



CAROLYN HAX

He finds her beautiful; she finds that puzzling

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn:
My girlfriend and I have been together for three months. I called her beautiful last week, just in passing as I caught a glimpse of her while we were running around setting up for a party. She gave me, I don't want to say a blank expression, but rather a shocked, vulnerable expression, and then moved right along, not acknowledging it any other way. She told me later after we had cleaned up that not a single person in her entire life has ever called her that, and she therefore doesn't know how to respond. She has just come to assume over the years that it wasn't true of her. She has been complimented on her brains and her will — and for very valid reasons. If it makes her obviously uncomfortable, should I stop calling her what I think she is — a gorgeous specimen of humanity?

San Francisco

Does it make her uncomfortable? Did she say that as part of the conversation, and did she ask you to stop? "I don't know how to respond" is very different from "Please stop making comments about my appearance." If it's the latter, then yes, you stop.

As long as it's the former, though, say what you want to say when you're moved to say it (within reason — you don't want to make your guests barf), and then see whether she rises to your words or shrinks from them. Respond to any visible discomfort by asking her if she'd like you to stop complimenting her — and if there's some reason she finds your compliments so hard to take or believe.

Please don't just shrug it off if she really can't handle comments about her appearance. If, for example, she was abused as a child, she could have an uncomfortable relationship with her sexuality, which would require attention far more serious than a moratorium on compliments.

Dear Carolyn:
How do you suggest one moves on and gets over regret? Regret for not getting that dream job, regret for not taking that trip around the world, or regret for . . . you name it. I can't help but wonder (obviously too much) what my life could have been like had I done those things.

Baltimore

The silver bullet against regret is to make something valuable of the life you have now. It doesn't have to be valuable in the eyes of society — big house, fancy job, Nobel Prize, etc. — just valuable in your eyes.

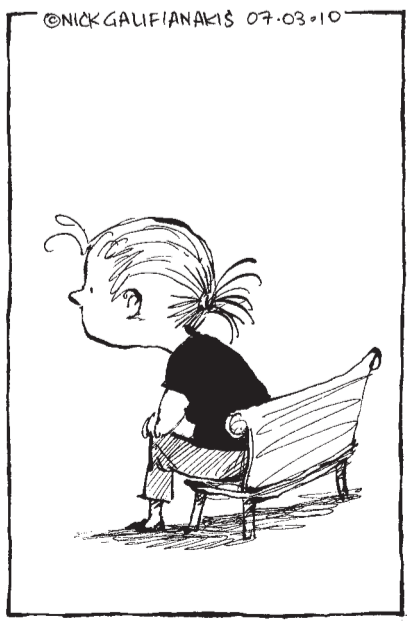
For example: knowing you've been helpful to someone who really needed it; being with someone whose face lights up when you're around, or who makes your day brighter; being able to pursue a goal/hobby/passion that feels worthy to you, or merely fulfilling; relishing the freedom to try new things where otherwise you'd be tied down . . . the limit isn't your circumstances, but instead the perspective and imagination you bring to your circumstances.

Short version: When you like where you're going, you tend to look back a lot more fondly on what got you there.

Shorter version: Look forward, not back.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com.



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

REPORT FROM WEEK 872

In which you were asked to combine the beginnings of someone's first and last names to create a new, pertinent term: Numerous Losers came up with "Algo: The former veep's last words to Tipper," "Jelo: One who jiggles in the right places" (Jennifer Lopez) and "Sico: Someone who derives a perverse satisfaction in humiliating others" (Simon Cowell).



