



Rob Brezsnys's Astrology Newsletter
May 23, 2018
FreeWillAstrology.com

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We call our organization the Beauty and Truth Lab and not the Beauty and Truth Think Tank because we want to put our ideas to the test -- to apply them in unpredictable situations beyond our control and see whether they're useful to people who aren't necessarily steeped in the mystique of pronoia, as discussed in the book *Pronoia Is the Antidote for Paranoia*.

One way we've gone about that is to encourage the public to testify and ask questions about their practical experiences with pronoia. Below is a taste of the exchanges that have unfolded.

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: I read about the concept of "pronoia" in your book. Here's my question: Does pronoia make you feel like you're falling in love? Not just with a person but with life itself? And can that be scary?

Is it possible that you might feel a chord of gorgeous terror resound in your gut when you entertain the thought that every person and even every animal and plant and rock in the world is ganging up to make your life interesting -- almost more brilliantly interesting than you can bear?

Does pronoia threaten to cause all perceptions, all sensations, all interactions to verge on being orgasmic?

I've been heading in this direction lately and it's freaking me out. Can extreme happiness be dangerous to my well-being? —Butchtastic

Dear Butchtastic: First thing we'll say is that while pronoia inevitably feeds the soul, it doesn't necessarily further the agendas of the ego. The anxiety that's welling up may be the result of your old self-image clinging to the shrunken expectations it had gotten used to thinking of as essential to its identity.

The second thing is that when people invite pronoia to take over their perceptual filters, they often feel as if they're falling in love with a Scary Yet Friendly Vastness that kicks their butts until they wake up to the secret beauty they've been ignoring.

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: I was lying in my bed basking in a sunbeam this morning, too comfortable to get up and take my Prozac, when I thought, Hey, what if I'm not, you know, emotionally challenged? What if I'm just lazy? Maybe if I worked harder at cultivating happiness, I'd just sort of outgrow my depression -- you know, render it irrelevant. Do you have an opinion about this theory? —Slothful Slack Seeker

Dear Slothful: We'd have to know more about your personal history to evaluate whether laziness is the cause of your depression.

We do know this, though: Many people are extremely lax about their pursuit of happiness.

Here's our question to you: What tricks would you have to play on yourself in order to get more aggressive about mastering the art of feeling really good?

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: I've wrestled all my life with fear. But lately it's been even worse than usual. My personal demons seem to be winning, or at least getting the better of the fight. I think it's related to the fact that when I caught wind of the idea of pronoia, I started working hard to lose all my illusions. Now I'm thinking maybe that was a mistake. Perhaps I needed my illusions to keep the demons at bay? —Crybaby

Dear Crybaby: Hang on. This is the toughest part of your struggle. It may seem that the illusions you dissolved were the main barriers safeguarding you from your demons. But what's more likely is that those illusions were food for your demons. Very soon now the demons will have devoured the last of their fuel and will start to starve. If they don't die off, they will at least fly away in search of other nourishment.

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Dear Flow-Meisters: If you were, like me, setting out on a 10-year project to become a beautiful truth-teller, having the simple goal of actually expressing the things that Everyone Ought to Say But Doesn't, what would you do? Other than to bother your favorite truth-tellers for advice, of course! —Aspiring Fount of Truth

Dear Aspiring Fount: One of the best ways to increase your mastery is to regularly tell yourself the truth about yourself with kick-ass kindness.

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: You must be kidding with your Pollyanna crap. Either that or you're lying to get gullible people to love you and give you money.

The truth is, life is not in the least bit kind. It's a brutal struggle for survival -- at best. We are, sadly, animals who are stuck being conscious of our own mortality, forever stalked by death, and trying to avoid both that knowledge and the inevitable appearance of the grim reaper. Wake up and see the sickness and misery that life on this planet really is. —Your Good Cheer Makes Me Puke

Dear Puker: It's true that the Beauty and Truth Lab errs on the side of optimism, but only because so many so-called experts and leaders err on the side of cynicism. Our calling is to overcompensate for the relentless propaganda that creates the false impression that ugliness rules the world.

By the way, when we urge people to more fully appreciate the multitude of blessings they take for granted, it's not the same as advising them to pretend there's no suffering in the world.

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: My mom calls me fat but feeds me pork rinds. My strongest supporter is a person I want to wrap up like a mummy, shove into a canoe, and push into the middle of the lake.

