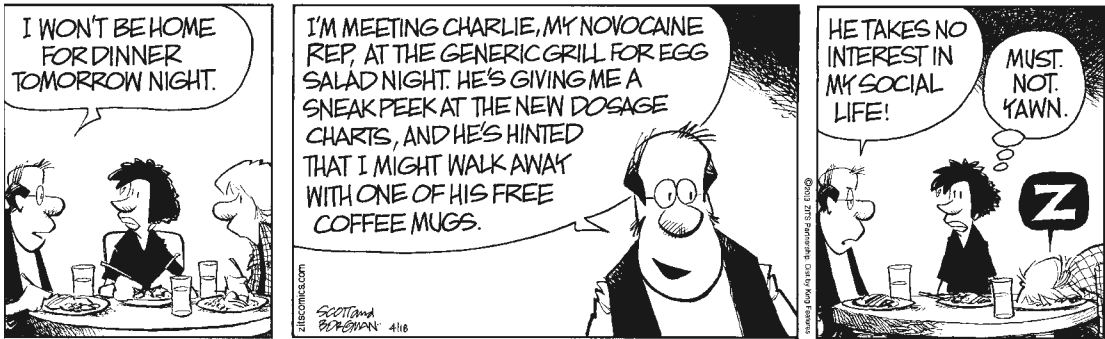


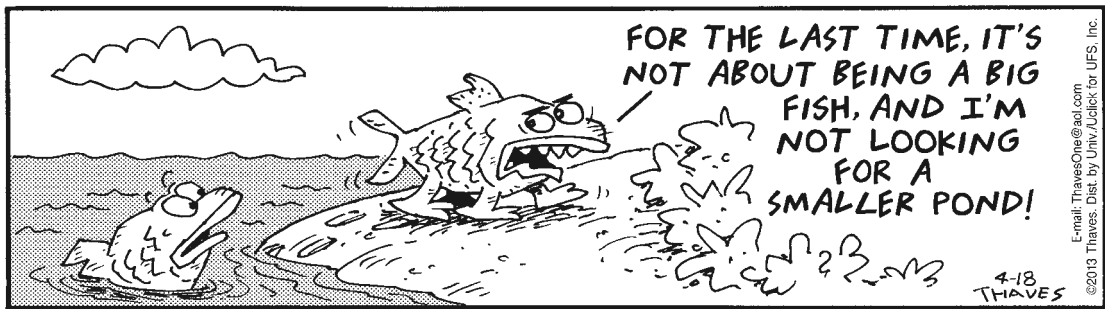
FAMILY CIRCUS | BIL KEANE



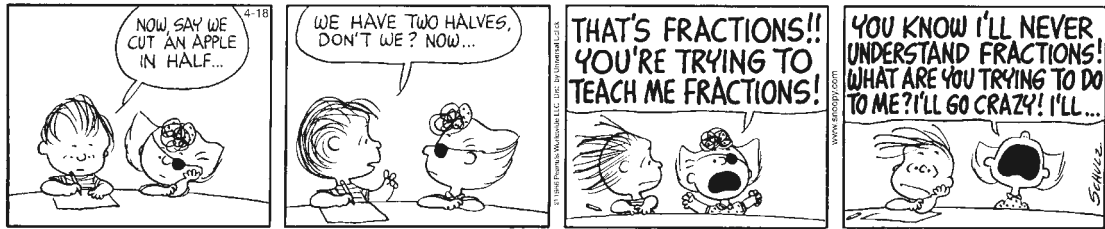
ZITS | JERRY SCOTT AND JIM BORGMAN



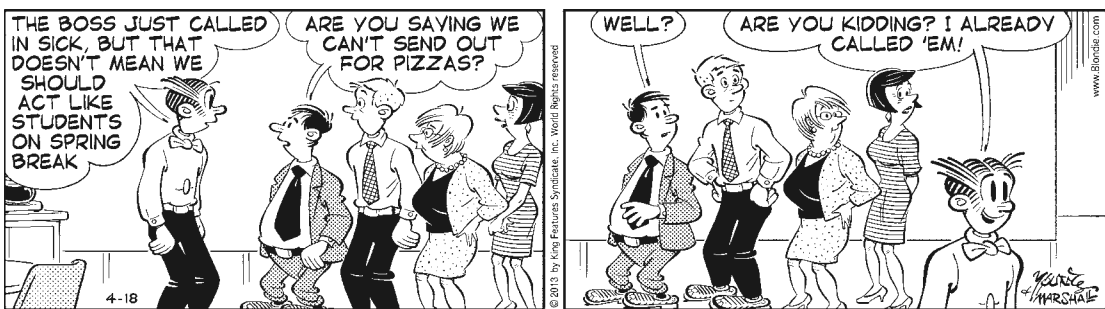
FRANK AND ERNEST | BOB THAVES



PEANUTS | CHARLES M. SCHULZ



BLONDIE | YOUNG & DRAKE



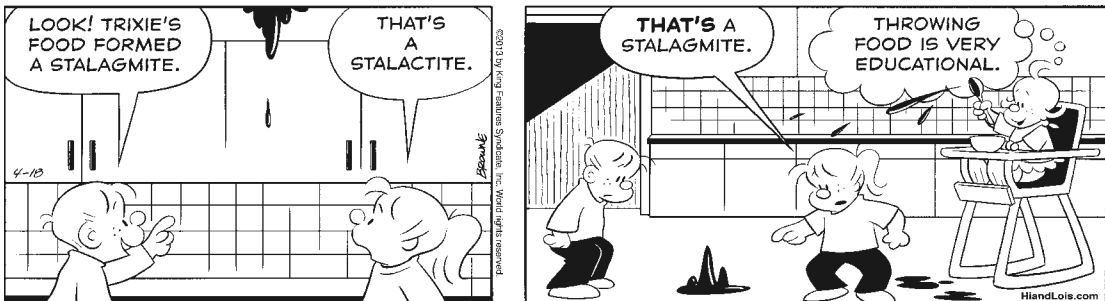
GARFIELD | JIM DAVIS



BEEBLE BAILEY | MORT WALKER



HI AND LOIS | BRIAN AND GREG WALKER



THE BORN LOSER | ART SANSON



Downside Overshadows Upside In Woman's Fear Of Parenthood

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I are contemplating starting a family. When I was younger I wanted children, but over the years my personal experiences have caused trepidation. Because of divorce and the custody battles of my older siblings, I know the amount of blood, sweat and tears that go into children.

I work in the field of social services. Every day I am confronted with families who struggle with more children than they can care for and with behavioral and emotional problems. Frankly, it has turned me off. I am terrified of all the "what ifs."

I can't talk to my family because I don't want to tell them they have created part of my problem. My in-laws can't understand why we don't have children yet.

My husband keeps insisting "everything will be fine." I love him deeply and he would make an amazing father. My heart wants this, but my head isn't sure. I can't picture our future without children, but the fear of actually having them brings me to tears. Can you help me? — SCARED TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP

DEAR SCARED: Children don't come with 100 percent, money-back guarantees. What they need in order to thrive is parents who love each other and them, and who are willing to put forth the time and energy to raise them. I don't know what went wrong in your siblings' marriages, but it appears their kids have been used as pawns rather than having their own interests put first. If both parents cooperated in the interests of the children there would be no battles.

Please do not allow the dysfunction you have seen in your work to influence your decision. You and your husband will not be having more children than you can afford, and I assume you are approaching the idea of parenthood in a mature fashion. I would caution you about one thing, however.

Having a child because of pressure from your in-laws would be a poor reason to embark upon parenthood.



DEAR ABBY

Jeanne Phillips

■ Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DIFFICULT SITUATION

DEAR IN: You say you have known for years that something was missing. Well, it is possible that your wives have felt the same way, and may have blamed themselves for it. That's why it is important for you and your friend to explain everything to them honestly.

It would be helpful for everyone who will be affected to seek counseling and receive the emotional support they will need through this life-changing transition. You and your lover should go online and

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bigar's Stars is based on the degree of your sun at birth. The sign name is simply a label astrologers put on a set of degrees for convenience. For best results, readers should refer to the dates following each sign.