TIWo: that new technology that allows you to replay your life without embarrassing moments (**Tiger Woods**). (Cliff Kellogg, a First Offender)

- 2** the dress custom-made from two Loser T-shirts: **Marvosa:** A disorder in which someone continually describes himself as a genius despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary (**Marilyn Vos Savant**). (Dion Black, Washington)
- 3** **Jacam:** A new moviemaking device that does away with the need for actors (**James Cameron**). (John O'Byrne, Dublin)
- 4** **Charkra:** An esoteric concept of rightness in some Eastern sects, considered a key on the path to true smugness (**Charles Krauthammer**). (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

DEEPER CLEAVAGE: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Adrif:** where many politicians find themselves after their political honeymoon ends (**Adrian Fenty**). (Cliff Kellogg)
- Levisira:** A brand of high-rise jeans (**Levi Strauss**). (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- Helth:** A state of outliving your common sense (**Helen Thomas**). (Ward Kay, Vienna)
- CaCl:** Smelling salts (**Cassius Clay**). (Alba Frias, Silver Spring, a First Offender)
- Rumur:** What counts as news on Fox News (**Rupert Murdoch**). (Lois Douthitt, Arlington)
- Scowel:** A jaded individual who doesn't like much of anything (**Simon Cowell**). (Doug Frank, Crosby, Tex.)
- Drec:** The lowest form of comedy (**Drew Carey**). (Jacki Moonves, North Hollywood, Calif.)
- Nadcoma:** A painful balance beam injury (**Nadia Comaneci**). (Randy Lee, Burke)
- Ala-mo:** Something that was once deemed important, but now seems mostly forgettable (**Alanis Morissette**). (Malcolm Fleschner, Palo Alto, Calif.)
- Vlaput:** What you'll be if you irritate the Russian government enough. "After writing about Chechen separatists, the journalists mysteriously went vlaput" (**Vladimir Putin**). (Laurie Brink, Cleveland, Mo.)
- Barmani:** The not-so-chic suits worn by tacky piano players. (**Barry Manilow**) (Ron Jackson, Chevy Chase)
- Riminix:** Pest company specializing in leaving bugs (**Richard Milhous Nixon**). (Dave Komornik, Danville, Va.)
- Geospat:** A territorial squabble among generals who are all supposedly on the same side (**George S. Patton**). (Brendan Beary)
- Hevi:** Loaded down with wives (**Henry VIII**). (Christopher Jones, Vienna)
- Rongo:** The opposite of the right place at the right time (**Ron Goldman**). (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village; Randy Lee)
- Wammo:** A stroke of genius (**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**). (Tom Witte)
- BP-Otter:** Peter Rabbit's very sick friend (**Beatrix Potter**). (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)
- Jobb:** Someone the White House suffers (**Joe Biden**). (Kevin Dopart, Washington)
- Jen-lope:** Distinctive walk of the ample-bootied (**Jennifer Lopez**). (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)
- Rosper:** To be rich but unelectable (**Ross Perot**). (Jim Reagan, Herndon)
- Mahmah:** The grating cry of the Iranian cuckoo (**Mahmoud Ahmadinejad**). (Judith Cottrill, New York)
- Dollpart:** A body feature that is disproportionately sized, e.g. **Barbie's chest** (**Dolly Parton**). (Craig Dykstra)
- Charma:** A dangerous man with an inexplicable charisma (**Charles Manson**). (Doug Frank)
- Dorp:** A girl who needs glasses (**Dorothy Parker**). (Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.)
- Bao:** To accept praise graciously for something you haven't accomplished but hope to someday (**Barack Obama**). (Steve Glomb, Alexandria)
- Emur:** A bird that used to fly spectacularly high but now tends to just lay eggs (**Eddie Murphy**). (Dion Black)
- Neging:** Acting as the Party of No (**Newt Gingrich**). (Ken Gallant, Conway, Ark.)
- J-La:** Someone with a really nice butt, especially for someone who's 95 years old (**Jack LaLanne**). (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)
- Christ-hit:** A diatribe against religion (**Christopher Hitchens**). (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
- Lobob:** A style of cut that involves removal of the head (**Lorena Bobbitt**). (Mark Barbour, Fairfax, a First Offender)
- Merrilly:** How Wall Street spends bailout money (**Merrill Lynch**). (Russell Beland, Fairfax)
- Johmon:** A food item made with slices of bread and some kind of filling inside (**John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich**). (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)
- And last:** Rubel: The approximate worth of several hundred Loser magnets on the black market (**Russell Beland**). (Laurie Brink)

Next Week: Back to Square 1A, or Boxing Match

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BOB STAAKE

Week 876: Oilies but goodies

To the tune of "Under the Sea," sung by a shrimp: They say there'll be no fish slaughter, that they'll make my home pristine.

