

Parental control overwhelms

Dear Annie: As long as I can remember, my parents have controlled the majority of my actions. They've told me which classes to take, which subjects to pursue, which extracurriculars to participate in, which colleges to apply to. Over the years, when I've tried to speak up, they've shut me down — especially my dad. Throughout my childhood, he was quick to yell and berate my sister and me when we didn't meet his high expectations. I've learned that my thoughts and feelings don't matter.

As you'd imagine, this has adversely affected my adult relationships. Even after moving out, even after finishing college, even with my own self-sustaining income, I still feel under their control. My brain doesn't know how to act on my own wants, my own needs that go against their will. I know it's my

life and I need to do what's best for me, but mentally, I feel entirely subservient, and I hate it. For instance, my parents are insistent that I will be going back to school (to get a master's), even though I've expressed that I'm not sure I want to go. (I am sure that I don't want to go.) They insist that I'm giving up on my dream, but it's not my dream; it's theirs. I've heard from friends that grad school is really difficult and that it's virtually impossible to succeed at it if you're not fully committed and passionate about what you're studying. So it'd be a huge waste of my parents' money — yes, they'd be paying — for me to go back to school.

I've told them what I want to be doing with my life, but they won't listen. I feel trapped. I'm terrified of not meeting my parents' expectations and of having my dad yell at me. But

I can't keep living like this. — *Parental Pawn*

Dear Parental Pawn: If you need my affirmation, you have it in spades. You should not go to grad school if you don't want to, even (perhaps especially) if someone else is paying for it. You're doing the right thing by taking ownership of your decisions. This is your life, and you seem to have a pretty good idea of how you want to live it, though your parents' domineering behavior might make you temporarily forget sometimes. I don't think you need my affirmation at all.

I can tell you all this, and you can tell yourself the same things, and you can know, intellectually, their validity. But to feel that they're true is a different story. To reach that point, it might require the aid of counseling. There are therapists who specialize in treating adult children of narcissistic or controlling parents. I encourage you to ask your medical provider to recommend a counselor.

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
Creators
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FRANK AND ERNEST



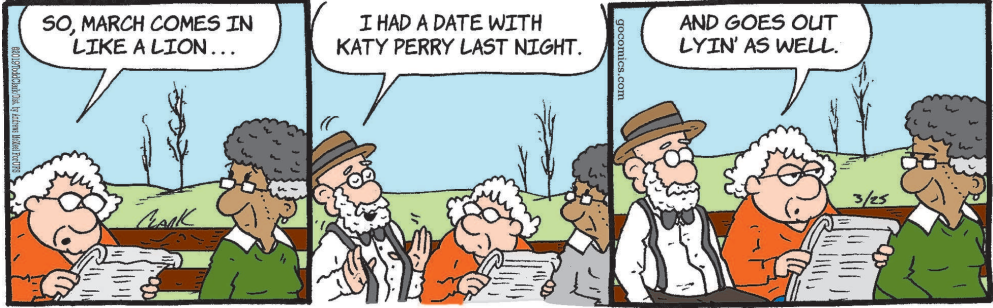
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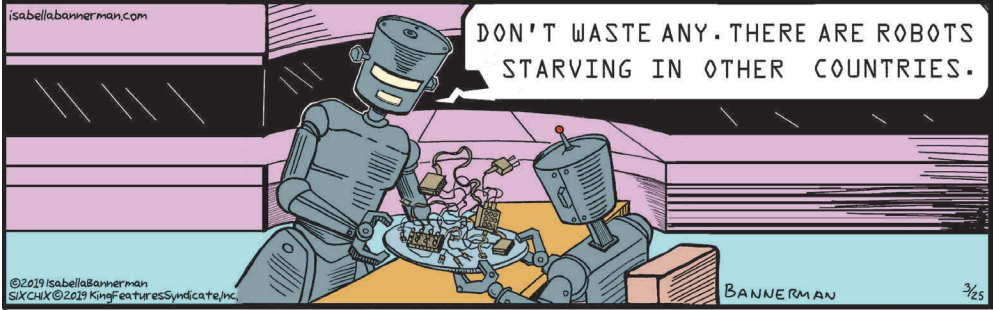
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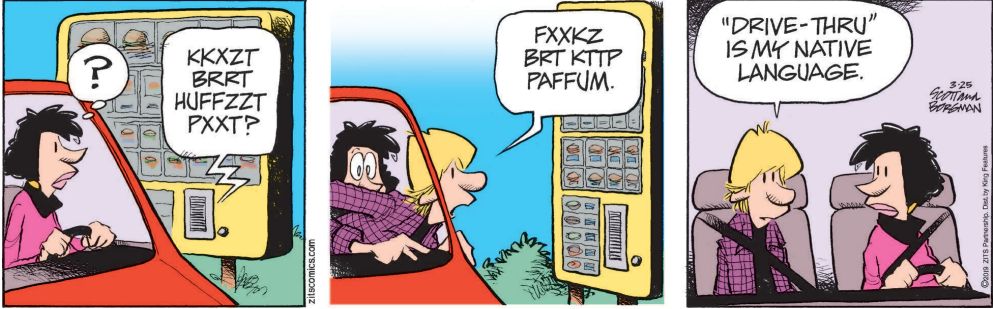
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). If justice is what you crave, you can get it within the confines of a game with consistent, unchanging and indifferent rules. So, basically a computer game. Real-world justice will be arbitrary by comparison.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Self-judgment does nothing for your motivation. It makes sense that you'd think it could help, in the way of a drill sergeant or a sports coach. But it won't. It only makes emotions get stuck inside you, where they'll do no good.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You thrive under the burden of responsibility as a weightlifter thrives through consistent lifting. Of course, in both cases, the trick is to push yourself without hurting yourself. Know when to back off.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's comfort in believing that everything will be all right. It's when you require that to happen in one particular preferred way that things get stressful. Trust that it will work out, and don't worry so much about how it's going to.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The preachers aren't all in pulpits. They're ranting at lunch tables, exalting in boardrooms, condemning in newsrooms, declaring to anyone who'll listen. You know when the message is for you. When it's not, you stay out of it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Regarding that frustrating (or perhaps just terribly boring) situation in your life, decide definitively whether you are in or out. Next thing you know, it gets better.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). When it comes to enforcing the rules, you have your own bag of tricks for the job. Sometimes you use rewards, and other times you use your cunning. Then there are the

