

Disagreeable dinner guest

Dear Annie: We often invite my brother-in-law to share dinner with us. He lives alone across the street and seems to enjoy the food when he comes over.

I am writing because he is very opinionated and shuts me down whenever I say something that he disagrees with. Recently, it was when I said that Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs is patient and that the New England Patriots were underdogs before the game, which the Patriots won — barely. But my brother-in-law disputed both of my comments and left no room to have another perspective.

In addition, after he has finished a meal, he often begins talking about food, where he's going to get it next — Chinese takeout, for instance — or where he gets the best meatballs, etc.

Is it me, or is this recurrent behavior a put-down to me, seeing as I'm a good cook and he seems competitive with me about other matters? I haven't cut him off as yet because of family ties, but I'm pretty tired of this kind of boorish behavior when he comes over

at our invitation to have dinner together.

Thank you for weighing in. —
At the End of My Patience

Dear End of Patience: I'm not so sure that his talking about his favorite meatballs or where he likes to get Chinese food is a put-down about your cooking. That is, of course, unless you are serving meatballs or Chinese food that night. No one likes to be around an opinionated person who refuses to listen to another's perspective, so you might ask your husband to help with this situation — either by talking privately to your brother-in-law or in defending you at dinner when the conversation gets heated.

Dear Annie: My boss is currently in marriage counseling. I found this out directly from him. He goes to regular weekly meetings with his wife. He's always in an especially bad mood on those days. I think their marriage is in a really bad state. That already makes me sad, but I've also met his three kids, and they're wonderful. I worry about them and about my boss.

Is there anything I could do to help him in this time of need? I know I would want the people around me to be compassionate if I ever told them I'm going through something. I offered my boss some homeopathic stress relief pills, but he brushed me off. What do I do? I don't want to stand idly by while he suffers. — *Bearing the Brunt of Boss's Breakup*

Dear Bearing the Brunt: Though I truly admire your compassion for your boss's unhappy marriage, I don't think you should take this one on unless you are planning on leaving your job. The fact that he brushed you off when you offered him your stress relief pills may be an indication that it's time to sit this one out. Sometimes not doing anything except listening without trying to offer advice is the best thing you can do. If he reaches out to you again, acknowledge how he feels without being patronizing or making the conversation about you.

Lastly, if in fact his marriage is in a bad state, then he has a right to be sad. Also, he is doing something about it by going to marriage counseling. Let's hope he has a good counselor and in time his sadness and bad moods lessen.

TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Etiquette is an ever-expanding body of knowledge. With each new forum for communication (and a new social media platform popping up every week) comes a different set of rules. Avoid pain by learning the rules.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The world is conflicted enough. It really doesn't need one more person in there cultivating conflict. The instinct to do so, even in a kidding, intellectual or artistic way, is something to examine before acting on.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You'll get a second chance at your pitch. This time, you're all warmed up; you know your idea even better; and you've shifted a few things to fit your audience. Things will go well for you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The person who's trying to get to know you may not know what to ask, or delve into the wrong topics, but that's where your social skills will shine. You'll take charge and get it all back on track.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Mistakes can be embarrassing, but not making them is much, much worse. Our personality is enhanced, our personhood expanded, all through making mistakes. Go make some!

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). There is no one in the world who can irritate you quite like a member of your original family. This is why it's good to go into interactions with them with the intent of giving an extra berth of generosity and graciousness.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It's hard for harmonious Libras to understand this, but there are people who actually enjoy conflict. It energizes them! And since you do not feel the same, it's

best to leave them to it. Run — don't walk — the other way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Love is the answer. Getting to love is the question. Luckily, there are many maps. Poems are maps. Songs are maps. There are also clues in nature and in stillness.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Decide and then go with it. You're right. Or you'll figure it out. It's just that there's no time to waste vacillating between options when there's incredible opportunity to create momentum today.

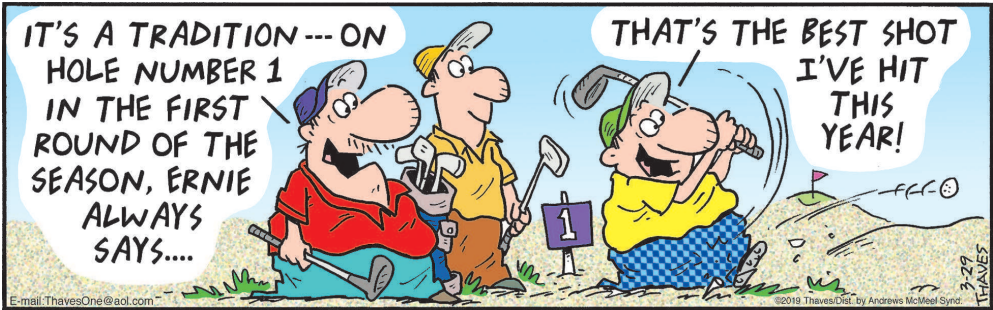
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Only give criticism that's asked for, and even then, consider that criticism may only be the cover for what's really being asked for, which is more along the lines of validation or attention.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'd rather be loving than nervy. You'd rather be compassionate than try to be funny and fall flat — or worse, be accidentally hurtful. Also, being loving is just easier.