My exuberant imagination has taken me hostage, violating its own principles. I'm so ambivalent and indecisive about everything that even my addictive nature can't figure out what to be addicted to.

I'd embrace my contradictions if I could, but they've got me surrounded like a pink-haired, cross-dressing SWAT team frothed up on multiple espressos. Can you point me in the direction of the pronoiac exit from this circus-like hell? —Crazy Crank

Dear Crazy: We detect a lot of wit and style in your meditations. Maybe that's the purpose of the limbo you're in: It's an opportunity to build your skill at being lively and feisty and smart no matter what your outer circumstances are.

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: The chemo treatments burned out all the math skills in my brain, which were already pretty meager. On the other hand, they awakened my ability to feel perfectly at ease while in the midst of paradoxical situations that everyone else finds maddening and uncomfortable.

The chemo also made me ridiculously tolerant of people's contradictions, sometimes even their hypocrisies, and freed me to enjoy life as an entertaining movie with lots of interesting plot twists rather than as a pitched battle between everything I like and everything I don't like. I guess I could say that my cancer helped turn me into a pronoiac! —The Chaos Artist Formerly Known as Risa Kline

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: I'm sorry to report that your bright and cheery outlook for the future did not come true. The gods have laid the cosmic smackdown upon me. My metaphorical buttocks are still smarting. I don't blame you, mind you. It is entirely my fault. My wishes were different from what the gods wished for me; I was utterly out of sync with the Grand Scheme of Things. My question now is: Being that I am in the habit of desiring pleasures that are good for my ego but bad for my soul, how do I break the habit? —Contrite Karma Chameleon

Dear Contrite: Not blaming others, but rather taking responsibility for your actions, is the best way. And you've just done that.

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: I used to give fear a free rein to crawl around my mind. But your philosophy has inspired me to fight back against that bad habit. I made a pronoiac shield for myself, and I sleep with it every night.

It's a hubcap on which I've glued protective symbols, like the fragment of a mirror I stole from the hospital where I was born, the toothbrush of an ex-lover I'm still good friends with, 20 Tylenol pills arranged in the shape of a peace sign, a notebook page on which I wrote my best dream ever (in which my mom and dad were Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama), a library card from Princeton University with both my name and Einstein's on it, a painting of a mutant butterfly dive-bombing a rainbow that's on fire, a bumper sticker that reads "Adrenaline is my drug of choice," and a million dollars in money I made out of cut-up photocopies of all the people I love. — Laughing at My Anxieties

Dear Laughing: If we ever market a line of pronoiac products, we hope you'll contribute a whole batch of your shields.

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Dear Compassion Police: Can you tell me why my trivial prayers are often answered (please don't let the light turn red, please let there be enough milk for one cup of coffee, etc.), but never my big life-changing prayers (please send me a soul mate, please help me make money at what I love to do)? Are God's priorities screwed up, or is it me? —Dumb Luck Collector

Dear DLC: There's an old fairy tale in which two old folks are given three wishes by a magic dwarf, but impulsively waste them on the first silly whims that pop into their heads. I'll tell you what I would have told them: Proceed on the assumption that only a few of your fervent prayers will be granted. Don't use them up on pleas for convenience when you're tired, cranky, or desperate. A Tibetan proverb says, "The person who gets stuck on petty happiness will not attain great happiness."

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Dear Beauty and Truth Lab: I'm a very analytical person, with a doctorate in nuclear physics and a high-tech job. All my training and business savvy tell me that Rob Breznsny's astrology column is superstitious mumbo jumbo, yet every time I've faced a crisis in the last 10 years, his horoscopes have provided accurate wisdom and counsel when things seemed darkest.

The same is true about the book Pronoia. The scientist in me knows that you Beauty and Truth Lab people are utopian nutcases. It's absolutely demented to regard the universe as friendly and to fantasize that there's some vast, invisible conspiracy of blessing-bestowers. And yet I have to confess that whenever I try the pronoia strategies you describe, my life veers in the direction of synchronicity and delight.

On the one hand, none of this makes any sense. On the other hand, I don't care that it doesn't make any sense. Somehow I'm able to draw sustenance from something whose power I don't understand or even believe in. In any case, thank you! —Humble Genius

Dear Genius: You've described a quality that we aspire to in our efforts to cultivate pronoia: the ability to be helped by powers that are beyond our ken.

