

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



Cindy was careful to make sure she was getting a bargain on toilet paper.

Overlooked student struggles to fit in

Dear Abby: I'm having trouble with my daily life. I have become more reserved and rarely even look at people.

All I do is my schoolwork. I have lost trust in quite a few people over the years, including most of my family members. My parents have taught me to trust almost no one and to always be afraid of strangers.

I recently started high school, and I have only talked with two or three people at the most.

I have really bad social anxiety, and I'm treated different from my siblings.

I'm feeling like my whole life is just a lie and that I'm nothing. I feel like people can't see me — that I'm invisible to everyone.

My family controls my life as if they are dictators. I've lost control over any decisions I make and anything I do.

I don't know what to do anymore. I'm so lost. Please help me! — *Lost in El Paso, Texas*



JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

Dear Lost: I agree you need help, because I'm sure there's more to your situation — and possibly your family's — than you have shared.

However, for you to overcome your distrust of others and the feeling that you are "invisible," you will need to confide in a trusted teacher or counselor at school.

You need more help than I can provide in a letter or my column. Licensed mental health providers routinely help individuals who suffer from social anxiety disorder, but in order to get that help, you will have to find the courage to reach out and ask for it.

Dear Abby: Last year I started a relationship with a woman. At first everything seemed to flow smoothly, but after a few months we started arguing. We both had issues with irritability and expressing ourselves.

"Nancy" and I broke up seven times in a four-month period. For reasons I have yet to understand, after each breakup and once we had time to cool off, we both wanted to get back together.

We recently went our separate ways again and I thought this was the last time. She

has now contacted me and casually proposed getting together to "hang out" for a while. Without batting an eye, I agreed.

I don't know if I'm hung up on her because I'm truly in love with her, or because I'm just unable to move on. As a couple, we work together well — as long as we aren't together every day. As friends, there's always an undertone of romantic interest.

I can't make heads or tails of my emotions concerning her, or hers for me. Any advice? — *Unable To Move On*

Dear Unable To Move On: Have you discussed this with Nancy? If you haven't, you should. If you both would like more from your relationship than you have been getting, it might benefit the two of you to have some couples counseling.

Sometimes people can be attracted to each other and care about each other, but something prevents the relationship from jelling. Because this push-pull has been going on for so long, it's time to find out the cause.

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

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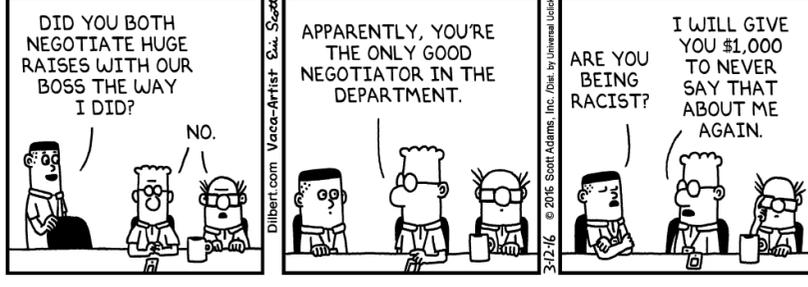
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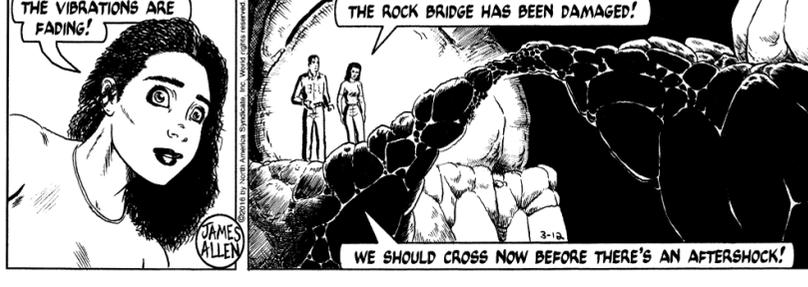
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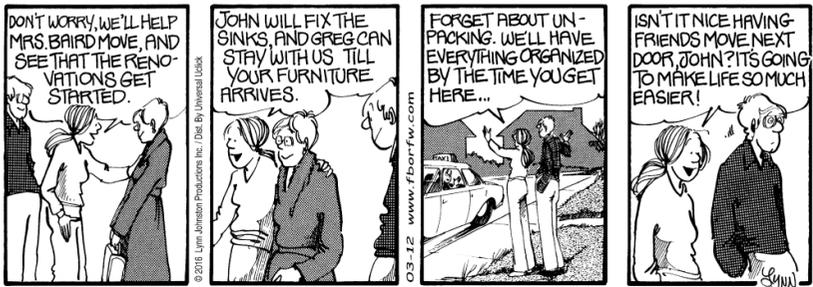
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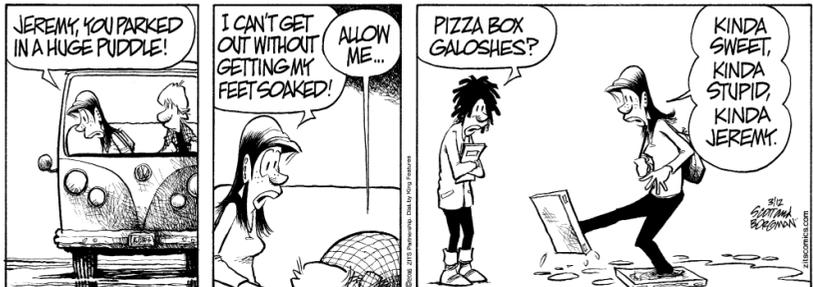
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Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Whether you're head over heels, falling for someone or stumbling toward ecstasy today, the implication is the same — your joy will be at least partly obtained through a loss of control.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Lovey-dovey, honey-bunny, puppy love: The amorous heart is also the animal heart these days and you'll be thinking — or rather, not thinking — along those lines as you fall in love this weekend.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The reason you're so relaxed is that you know who you are, you can stand behind all you've done, and you have nothing to hide. A clean conscience and a confident swagger go hand-in-hand.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You'll discreetly avoid anyone whose company feels negative to you. This will keep you out of harm's way. Your life will remain unfettered by social annoyance.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). When your achievements don't seem to be taking form to fit your preconceived purposes, rest assured there is something better out there for you that you simply haven't discovered yet.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). If you're tired, hungry, lonely or otherwise stressed or compromised, this is not a time for making agreements

of any kind, let alone binding appointments, deals or promises.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). If it doesn't work out one way it will work out another. So there's no reason to get overly anxious at the ups and downs of simple logistics. A relaxed voice and presence will take you far.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your honest assessment of the situation sometimes sounds a little more cynical than you would like it to, but that doesn't make it any less accurate. Stand in your truth. If you don't wish to offend anyone, stand quietly in it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You'll be earning good karma as quietly as you can. It's as though you already know that anonymous good deeds earn more points than loud ones.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). There may be something unsettling eating at your thoughts, and that could have an effect on your digestion. Can love heal this? When your heart is content, your body will follow suit.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Different social configurations inspire good things in your life now, especially your love life. So try to be open-minded about the couples forming or dissolving around you. Change will favor you.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Remember when you had to ask the one in charge for everything you needed and wanted? Now you celebrate your autonomy. Revel in it by doing what you don't need anyone else's permission to do.



HOLIDAY MATHS