

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"In just five days the sparrow should totally clear up your case of head lice."

Mother wants to deflect rude question

Dear Abby: I need help developing a response to a very rude question. My daughter recently turned 13. It seems that every time we go to a gathering and the moms get together talking, someone will ask me if my daughter has gotten her period yet.

It isn't even a question from people I'm close with. She would be mortified if she knew that people were fixated on it.

What is a good way to reply that it is none of their business without seeming rude? — Offended in N.Y.C.

Dear Offended: My goodness, what a question. And from someone who is only an acquaintance. If the person is someone I don't know well, I would reply, "That's a personal, private matter between my daughter and me."

Or, if I was feeling mischievous, I might smile and say, "She hasn't had one for the last four months and it's beginning to worry me." (Just kidding.)



JEANNE PHILLIPS DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby: I am curious about your opinion on setting people up on dates. I am considering introducing one of my best friends, "Sierra," to my uncle "Wade."

Do you think it's a good idea to set a friend up with a family member? I'm worried if it doesn't work out that my friendship with her won't be the same. Your advice is greatly appreciated. — Cupid in Peoria

Dear Cupid: I don't think there are any hard and fast rules about this. If you think Sierra and Wade have enough in common that they would enjoy meeting each other, go ahead and introduce them.

If it works out — fine. If it doesn't, it shouldn't have a negative impact on your relationship with her. Personal chemistry is hard to predict, and if they are both mature individuals, neither should blame you if there isn't a "spark" between them.

Dear Abby: I'm a 16-year-old piano student. My piano teacher is a wonderful person and I enjoy taking lessons from her, but there is one problem: She is always late.

Usually it's 15 to 20 minutes, but other

times I might be kept waiting for an hour or more. She also switches my lesson because of her busy schedule, which means I have to forgo many activities at the last minute. I have never missed anything important, but still, I am annoyed when I have to miss something I was looking forward to for a piano lesson.

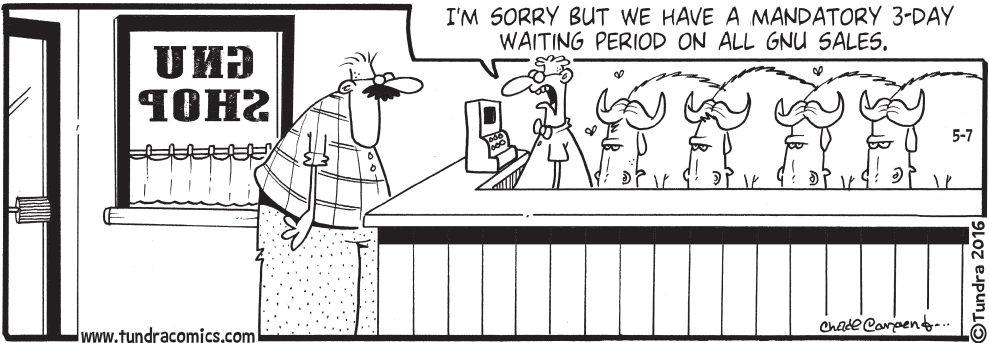
I'm not sure what to do. How should I tell her to start coming on time? I really don't want to find another teacher, but this is very annoying. — Frustrated in Wisconsin

Dear Frustrated: I don't blame you for being annoyed. Before your next lesson, talk with the woman and tell her how you feel about her inability to stay on schedule. She isn't your "friend"; she is paid for these sessions.

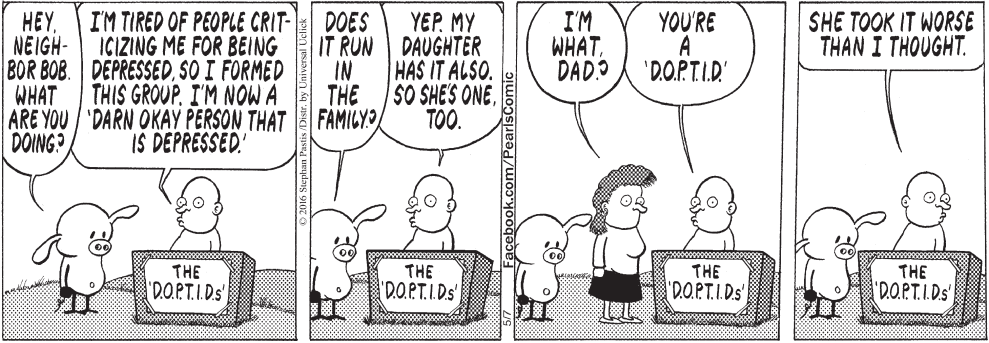
An occasional 15-minute wait is understandable; making someone wait an hour or more is inconsiderate and disrespectful. If she can't do better than this, you might be happier if you found another teacher, and she might be happier because she'll be less overscheduled.

