is meant both figuratively and actually, as great power and intelligence can be conveyed in the sounds that come from your mouth.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Maybe you technically don't need to prove yourself to keep your current job or relationship in good standing, but you're still thinking about doing the extra thing that sets you apart. Let nothing stop you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). The saying,

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained" does not account for the sort of luck that come through an auspicious birth or the dumb luck of improbable circumstance, but it counts for the sort of luck that's available today.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Something you thought would be a setback or disruption will turn out to be just what was needed to invigorate your circumstances and inspire a top performance.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You were going through emotions while you made your work and now those emotions are embedded in the work. Sensitive souls will be able to feel it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Grandiose proclamations will be used to cover up inadequacies. The truly able will just tell you what they can do. Supersized outcomes are no big deal to supersized players.

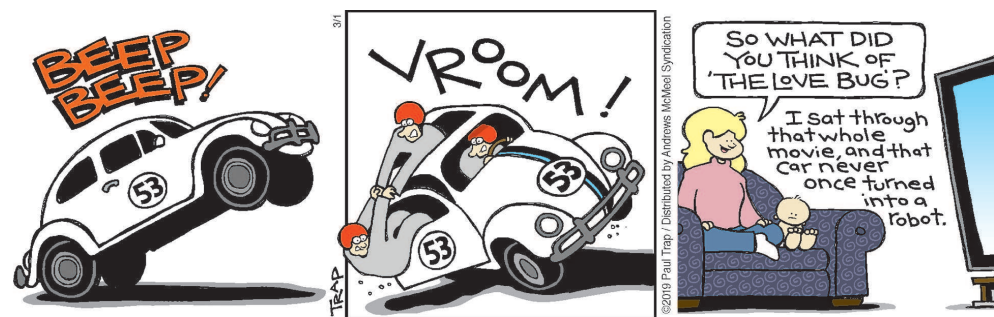
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You may regret certain things you say, but don't worry too much about it. People really do hear what they want to hear. And once a person gets to know you, the listening goes a little softer, the margin for error wider.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 2). Your dance with destiny goes through style variations. First, you'll be the lead, and then life carries you along. In both instances you'll have the grace of a professional, which comes from putting in the effort to figure out relationships and work at deeper levels. Notable: Family makes you proud. There's a cash win in July. Cancer and Capricorn adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 49, 8, 1, 21 and 39.