times like today, when you enforce the rules by bending them.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). When you sincerely misstep, giving an apology is appropriate. But to regularly apologize for minor things that are not your fault will only weaken your position.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Life is like the school play today. People get the roles they fit into. Not everyone is right for the role that has the most lines, so don't worry about who gets it. Happiness is in getting the role you'll be best in.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It's pretty much the job of older people to misunderstand the preoccupations and proclivities of the younger generation. Today's lucky move will be to resist the stereotype.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The sound of a foreign accent reminds you there is more of the world to experience. Dream, scheme and plan about the next time you'll go where people live and communicate differently.

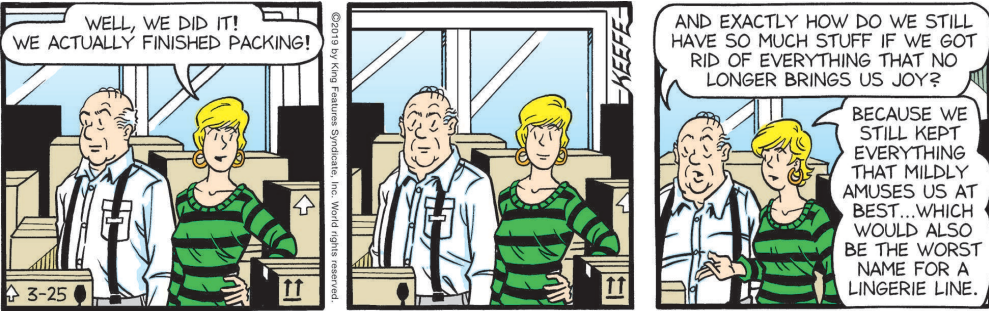
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). If only life came with more "do not disturb" features. Alas, you have to come up with your own strategy to keep from being interrupted all day. Then again, there's something good about being so needed.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 26). An adventurous mood kicks off this solar return, and you'll feel at home wherever your travels take you. Mementos from these experiences will be material, spiritual and social. Summer is about guiding others, and you could even start an instructional program. Bonds of friendship and love reflect in a year-end project. Cancer and Aries adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 19, 42, 3, 16 and 38.

BLONDIE



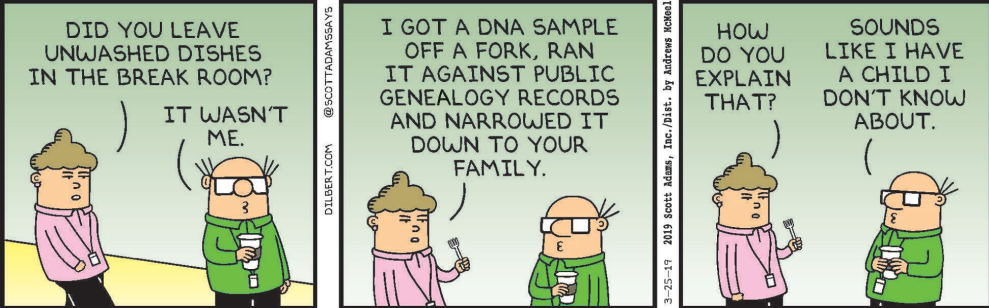
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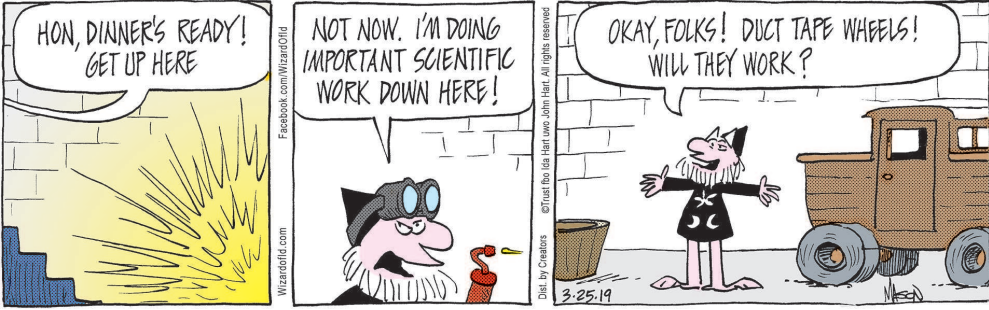
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ROSE IS ROSE

