

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"I told you that costume was a bad idea knowing that the party was in this neighborhood."

Stepson must learn that mother is sick

Dear Abby: My stepson just turned 7. My husband was granted custody because the mother was declared unfit due to her drug abuse. She was granted supervised visits until she can pass two consecutive drug tests.

Over the last year and a half, her visits have become few and far between. My husband and I think it would be a good idea for "Tony" to start seeing a therapist again. He doesn't talk about his mother often, and I'm worried he may be bottling up a lot of his feelings.

Tony is starting to ask more questions about his mom — like why he can't stay the night with her, why he can't live with her, and why he hasn't seen her much lately. I try not to say anything negative about her.

Is it time to explain the situation to him? He is still so young, and I don't know how to explain things in a way he would understand. If you were me, what would you do? — *Stepmom in Alabama*



JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

Dear Stepmom: You and your husband are wise to want to prevent problems before they happen. If I were in your situation, I would talk to Tony's therapist, explain what's going on, and ask for pointers regarding his questions and his behavior.

My instinct would be to tell the boy that his mother doesn't see him because she is sick. It's the truth. When he's older, he will need to know that there may be an inherited predisposition to addiction in his family — but for now that can wait. Definitely contact the therapist if you think he/she was a good one.

Dear Abby: I used to be best friends with this girl I met in kindergarten. Over the years we became like sisters and did everything together. We played Barbies, went on adventures, shopping, saw movies and had sleepovers.

As we grew older, we began trusting each other with our lives. I could tell her anything and everything, and I was there for her whenever she needed support or a shoulder to cry on.

However, now that we are older, we have slowly noticed small differences in our lives.

She became focused on her studies and art. I joined the cheerleading squad and became interested in meeting new people. Our lives have diverged, and now it's like we have become complete strangers.

I want our friendship to go back to the way it was. What can I say or do to show her I miss the old her? — *Confused Ex-friend*

Dear Confused: As people mature, it is not uncommon for their interests to diverge. This is normal, and it may be what has happened with you and your longtime friend. If you miss the closeness you once had, tell her so. But do not expect it to magically return your relationship to what it was.

You are both sharing another adventure now — exploring the interests and relationships you are developing as adults. It's possible that in the future your paths will converge again. When people are true friends, their ability to communicate on a meaningful level can last forever despite intervals when they are not in contact.

Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

TUNDRA by Chad Carpenter

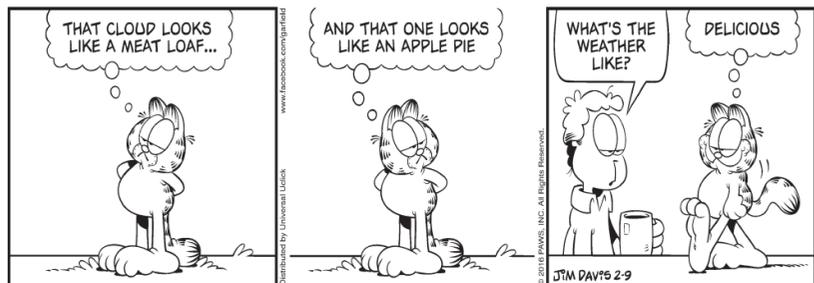


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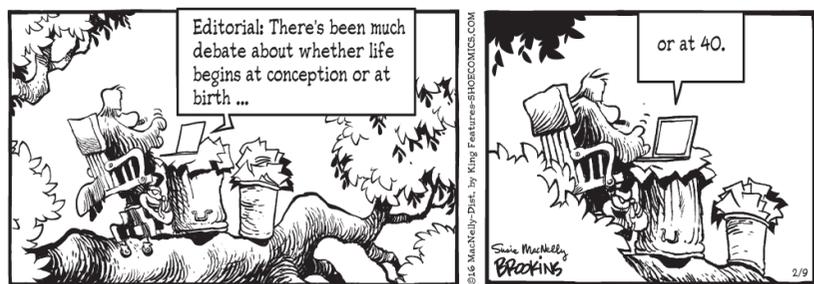
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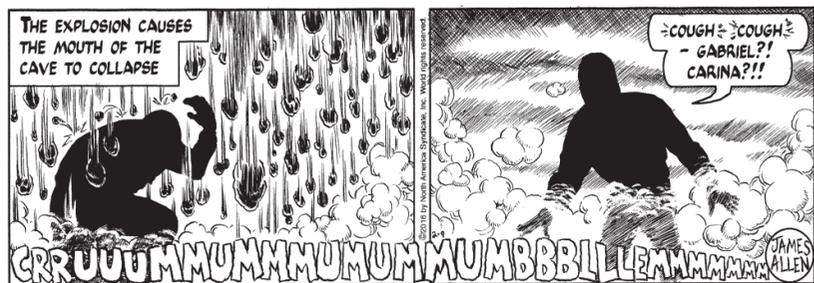
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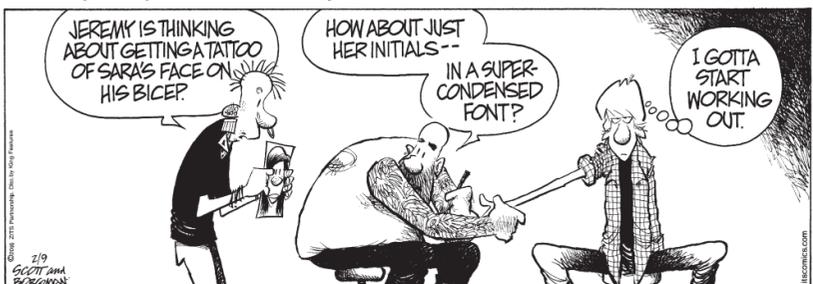
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Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Focus exclusively on positive, desirable options. If it's not a win for everyone involve it's not good enough for you, either. This bold approach will eventually lead to your promotion.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Sign up. Volunteer. Say yes. It doesn't matter if you know how to approach the task at hand, as you'll learn along the way. Your attitude makes you a perfect fit for anything that sounds fun to you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). While most compliments are nice to hear, they are not all created equal. Someone will elevate verbal admiration to an art form. You'll love how it feels to receive these kudos, and you'll learn to give as such.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). If you're wondering what keeps someone coming back and back to you, it's all that fresh excitement, kindness and tenderness you give. You never give your attention the same way twice.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You'll appreciate the ones who keep their correspondence short and to the point. You tend to accept calls and visits from this type because you know it's not going to drag out. You'd do well to emulate this succinct style going forward.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Unlike zoo animals, people often get to design their own cages. It sometimes takes them a while to realize this,

though. You have more freedom than you think. Current boundaries are either illusory, self-imposed, or both.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Your soul is searching for someone to nurture. At the same time, it scares you to take on too much responsibility — that's because you know deep down that you'll give yourself fully to it!

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Many want to be in your "club," whatever that means to you these days. For some it's a professional situation. One warning: Make sure the ones you take on are really ready and qualified to play at your level.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The negative emotions needn't be shoved aside; nor should they be obsessed over. Acknowledge these feelings as natural and acceptable. They will flow through you and dissipate.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Inaction frustrates you. What are they waiting for? The truth is, they are waiting for an invitation from someone like you. Go on now; throw the doors open and encourage them to walk through.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You see right through the sad people putting on a good face. You also see through marketing ploys, ulterior motives and anyone trying to achieve an end through the act of pretending.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Someone may be pressuring you, but don't rush to make a choice. When you do make up your mind, you'll strongly lean toward the option that gives you the most space and possibly an escape hatch.

HOLIDAY MATHIS