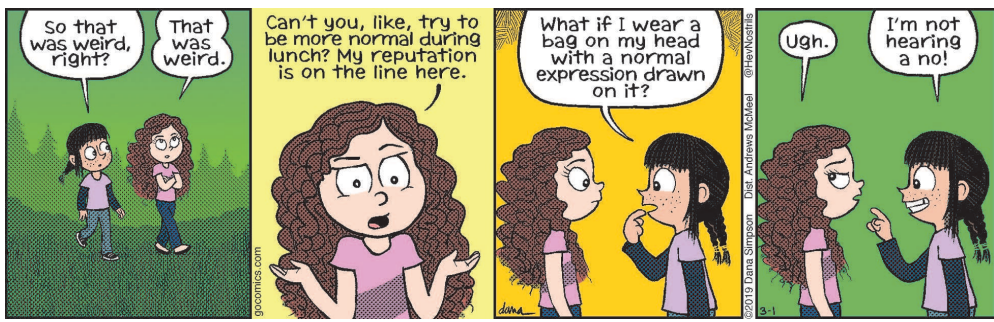
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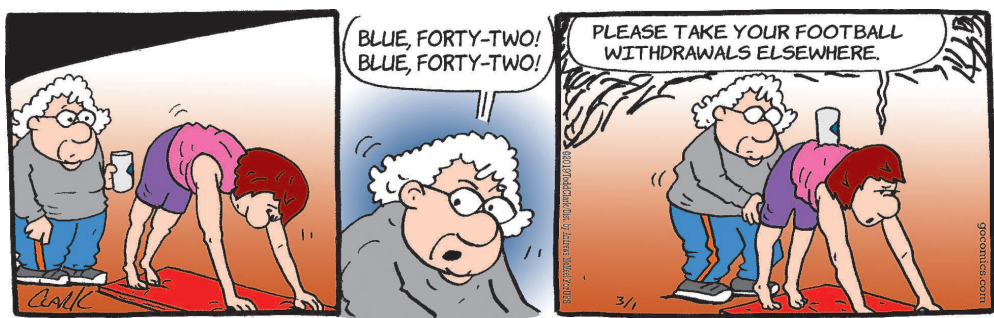
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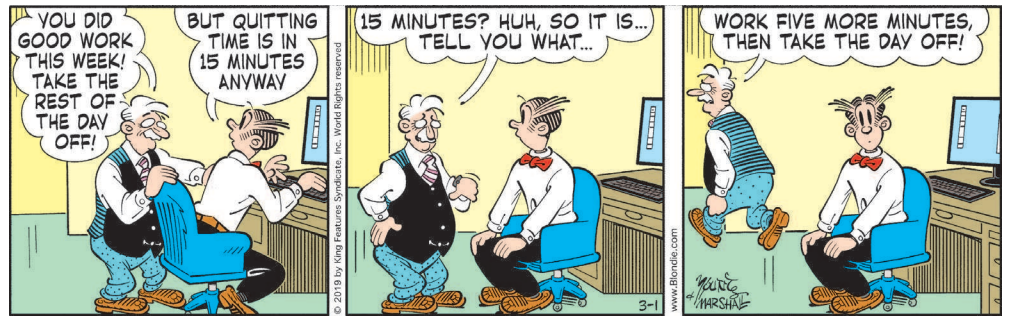
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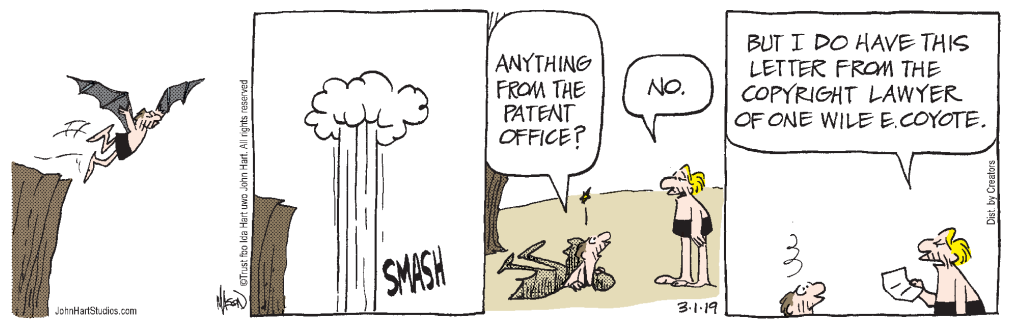
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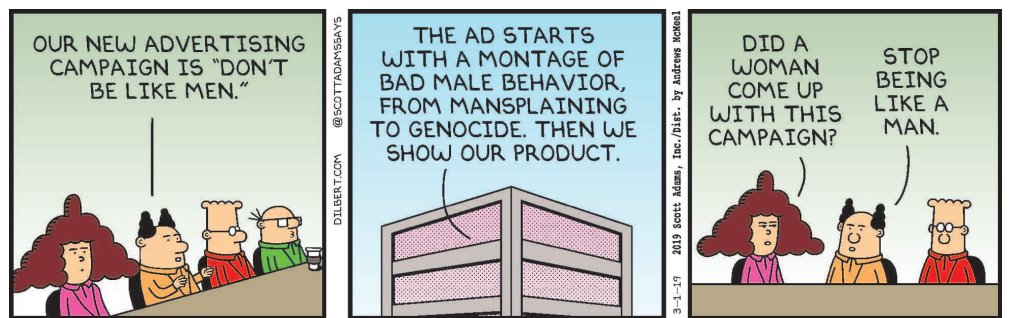
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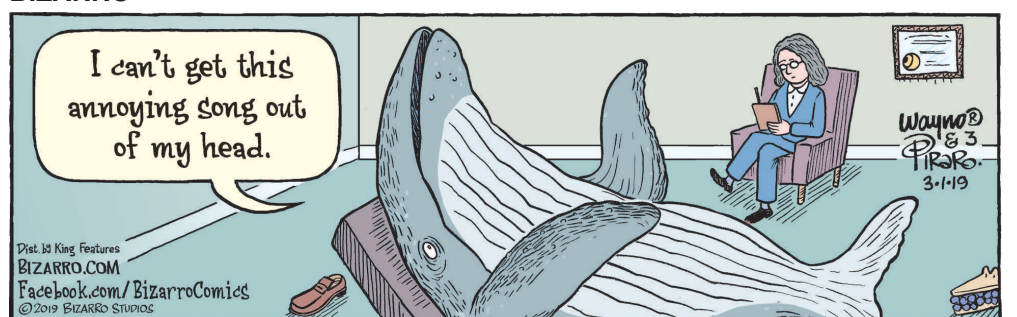
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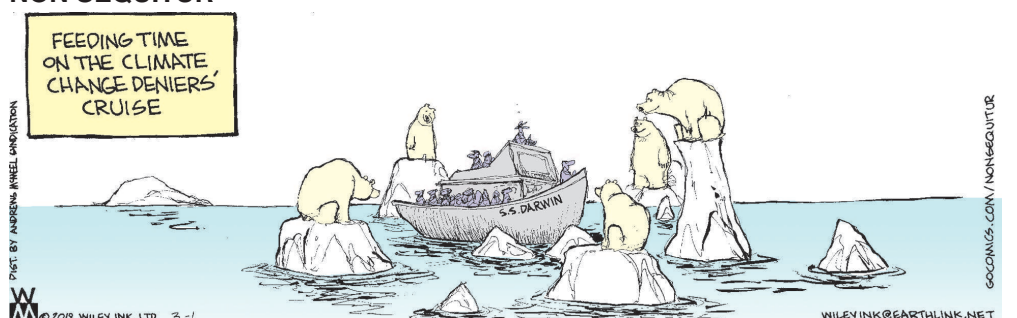
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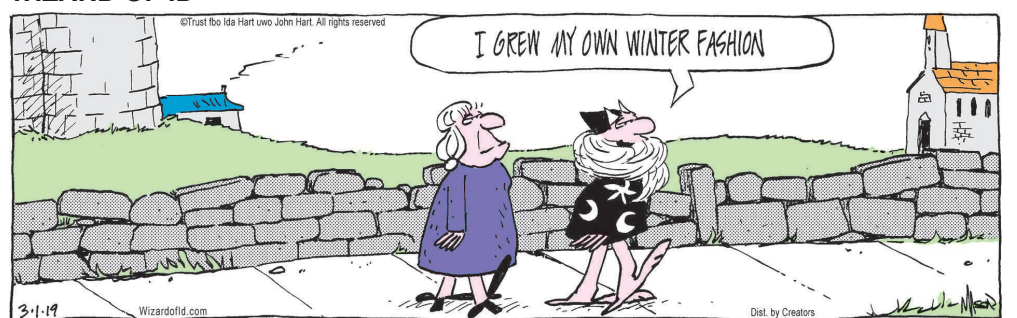
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