But how can they clean the water when they can't keep their restrooms clean?

— from the Capitol Steps' "Under BP," by Richard Paul

This week: Write lyrics somehow related to the oil spill, set to an existing tune. We almost always print more songs on washingtonpost.com than we have room for in the print paper; on the Web, we can include a link to the melody, but the ones we publish in the Style section have to be set to very well known tunes.

Winner gets the Inker, the Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a very neat roll of packing tape that is clear except for the continuous column of human vertebrae running down the middle. And this is . . . This Is Spinal Tape. Donated by Loser Jeff Contompasis, who once gave us a device that turned a hot dog into an octopus. Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Loser Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their first ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 12. Put "Week 876" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results to be published July 31. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's results is by Craig Dykstra; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Jeff Contompasis.

Online discussion Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

Trading in cash for Groupons

GROUPON FROM C1

tourist on a never-ending schlep. He's done boat tours. He's restauranted. He's traded his Groupons for essentials like clothing and toiletries, since Groupon insisted he begin with nothing but a paper suit made of Groupons.

After Finemondo, Stevens packs up his Groupons and departs. Next he has a free tour of Madame Tussauds, followed by a free appointment at the Grooming Lounge. To get there, he will use a free Metro card, provided not by Groupon but by Laura Cassil, who heard about Stevens then invited him to stay with her in Washington, where, Stevens says, he would like to take President Obama on a Groupon date.

Something about the Groupawn speaks to people. The 6,000 Groupon groupies who follow him on Facebook want to buy him plane tickets (in exchange for Groupons), pick him up at airports (in exchange for Groupons), meet up with him at restaurants and spend Groupons together.

"Something different comes along, and you want to live vicariously," says Karen Shatin, a contractor for the State Department who has met up with Stevens in two different cities.

"It's the whole idea of him getting rid of his possessions," Cassil says. "He's not paying bills, he doesn't have to worry about looking for a job. It's very romantic."

Just Stevens against the world, him and his Groupons, a glimpse at what society would look like if we suddenly returned to a barter system. Our sustenance would be manicures and sky-diving excursions: We would exchange wine-tasting classes for NASCAR driving experiences or deep tissue massages.

"The spa things are some of my best currency," Stevens says. He's gotten lots of stuff trading those.

At Madame Tussauds, he discovers he is taller than the Rock. At the Grooming Lounge, he discovers he loves pedicures. He tweets these developments to his followers, taking notes for his later blog entries and Facebook updates.

The possibilities are endless for the Groupawn. He may write a book. He might hire a personal assistant, to help him keep track of his Groupons and pay the assistant with Groupons.

After his pedicure, Stevens stands in the lobby of the Grooming Lounge and chats up the other customers.

"Are you here with a Groupon?" Stevens asks a man exiting the spa.

"No," the man says, disappointed. He paid full price, with real money. Sucker.

hesslem@washpost.com

In films of Spielberg and Lucas, a bit of Rockwell's America

DIRECTORS FROM C1

tarily turned away, teases.

Spielberg continues: "He was the most popular of the popular illustrators. The Saturday Evening Post was a must-have. It never concerned me if he was taken seriously by the art critics." Spielberg's first Rockwell purchase was a 1923 oil: "And Daniel Boone Comes to Life on the Underwood Portable."

"In my family," he says, "he made us smile, he made us laugh. Later, in the civil rights era, when he started revealing what was behind the fourth wall" — meaning the barrier between the work and the artist — "he was just as serious about those topics as we were."

Lucas started collecting works by illustrators after the 1973 film "American Graffiti" gave him enough money to invest in art. There are filmmaking techniques in almost every image, a connection that underlies the show.

Rockwell, for instance, held auditions for his characters: actors when he lived in New Rochelle, N.Y., and neighbors when he lived in Vermont and Massachusetts. "He was telling stories on issues I could relate to. I wanted to be an illustrator but finally went into film-

making," Lucas says. Spielberg interjects: "Thank God for all of us."

