

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"Those are genetically engineered sample dogs. The real dogs are in the back."

Anglo woman unaware of boundary

Dear Abby: I am a retired librarian who lives in Texas. I am what around here is called "Anglo," meaning white and not Hispanic. I speak four languages, with varying degrees of proficiency.

Recently, a friend who is Hispanic told me that if an Anglo speaks Spanish to a Hispanic person, it's considered an insult because it implies that the Hispanic person is "too stupid" to learn English. I had never heard of this before, so I asked a retired college-level Spanish teacher who is also Anglo. She informed me that Hispanic people use the language difference as a "boundary," and my speaking Spanish to them was a violation of their boundaries.

It came as a complete shock! I spent a lifetime developing language skills. I always considered speaking another language to be a sign of respect and friendship. Now I'm being told that it's insulting and intrusive?

I can't believe all Hispanic people feel this

way, but I don't know what to do with this information. My next-door neighbors are Spanish-speaking. I've always spoken to them in Spanish because it's what I heard from them when I first met them. Now I don't know if I've been insulting them. What should I do?
— *In Shock in San Antonio*

Dear In Shock: After reading your letter, I polled a focus group of Spanish-speaking friends about it. Some said it didn't bother them, but the majority explained that the reaction may depend upon how long the family has been in this country. If it has been several generations, the people you are addressing might identify more as English speakers than Spanish speakers, and consider your addressing them in Spanish to be condescending because it implies that you don't think they have learned English.

So the rule of thumb would be: Assume that everyone speaks English; then if it turns out they don't, use their language.

PS. If your relationship with your neighbors is good, tell them what you were told and ask if you may have offended them because if you have, you would like to apologize.

Dear Abby: My wife, "Jennifer," and I just finished a project and I am so peeved. We usually get along well. That is, until we work together. Then I go from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde.

I spent 25 years in heavy industrial construction. I have also taken classes in wood-working and metal crafts.

My wife has no building skills and no knowledge of how to use power tools. Yet, only minutes after we start, she becomes an engineer and starts telling me how to do things. When it happens, I explode with cursing and throwing things.

The thing I yell the most often is, "If you know how to do it, why do you need me?!"
— *Can't Work Together*

Dear Can't: Even though you're the expert, it appears your wife would like to offer some creative input. If you become so volatile that you lose control when working on projects with her, the obvious answer is to refrain from doing them together.