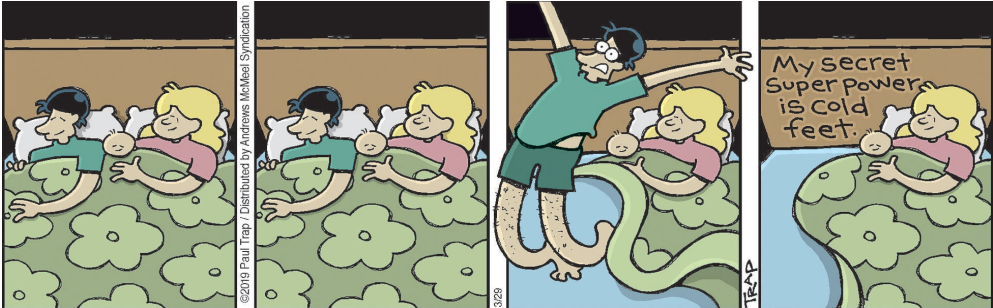
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You have seen it happen time again where people underestimate how fragile the human ego can be. It's why you're so very careful with the feelings of another today.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (March 30). Some of the wonderful things that happen this solar journey are things you expected and have been working toward for some time. But your favorite events will be fortuitous surprises, or things you turned into good fortune that didn't strictly look like that from the onset. Also, there's a contract in April and a move in January. Taurus and Gemini adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 18, 5, 20, 43 and 1.

