

DEAR ABBY

Write to Dear Abby online at dearabby.com or by mail at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069



Dear Abby: Our 21-year-old daughter has been home since March when the pandemic began. She has always been a homebody. Our house is small, and my wife and I no longer can be alone or be physically intimate because our daughter prevents it.

If we hug for an extended period of time, she will make a comment. If we want to watch a movie, she wants to hang out, and we can't watch it without her. My wife and I need privacy, and we need our adult daughter to cut the cord.

Our marriage really evolved and we grew even closer when "the kid" moved out for college. Now we can't escape her. I miss my wife and our alone time. What should we do?

— *Frustrated in the East*

Dear Frustrated: This is your home, and your daughter needs to accommodate you, rather than the other way around. What you must do is have an adult conversation with your homebody daughter and explain that you and her mother need time alone. Establish a date night so she knows when to disappear.

I'm assuming that she has a job and friends. If that's the case, she should be accumulating enough money to live apart from you. If you are not only sheltering her but also supporting her, you will need to create a plan so your daughter can become independent. It may mean contributing to her rent for an agreed-upon period of time, if necessary, so be prepared.

Dear Abby: I was wondering if you could give me some advice on tipping. I frequent coffee shops in my area as well as when I travel.

The baristas usually are younger women. Usually, there will be a tip jar located next to the cash register.

A typical latte costs \$4 to \$5, and I leave a dollar in the tip jar. I realize that many servers may be distracted if they're waiting on other customers, but is it normal for them to never acknowledge someone who is giving them a tip? Is the tip just expected?

Again, I realize there could be distractions, and maybe the baristas don't notice me tipping them, but it seems like the rule rather than the exception. I think it comes across as lousy customer service. How hard is it to say "thank you"? Is this another example of a generation of poorly raised people?

— *Sipping & Tipping in Connecticut*

Dear S & T: It's not only good manners but also GOOD BUSINESS to thank clients/patrons — just as it's considered proper etiquette to thank the person who served you. I hesitate to paint an entire generation with the same brush, but the individuals you are dealing with could benefit from a refresher course in courtesy.

Dear Abby: I'm 56, disabled and live with my mom, who is 86. I'm really scared of what's going to happen to me when she passes.

— *Scared in Nevada*

Dear Scared: You should not be in limbo regarding this question because your concern is valid. It's important that you talk to your mother about your fears and ask her that question. The answer may involve her estate and whether she has a will that provides for you in the event of her death. I am hoping that her answer will put your mind at ease.

YOUR HOROSCOPE *By Madalyn Aslan*

Stars show the kind of day you'll have

★★★★★ DYNAMIC | ★★★★★ POSITIVE | ★★★ AVERAGE | ★★ SO-SO | ★ DIFFICULT

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR SUNDAY, JAN. 24, 2021: Admired, magnetic and active, you're so attractive that you're often worshiped. This year, you decide what you really want and go after it. It proves to be very successful and wins you even more fans. If single, a passionate yet sometimes stormy relationship is on the horizon. You don't commit this year. If attached, your partner needs more encouragement and support from you. Then bliss ensues. GEMINI makes you laugh.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★★ Today heightens your communication. Your clever use of words will make an impression on someone important. Promote ideas and make suggestions. They will be very well received and win you admiration. Tonight: Catch up with old friends through emails and calls.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Today brings delight. It is time to relax, socialize and purchase some new trinkets. The financial picture has brightened, so you can afford to indulge a bit. Be good to yourself and spoil yourself a little. You deserve it. Tonight: The old rules are changing.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Gemini is concerned with channeling words, thoughts and ideas. Today brings revelations concerning a close friend. There is time to reconsider the value of longtime associates and old goals. Learn from the past, then release it. Tonight: A more progressive trend begins.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ You will be aware of the secret needs and worries of others. Quiet, good deeds generate positive karma. There are opportunities now to be helpful, almost acting like a sort of guardian angel to those less fortunate. Tonight: Feeling good about yourself.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ A new sense of direction and purpose develops today. Accept invitations from friends or plan a get-together. You realize the blessings of friendship. You end the day in a pleasant, nostalgic mood. Tonight: You accomplish much in record time.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ People from the past call or visit. You'll feel haunted by an old wish or goal that proved elusive. Be very realistic if you're tempted to give it another try. Practical guidelines provide the best route to success just now. Tonight: Mulling it over.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your intellectual curiosity is heightened today. It's a good time to enroll in classes or join a book club. Someone from another cultural or spiritual background can become a romantic prospect or at least a new friend. Tonight: Stimulating chat online.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★ A dream or psychic vision should be heeded. Your intuition is right on target. Do background research and check claims that others make. Your feelings will be very intense today. Add a note of humor if you sense you're coming across as overly opinionated. Tonight: Relax.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★ Choices must be made regarding loyalty and commitment. Others cling to you, a situation that can be uncomfortable for the free-spirited Sagittarian. Today illuminates your options and marks a turning point. Tonight: Talk it over with old friends who know you best.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Today finds you faced with some rigidity. Play by the rules patiently. Make the most of the status quo. Short cuts won't work right now. Hesitate if you're considering a huge change. Ideas suggested in casual conversation are worth examining. Tonight: Write your mission statement.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Friends and lovers may change roles. Travel opportunities are very promising through the summer season, so you can start to plan. Don't let your potentials slip away. Do your part to let a memorable experience unfold. Tonight: In some considerable wonderment.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Make happy changes in living arrangements and help family members reach goals. Hang an updated photo of your family in your workspace to symbolize the positive interaction of home with your professional life. Tonight: Feeling very proud of yourself and good in the world.