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The preceding blips are excerpts from my book
PRONOIA IS THE ANTIDOTE FOR PARANOIA

It's available at Amazon: bit.ly/Pronoia
or Powells: bit.ly/PronoiaPowells

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MORE PRONOIA RESOURCES:

The World Is a Miraculous Mess, and It's Going to Be All Right. In her latest book, author adrienne maree brown envisions a world of abundant justice, abundant attention, and abundant liberation. tinyurl.com/ybtj7taq

The Disruption of White Supremacy. The white male-centric colonial system is incapable of the leadership we need, and Indigenous knowledge is essential for the innovation that will follow this disruption. tinyurl.com/y8zqnu5l

Bye, Spotify: Musicians Take Back Ownership With This Cooperative. There is a streaming service that can benefit both artists and listeners. tinyurl.com/y9dwep6x

(Note: I endorse these because I like them. They aren't advertisements, and I get no kickbacks.)

Please tell me your own nominations for PRONOIA RESOURCES: Truthrooster@gmail.com.

Read old but still useful archives of Pronoia Resources: pronoiaresources.com

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FREE WILL ASTROLOGY
Week beginning May 24

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GEMINI (May 21-June 20):

Now is a favorable time to worship at the shrine of your own intuition. It's a ripe moment to boost your faith in your intuition's wild and holy powers. To an extraordinary degree, you can harness this alternate mode of intelligence to gather insights that are beyond the power of your rational mind to access by itself. So be bold about calling on your gut wisdom, Gemini. Use it to track down the tricky, elusive truths that have previously been unavailable to you.

CANCER (June 21-July 22):

"A poem is never finished; it is only abandoned," wrote poet W. H. Auden, paraphrasing poet Paul Valéry. I think the same can be said about many other kinds of work. We may wish we could continue tinkering and refining forever so as to bring a beloved project to a state of absolute perfection. But what's more likely is that it will always fall at least a bit short of that ideal. It will never be totally polished and complete to our satisfaction. And we've got to accept that. I suggest

you meditate on these ideas in the coming weeks, Cancerian. Paradoxically, they may help you be content with how you finish up the current phase of your beloved project.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):

I highly recommend that you spend the next three weeks hanging out on a beach every day, dividing your time between playing games with friends, sipping cool drinks, reading books you've always wanted to read, and floating dreamily in warm water. To indulge in this relaxing extravaganza would be in maximum alignment with the current cosmic rhythms. If you can't manage such a luxurious break from routine, please at least give yourself the gift of some other form of recreation that will renew and refresh you all the way down to the core of your destiny.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):

Contemporaries of the ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras told colorful stories about the man. Some believed he was the son of a god and that one of his thighs was made of gold. When he crossed the Casas River, numerous witnesses testified that the river called out his name and welcomed him. Once a snake bit him, but he suffered no injury, and killed the snake by biting it in return. On another occasion, Pythagoras supposedly coaxed a dangerous bear to stop committing violent acts. These are the kinds of legends I expect you to spread about yourself in the coming days, Virgo. It's time to boost your reputation to a higher level.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):

My counsel may seem extreme, but I really think you should avoid mildness and meekness and modesty. For the immediate future, you have a mandate to roar and cavort and exult. It's your sacred duty to be daring and experimental and exploratory. The cosmos and I want to enjoy the show as you act like you have the right to express your soul's code with brazen confidence and unabashed freedom. The cosmos and I want to squeal with joy as you reveal raw truths in the most emotionally intelligent ways possible.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):

French novelist Honoré Balzac periodically endured intense outbreaks of creativity. "Sometimes it seems that my brain is on fire," he testified after a 26-day spell when he never left his writing room. I'm not predicting anything quite as manic as that for you, Scorpio. But I do suspect you will soon be blessed (and maybe a tiny bit cursed) by a prolonged bout of fervent inspiration. To ensure that you make the best use of this challenging gift, get clear about how you want it to work for you. Don't let it boss you. Be its boss.

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WHY IS IT CALLED "FREE WILL" ASTROLOGY?

It's called Free Will Astrology because my goal is to create horoscopes that nurture your free will!

Contrary to what some horoscope fans believe, there's no such thing as predestination. Fate is a tricky, wiggly sucker that keeps changing its mind about where it wants to go. The stars may impel, as the astrological saying goes, but they don't compel.

That's why I've never considered myself a fortuneteller. I prefer to think that my greatest service is as a psychic intelligence agent, helping you expose the hidden patterns and unconscious forces that may be affecting your life without your knowledge.