FRANK AND ERNEST



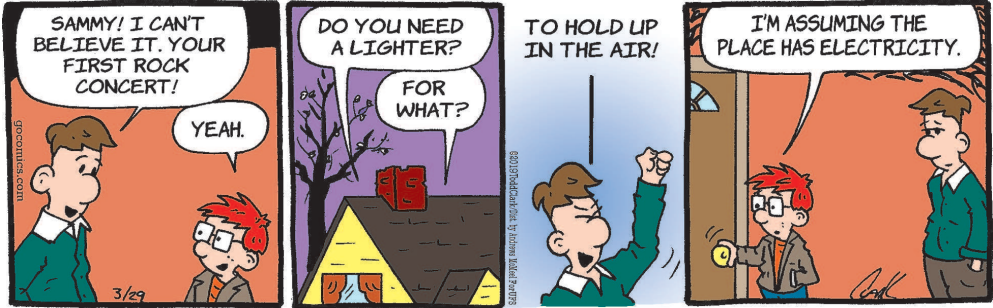
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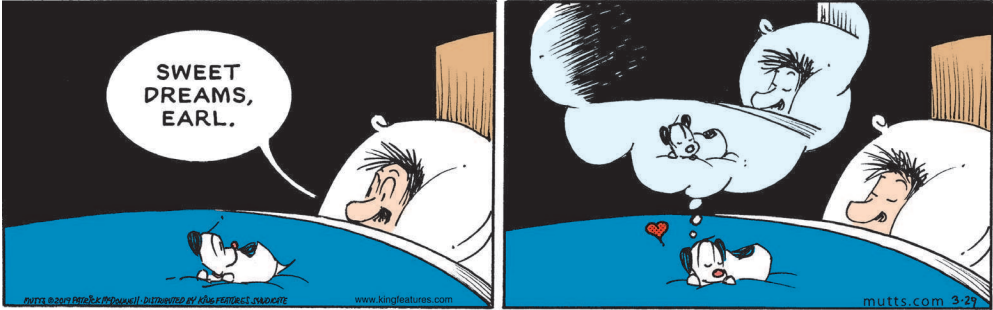
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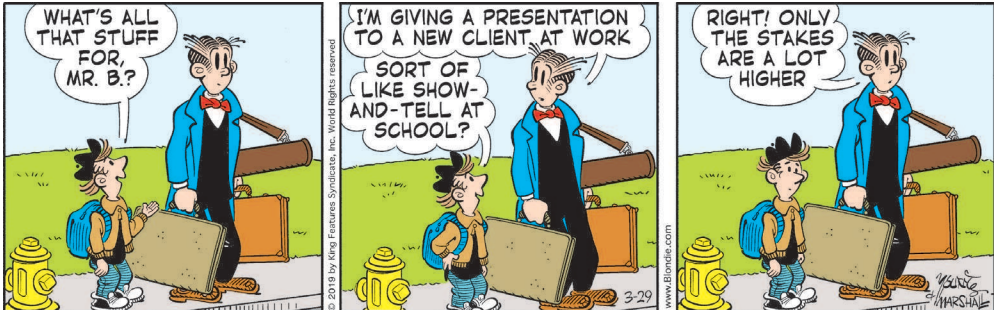
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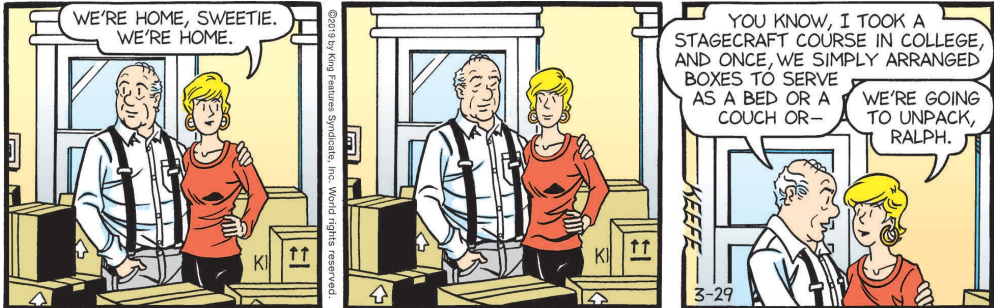
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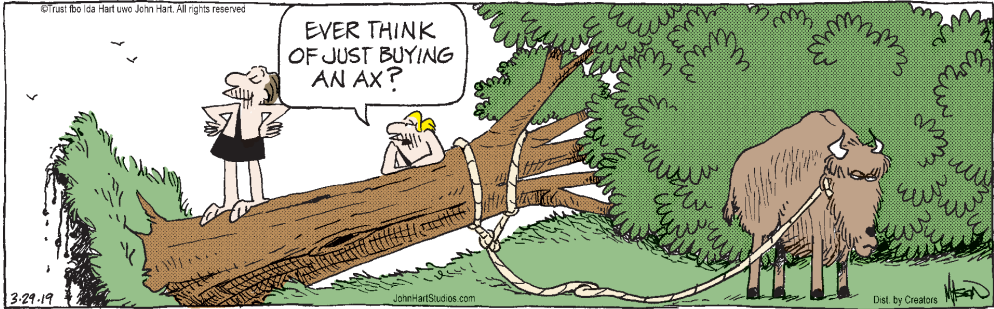
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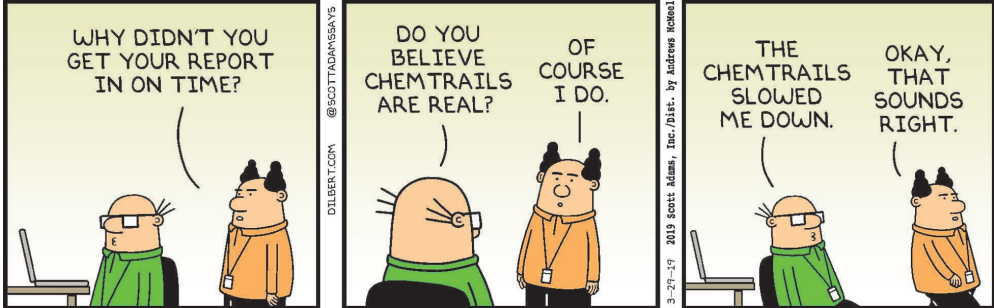
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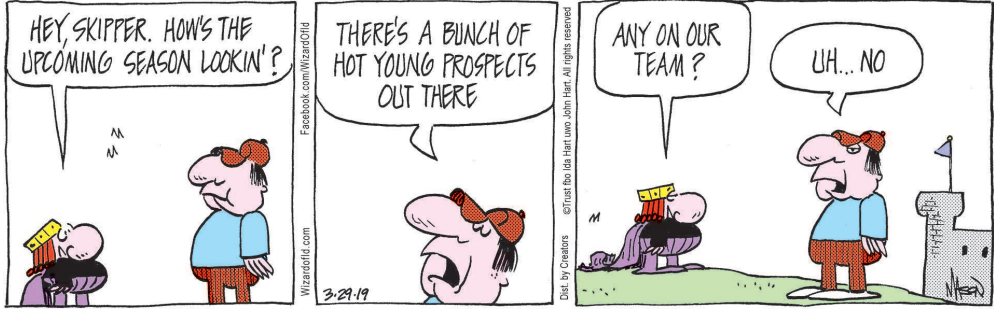
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