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

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PEARLS BEFORE SWINE by Stephan Pastis



GARFIELD by Jim Davis



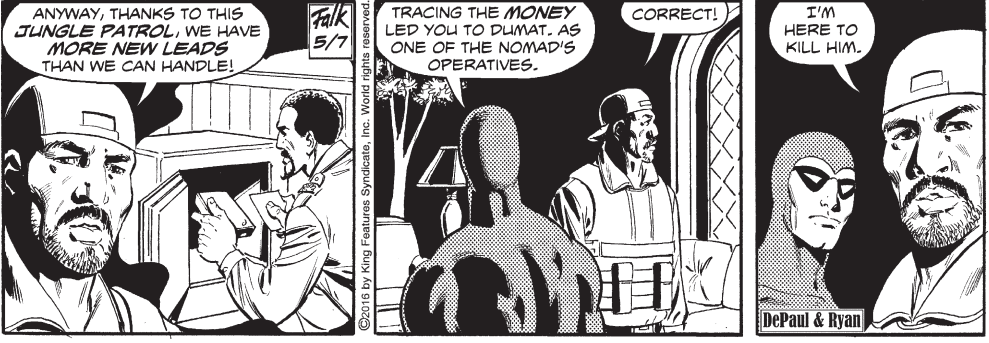
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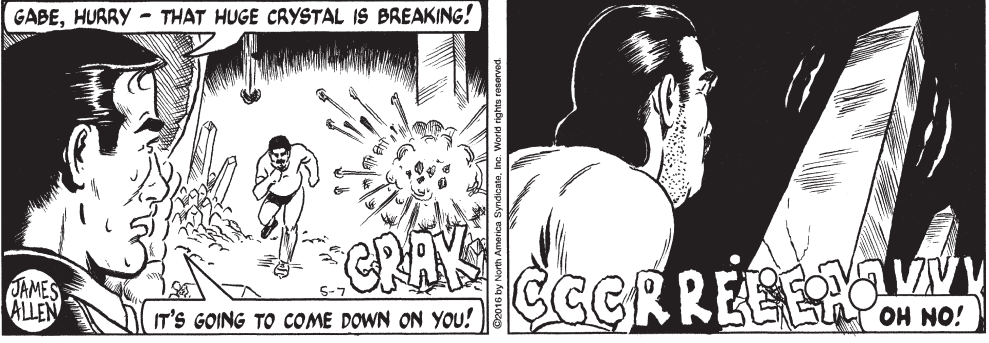
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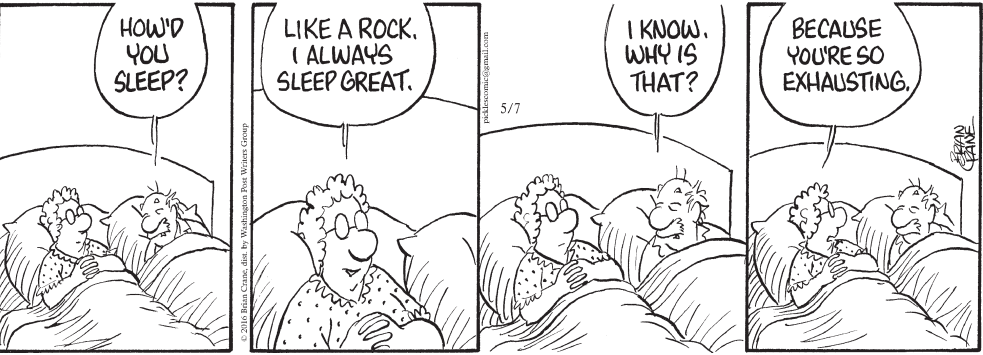
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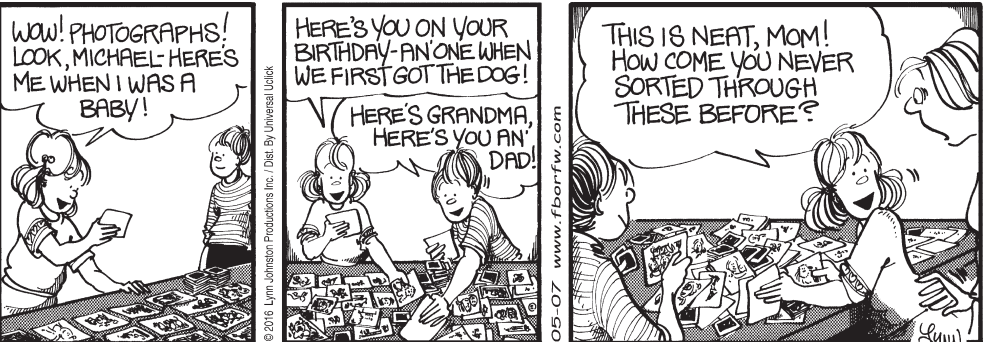
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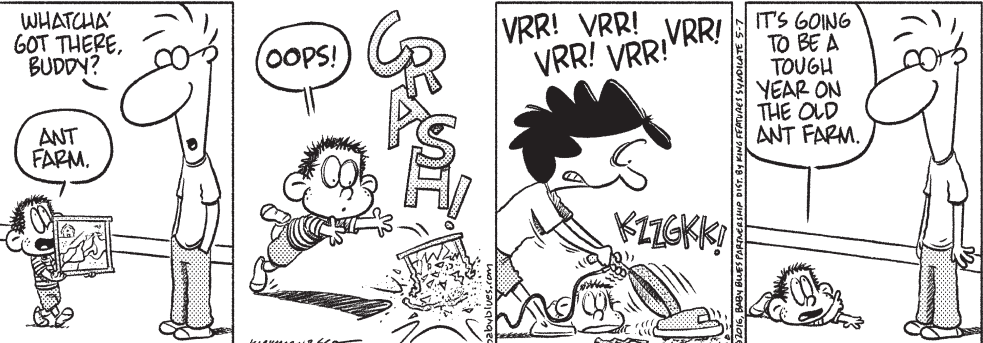
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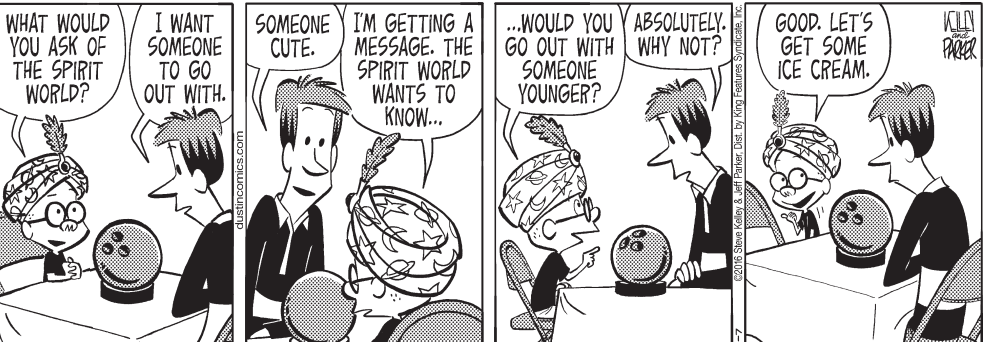
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DUSTIN by Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker



Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're not randomly choosing moods here. You're working on a problem all of the time — even when you're not aware of it. So be kind to yourself and allow for all kinds of feelings. They are informing you.

TAUROS (April 20-May 20). You'll come to a crossroads. Honestly, these two choices are not all that different from one another and may in fact lead to the same place. So don't agonize; just choose.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Music is powerful. Share the songs you love with people. And when the people you love aren't demonstrating that in the way you'd prefer, the songs you love will bring joy and healing.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Human beings are the only known animals who publish their words and broadcast their ideas. To express yourself publicly is to exercise part of your humanity. Besides, you have a lot to say right now.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The project you're tackling alone could die from neglect if you don't pick it up and run with it soon. Better yet, share your ideas, wants and needs with others: They'll help you stay on track if you ask them to.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). People who feel good about who they are generally don't need a lot of validation from the outside world. Comfortable in your skin, you suspect that you're

doing great — but a compliment still makes your day.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You'll be in the company of smart, aware people who will enjoy the mystery of trying to get to know you and maybe even impress you a little, too. For these reasons and more, bring your A-game.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It takes courage to demonstrate affection. Whether or not you can return a person's amorous feelings you'll appreciate the risk this person took in sharing that with you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're not going anywhere until you want to. You can't be pushed, persuaded or cajoled. You'll be especially resistant to anyone trying to influence you who hasn't taken the time to get to know you first.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Don't try to keep the peace at your own expense. Martyrdom isn't necessary either: Pause and step back. What do you want from this? That question will keep you from being a doormat or enabler in the situation.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Instead of demanding or even requesting that life greet you in your preferred manner, you accept what comes. To welcome the full spectrum of life, the good and the bad, is to live in wholeness.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Where there is sunshine there are shadows. If you run away in fear, they'll always follow you. Stay and play with the shadow aspects of life and you'll be quickly reminded of their illusive qualities.



HOLIDAY MATHIS