Finding workers is getting harder for homebuilders

BY ARIANNE COHEN
Bloomberg

As industries go, residential construction in America has largely weathered the pandemic thanks to steady demand and low interest rates. Worksites nationwide are humming with good, paying jobs at a time when 1 in 8 workers are receiving unemployment checks. So why on earth are some construction firms complaining of a labor shortage?

U.S. construction is sprawling, employing roughly 5% of the nation's workforce (7.3 million employees) at some 680,000 firms, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The industry is essentially its own economy, building hundreds of billions of dollars worth of structures each month. It's true that many parts of the sector are hurting because of the pandemic. But in others, there's actually too much work to go around.

A survey by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) found that builders' top concern is labor, with 85% expecting future cost and availability problems, up from 13% in 2011. It's a conundrum that predates the pandemic, but one that's certainly been exacerbated by it.

While unemployment peaked at almost 15% in 2020, empty construction jobs nevertheless hovered between 223,000 and 332,000—about the same number of open slots back when unemployment was



George Frey/Bloomberg

A worker frames a house under construction in Lehi, Utah, on Dec. 16.

only 4.1%. So what gives? "You've got a lot of folks who are recently unemployed, but still don't think of construction careers as an opportunity," said Brian Turmail, vice president of strategic initiatives and public affairs at Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), which in the spring plans a nationwide recruiting campaign called "Construction is Essential."

"There's an impression that construction careers are like a job of last resort, and not a rewarding kind of middle-class career," he said. "Yet in many respects, they are a lot more rewarding than sitting in some kind of fluorescent-lit cube farm."

But if you are one of those unemployed Americans willing to try, be forewarned: entry level construction workers are not what many firms are look-

ing for. You have to know what you're doing.

Daniel Lane, vice president and installation manager at Flint, Michigan-based American Metal Roofs, said he tried to fill 10 positions last year for seven residential roofing crews throughout Michigan. It took him more than six months—despite paying his employees bounties for bringing in successful new hires. "A third of our applicants can't read the tape measure," he said.

Pre-pandemic, the industry was already partnering with correctional facilities to find day workers to keep projects moving. Now, wage-wars have erupted, inflating starting rates, Lane said. "We're all fighting for that same guy—in our region, at \$18-an-hour plus paid-travel time, you're not going to get anybody replying to your ads but entry level."

This is the secret about construction that many people don't get: positions that typically pay good money require technical knowledge and significant training, while others can mandate certifications and college degrees. Add to that common misperceptions that keep many people from considering construction work in the first place, and you have the recipe for a labor shortfall.

Such hiring lags have become a huge headache for some developers. "I'm looking to reduce all of my construction costs, and I see the prices of everything are going down, but the labor is not," said Eran Polack, chief executive of HAP Investments, which had seven projects underway in New York City. "There was a 16% unemployment rate in New York, so I'm asking...everybody, 'how come you can't reduce the cost?'"

In 2019, construction careers paid laborers on average \$42,320 a year; carpenters took home \$53,150, while managers earned \$103,960, according to the BLS. Certifications differ for trades like electricians and plumbers, as well as for types of construction such as residential, commercial and industrial. Training time varies from 4-week introductory courses to two-year trade school certificates. It's this required training—both the expense and unavailability—that may be deepening the labor problem.

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