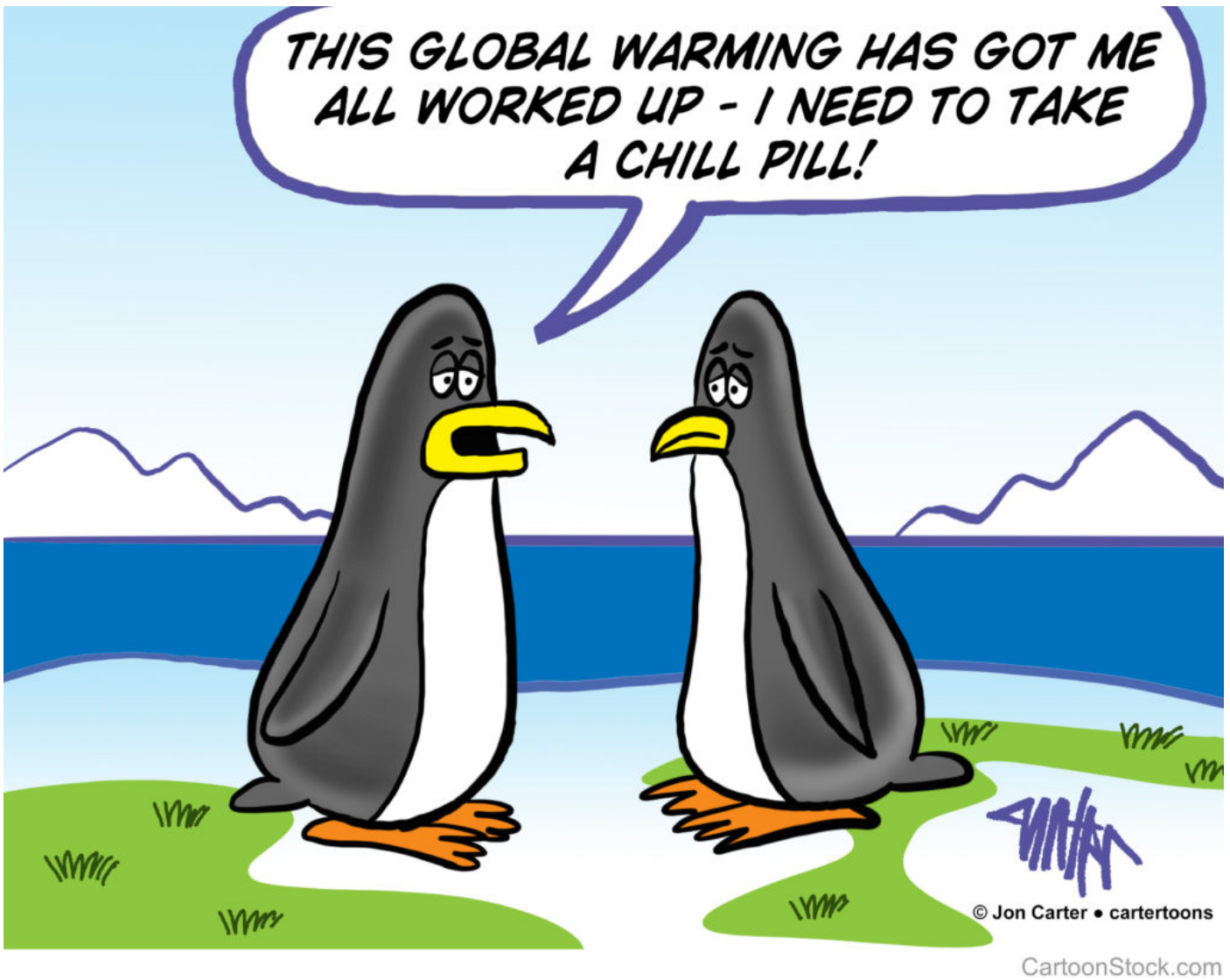


Periodically, take a chill-pill



Sometimes, I trip over inconsequential issues. I obsess about issues that won't matter six months from now, or even six hours from now. When this happens, I need to take a "chill-pill" and drop it.

Figuratively or literally, carry some "chill pills" with you. Figuratively, when you need to settle down, just *imagine* putting a pill in your mouth. Literally, keep a small packet of breath mints in your pocket and use them when needed for halitosis, but also pop one in your mouth when you need to relax and ease up on an issue (the [placebo effect](#) may genuinely help).

We also need to learn the indispensable coping skill called "drop it." Imagine holding something in your hand, perhaps a pencil. Now uncurl your fingers and drop it on the floor; as an act of your will, let it go. Sometimes I will "drop it" metaphorically—in my mind I'll imagine my hand releasing the pencil. If an issue is harder to dislodge I'll hold up a clenched fist and physically release the grip. If I'm deeply entrenched in an issue, I may literally hold an object in my hand and drop it on the floor.

Here are some situations when we ought to swallow the pill.

- When the issue is settled; it's not going to change. When the pilot says, "Ladies and gentlemen, we're having mechanical problems so we'll have to switch to another plane," relax, take a deep breath, and let go of your frustration. You can't change the situation.
- When I have little or no control over a situation. When my four-year-old grandson has a meltdown, all I can do is try to minimize the damage (if we're in a restaurant, we'll go for a walk). There's no

sense in getting upset and impatient—he's a child.

- When I'm inordinately emotionally peaked. Perhaps I *can* influence a situation but in order to do so productively, I need to decrease my emotional fervor and become more rational.
- When contemplating an issue over time will give me greater clarity. Often, my first reaction to a situation is not my best; but when I allow myself to think through a situation, I arrive at a better conclusion. Instead of reacting immediately, I need to take a chill-pill and delay my reaction until a later time.