

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson**Cousin needs to respect reader's space**

Dear Abby: I'm a 21-year-old college student. Recently, my cousin (also 21) moved in with my parents and me because her mom is verbally and mentally abusive. Lately, I'm having issues with her being here.

She constantly barges into my room, leaving me no time for myself.

Most days she ends up napping in my bed instead of hers, leaving drool on my sheets.

When she comes home from school, she drops all of her things in my room. My parents cleared out a room for her, yet most of her stuff is in mine.

She gets ready in my room instead of hers and talks on the phone with her boyfriend loudly while I'm studying or reading.

She's constantly complaining about school, her boyfriend, work, etc. If I get invited somewhere, she tries to tag along.

I don't know what to do. I need time for

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DEAR ABBY

myself. I can't bring these issues up to her because she's extremely sensitive and will see it as an attack.

I don't know how much longer I can take it because she is stuck here until November. Please help. — California Girl

Dear California Girl: You need to talk to your parents about your cousin's lack of boundaries.

Everyone needs personal time, and yours should be respected. Installing a lock on your bedroom door could guarantee that your cousin stays out in your absence.

However, because you are all adults — even though your cousin appears to be emotionally stuck in adolescence — some rules need to be established.

If she would consider it an attack if they come from you, your parents should be the ones who deliver the message.

Dear Abby: I'm 13 and my problem is, when I look in the mirror, all I can see is ugliness.

My mother has heard the way I talk about myself, and she doesn't like it one bit.

But I can't seem to stop because all I hear is, "You're ugly or you're fat. Go on a diet!"

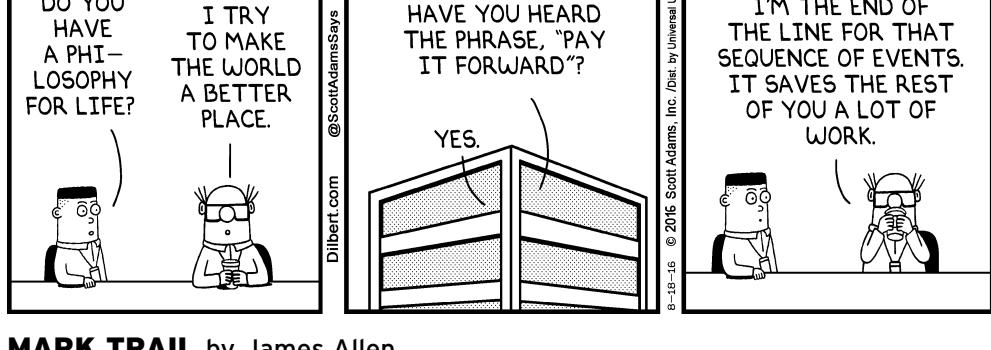
Is there something wrong with me? Do I need help? If so, what type of help? — West Coast Teen

Dear West Coast Teen: Whether or not you are overweight is something your doctor should determine.

As to your being "ugly," most young teenagers go through a period of transition. Your problem isn't your looks. It's the voice in your head.

My advice to you would be to concentrate on developing the things you are good at — sports, music, art, drama — and let the rest take care of itself because it will.

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

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ARIES (March 21-April 19). Sometimes you think things through, and other times it seems like the thoughts are thinking through you. A series of rapid-fire thoughts will lead to a profound revelation that changes everything.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The people from your past are important to you, even if they don't have a lot to do with where you're headed. You'll make efforts to keep in touch, not because you should, but because these contacts are part of who you are.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The task at hand is an awkward one. So, you're not the best at this. You don't have to be the best; all you have to be is your best. You'll hit the pillow tonight knowing that you used this day to its full potential.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You'll act on the best idea that occurs to you in the moment. If you want better ideas to occur to you, don't worry; they will. It's a natural function of exposing yourself to such moments repeatedly.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Cheerlead and coach yourself. Tell yourself that you're a champion, a hero, you got this. There's no time to agonize over the situation, or even time to try and get it right. Just get it done.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Someone has wronged you in the past. If only it were enough that this person has apologized and wants your forgiveness. It still seems a little too easy, doesn't

it? There's more that will occur before you'll be ready to let this one go.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Not everything in the relationship will add up neatly. It's a bit confusing, but so what? It's a wonderland! You're not supposed to understand those. If you did, there would be nothing to wonder at.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You can't do A without tending to B, which relies on A being solidly in place. Your best bet is to recognize that this conundrum could go on forever unless you break out and find about 10 other options to try on.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Life leads you to do such funny, contradictory things, and then you'll laugh as though you were merely a witness to this. Of course, you have to deal with consequences that a witness wouldn't have to worry about.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The situation has the potential to leave you in a state not unlike that of a disgruntled teen, sighing and full of argument. Don't let it happen. The adult answers are the only ones that will work.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Objectively, you feel the situation won't bring out your best and the crowd won't be a good fit for you — and yet, inexplicably, you want to be included. The reasons are primal and hard to argue with.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Follow your curiosity and ask the meaningful questions. When you know a little about a person's past, this person's present status will delight you all the more.