In "Empire of the Sun," his 1987 film about a boy in a Japanese POW camp, Spielberg paid direct homage to Rockwell by including "Freedom From Fear," one of the artist's best-known works. "On his way to the detention center, Jim cuts out that picture and puts it in his suitcase," Spielberg says.

Lucas says that he never used Rockwell specifically but was influenced by his treatment of "the imagination."

Spielberg owns "Good Boy (Little Orphan at the Train)," a portrait of a nun holding a child while a woman on the station platform considers taking him. Other orphans are watching the transaction from the railroad car's windows. This work depicts the Orphan Train, a controversial movement from 1854 to 1929 that took children out of cities and into rural areas for new lives. "Rockwell was accused of gross sentimentality. That piece speaks to the paths of what happened to those children," Spielberg says, adding, "and we have been accused of being sentimental."

At "Grandpa and Me: Raking Leaves," owned by Lucas, Spielberg says, "It is everything Rockwell intended. He left it

open-ended and included us in the interpretation." Lucas adds: "Grandpa is sensing the seasons change, and the boy is completely focused on burning leaves. The dog is curious." Spielberg amends, "The dog is looking for a ball."

The friends are not competitive when a Rockwell comes on the market. "We step aside for each other," Spielberg says. Also, Lucas says, laughing, "we never had to flip a coin."

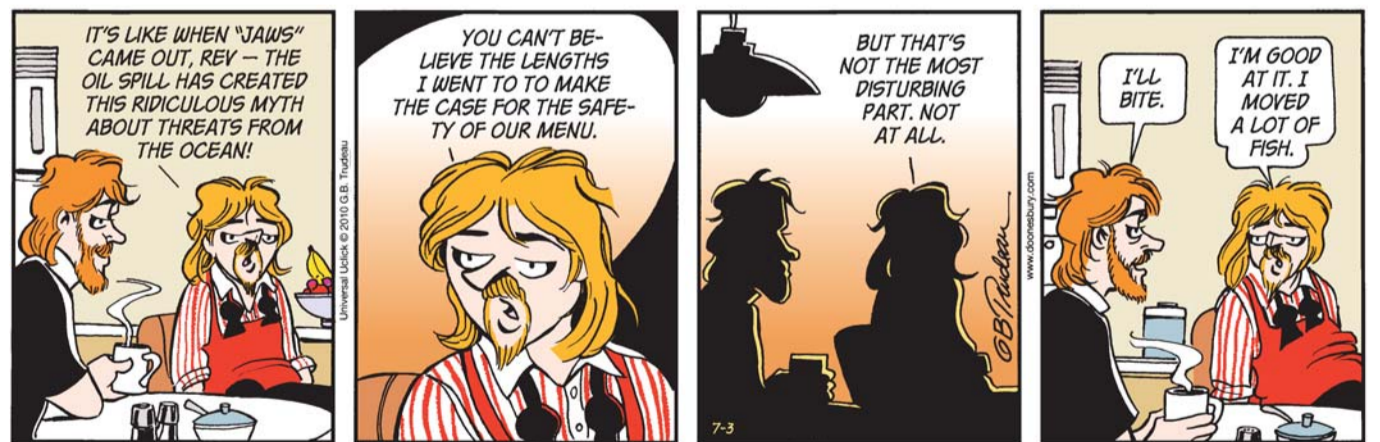
And finally Spielberg gets to his favorite Rockwell, "The Connoisseur," done in 1962. "There's this very dapper gentleman standing in front of a Jackson Pollock. Now Rockwell spoke volumes about his intentions with just the back of people's heads," Spielberg says. "I think this is Alfred Hitchcock looking into the frame and saying, I hope I am never part of that. It looks so chaotic."

trscottj@washpost.com

Upcoming in The Post: The problem with Rockwell, a review by Blake Gopnik in Sunday's Arts & Style.

View photos of the Norman Rockwell exhibit at washingtonpost.com/style.

DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU



CUL DE SAC BY RICHARD THOMPSON