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

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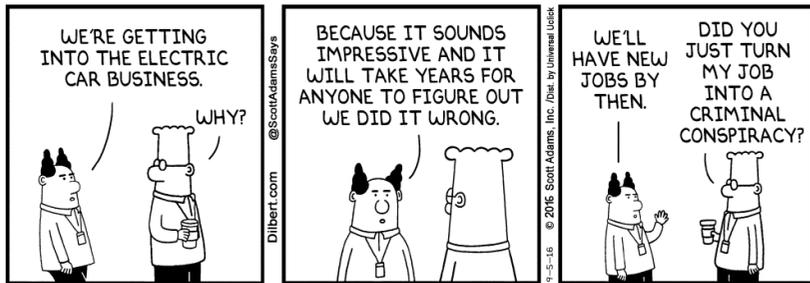
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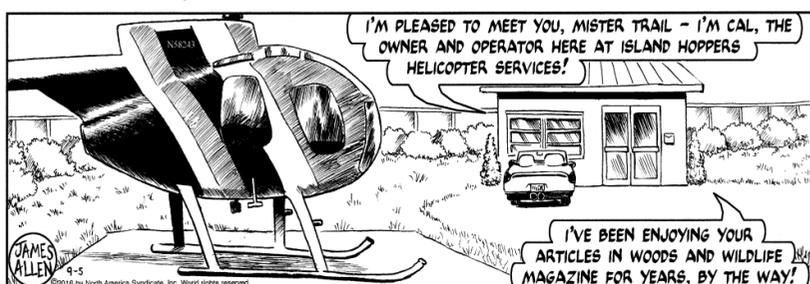
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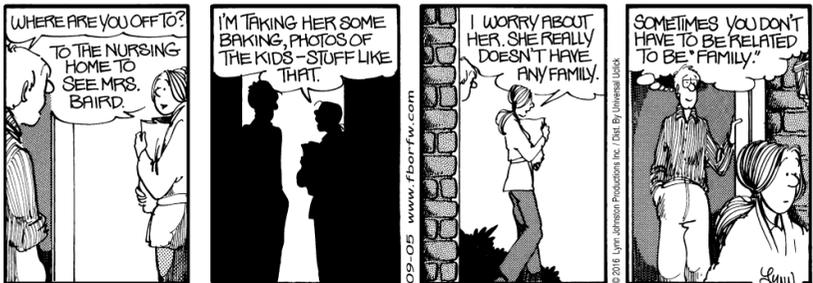
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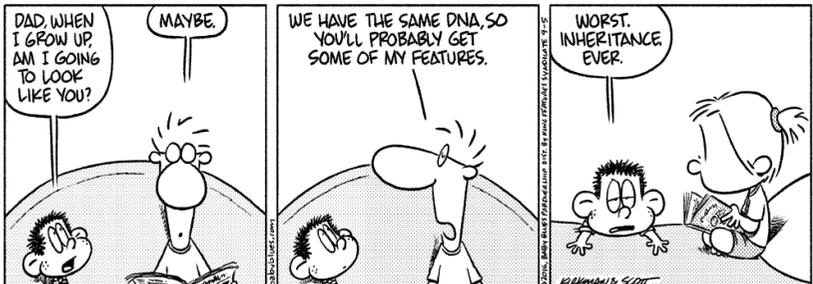
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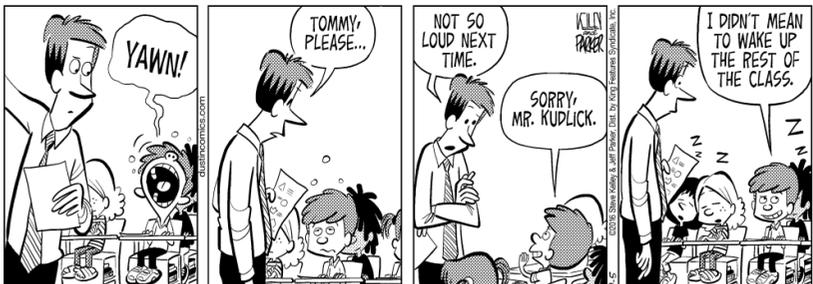
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Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're only just now getting to know someone. This is a phase of the relationship to stretch out for as long as possible. Stretching it out will make for a better experience now and a good story later.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Those who are reasonably sure that they are "good" don't make goals around being good. That doesn't, however, make them automatically good. Many aren't self-aware. They don't question their own behavior as you do.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Every group has its own special language, history and culture. You may not know the ins and outs of this yet, but you know enough to respect that it exists and move with care around those ideas.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Once you are absolutely clear about what others are expecting of you, you'll find it easy to either deliver it or have the conversation that gets you out of the arrangement with relative grace.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). When you're feeling tough, the one who can calm you and give you a sense of security will be your most valued friend. Down deep, you don't want to have to fight so hard for the things that should really be readily given.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Every relationship has a status quo. You've changed, and the basic nature of your relationships must change,

too. The norms that used to be fine with you are no longer satisfactory.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You need to feel a certain level of enthusiasm in order to move ahead with the action, both from you and the others involved. If it's not there, you'll take it as a sign to stay put — a legitimate and wise reading of the situation.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Teaching what is known isn't teaching; it's preaching. Find out where the knowledge gaps are and you'll quickly gain the rapt attention and respect of your audience.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You've no need of social techniques or tricks. You've no need to employ any special social discipline. The reason you seem so interested in others is because you genuinely are.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You see the problem. Not everyone around you will be able to see it. Then there are those who will see it, and yet do not believe that it's a problem at all. You have a lot of convincing to do before a solution is possible.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Presence isn't something you possess; it's something you give off. You'll radiate an energy today that makes people feel good about themselves, and the side effect is that they'll feel good about you.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). A good teacher erases the board, clearing the last lesson before moving on to the next one. Otherwise, there's a distraction hanging in the air that is mighty difficult to overcome.



JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY



HOLIDAY MATHS