A baby born today has a Sun in Aries and a Moon in Cancer if born before 11:13 a.m. (PDT). Afterward, the Moon will be in Leo.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2013:

This year you are vibrant and upbeat. Your creativity determines the nature of events. Others would be hard-pressed to stop you from fulfilling a long-term desire or goal. If you are single, remember that you might be seeing your newfound sweetie through rose-colored shades. Take them off if you want to have a successful bond. If you are attached, realize that you lost your shades a while ago. In any case, you will start to see your significant other in a more positive light. LEO is a lover of life and love.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19)

★★★★ You are fiery right now, especially when dealing with a personal issue. If you hit a "nay," you'll automatically turn up your creativity in order to get a "yea." Others seem very into having control. You might need to step back and let them take the lead. Tonight: Put on your game face.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20)

★★★★ Understand what is happening behind the scenes with a relative or neighbor. This person might not be revealing as much as you would like. As a result, you will stay guarded until he or she decides to open up. You might need to verbalize your terms. Tonight: Hang in there.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20)

★★★★ You can be possessive. You actually might feel a strong need to try to keep up with the Joneses. By noon, you'll let go of this attitude, communicate better and draw others toward you. Express your true values. Tonight: Return all calls before deciding who, what or where.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22)

★★★★ Get as much done as possible before noon. Afterward, you might have to deal with a money matter or a decision. You know what you want -- be willing to pay for it as well. You might change your mind once you see the cost. Tonight: Buy a treat on the way home.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22)

★★★★ Suddenly, the cards are stacked in your favor. Your personality and magnetism help you get what you desire, even if it is just an easy day or some extra free time. Know what you want! Others clearly are drawn to you. Tonight: Do not hesitate to ask for what you want.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

★★★★ You might encounter a fun-loving person in the morning and suddenly find yourself on an adventure. Detach some in the evening, as you might have some responsibilities to take care of. Not everyone thinks fun is a good reason to shirk responsibilities. Tonight: Vanish.

LIBRA (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

★★★★ You rush into a project with an eye on the goal of completion. In the afternoon, you'll discover even more reasons to cross items off your to-do list. Extend lunch as long as possible. You might want to relax and enjoy the company. Tonight: Where the action is.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

★★★★ Staying grounded could be nearly impossible this morning. What you accomplish in little to no time might surprise even you, if you stay centered. If you do not want to accept any more responsibilities, simply say so. Others will pitch in to help. Tonight: To the wee hours.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

★★★★ Deal with a partner or an associate directly in the morning. You might not be thrilled by everything that is happening. Look past the immediate to the long term, and you will be able to go along with the program. Tonight: Reach out to a friend or loved one at a distance.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

★★★★ Someone could become so controlling that you might want to completely overpower him or her. Do you really think a showdown will work? Be subtle, yet claim your power. The way you visualize a partnership or a financial deal could become possible. Tonight: Togetherness.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

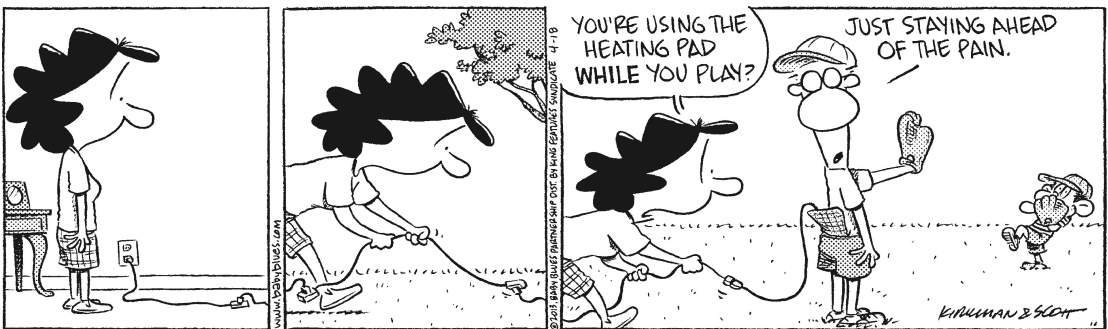
★★★★ Others might prove to be a hindrance. You can handle what is happening simply by ignoring them and not responding to their requests or demands. Continue as you have, and you will like how you land. Be more forthright in a discussion. Tonight: Sort through invitations.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20)

★★★★ A loved one dominates your morning, at least in your thoughts. What you'll discover is that you need to find another way around a problem. Apply your ingenuity, and answers will come forward soon enough. Tonight: Toss yourself into a favorite pastime.

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BABY BLUES | RICK KIRKMAN AND JERRY SCOTT



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE | LYNN JOHNSTON



MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM | MIKE PETERS