If I "predict" anything, it's not so much the future as the unknown part of the present.

And if you ever want more than the 'scopes you're reading here, keep in mind that I also create EXPANDED AUDIO HOROSCOPES for you. They're four-to-five-minute meditations on the current state of your destiny.

These forecasts are different in tone and format from the written horoscopes you read here in the newsletter. They're longer and more leisurely in tone. They tend to bring out more of the patient counselor in me, and have a bit less of the poet.

To buy and listen to your Expanded Audio Horoscope online, go to RealAstrology.com.

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"I always feel like I know myself better after listening to your audio 'scopes."
-June R., Austin, TX

"Your audio horoscopes calm me down when I'm too manic and pep me up when I'm down."
-Arthur T., Cleveland, OH

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SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):

Ancient civilizations waged war constantly. From Mesopotamia to China to Africa, groups of people rarely went very long without fighting other groups of people. There was one exception: the Harappan culture that thrived for about 2,000 years in the Indus River Valley, which in the present day stretches through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Archaeologists have found little evidence of warfare there. Signs of mass destruction and heavy armaments are non-existent. Art from that era and area does not depict military conflict. One conclusion we might be tempted to draw from this data is that human beings are *not* inherently combative and violent. In any case, I want to use the Harappan civilization's extended time of peace as a metaphor for your life in the next eight weeks. I believe (and hope!) you're entering into a phase of very low conflict.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):

Every human being I've ever known, me included, has to wage a continuous struggle between

these pairs of opposites: 1. bad habits that waste their vitality and good habits that harness their vitality; 2. demoralizing addictions that keep them enslaved to the past and invigorating addictions that inspire them to create their best possible future. How's your own struggle going? I suspect you're in the midst of a turning point. Here's a tip that could prove useful: Feeding the good habits and invigorating addictions may cause the bad habits and demoralizing addictions to lose some of their power over you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):

"Some books seem like a key to unfamiliar rooms in one's own castle," said author Franz Kafka. I suspect this idea will be especially relevant to you in the coming weeks, Aquarius. And more than that: In addition to books, other influences may also serve as keys to unfamiliar rooms in your inner castle. Certain people, for instance, may do and say things that give you access to secrets you've been keeping from yourself. A new song or natural wonderland may open doors to understandings that will transform your relationship with yourself. To prep you for these epiphanies, I'll ask you to imagine having a dream at night in which you're wandering through a house you know very well. But this time, you discover there's a whole new wing of the place that you never knew existed.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):

Just for now, let's say it's fine to fuel yourself with comfort food and sweet diversions. Let's proceed on the hypothesis that the guardians of your future want you to treat yourself like a beloved animal who needs extra love and attention. So go right ahead and spend a whole day (or two) in bed reading and ruminating and listening to soul-beguiling music. Take a tour through your favorite memories. Move extra slowly. Do whatever makes you feel most stable and secure. Imagine you're like a battery in the process of getting recharged.

ARIES (March 21-April 19):

The Aries poet Anna Kamieńska described the process of writing as akin to "the backbreaking work of hacking a footpath, as in a coal mine; in total darkness, beneath the earth." Whether or not you're a writer, I'm guessing that your life might have felt like that recently. Your progress has been slow and the mood has been dense and the light has been dim. That's the tough news. The good news is that I suspect you will soon be blessed with flashes of illumination and a semi-divine intervention or two. After that, your work will proceed with more ease. The mood will be softer and brighter.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20):

Do you know what you are worth? Have you compiled a realistic assessment of your talents, powers, and capacities? Not what your friends and enemies think you're worth, nor the authority figures you deal with, nor the bad listeners who act like they've figured out the game of life. When I ask you if you have an objective understanding of your real value, Taurus, I'm not referring to what your illusions or fears or wishes might tell you. I'm talking about an honest, accurate appraisal of the gifts you have to offer the world. If you do indeed possess this insight, hallelujah and congratulations! If you don't, the coming weeks will be an excellent time to work on getting it.

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HOMEWORK:

Send news of your favorite mystery -- an enigma that is both maddening and delightful -- to FreeWillAstrology.com.

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Submissions sent to Rob Brezsny's Astrology Newsletter or in response to "homework assignments" may be published in a variety of formats at Rob Brezsny's discretion, including but not limited to newsletters, books, the Free Will Astrology column, and Free Will Astrology website. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, style, and content. Requests for anonymity will be honored. We are not responsible for unsolicited submission of any creative material.

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