

Ten tips for a memorable Valentine's Day

By Lillian Vernon
ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

From its earliest origins, Valentine's Day has been associated with love.

Centuries ago, the Romans celebrated a feast every February called Lupercalia. The celebration included a ritual for matching young, single men and women. Names were placed in a box, a drawing was held and couples randomly matched together were partners for a year — after that it was up to them.

The Valentine's Day gift you choose for your loved one and how you decide to spend the day says a lot about the qual-

ity of your relationship, so give something that has real meaning to you. Gifts from the heart don't have to be expensive.

Since the traditional gifts of flowers or chocolates don't last forever, here are ten creative ways to express your love.

- Create your own Valentine's Day card. Compose a poem or an expression of love that expresses your personality.
- Create a recollection collection scrapbook filled with favorite photographs, love letters, keepsakes from special occasions, and cherished mementos.
- Make a CD of your

favorite songs as a couple including love songs that you both enjoy listening to. Buy some romantic CDs, classic videos or DVDs and wrap them all together with red ribbon.

- Jewelry is always a favorite. For the woman in your life, buy a heart-shaped locket and put a picture of yourself in it.

Personalize the locket with your loved one's initials so she'll have something to wear that's hers alone.

Package it in a heart-shaped box or tied to fresh flowers. For your man, a good choice is the classic sterling silver ID bracelet or cuff links with his name or initials cus-

tom-engraved.

- Give silk or glass flowers, which will last forever. If your beloved has a green thumb, give a flowering plant to put in the garden to enjoy year after year.

- Prepare your loved one's favorite dinner and serve it on a romantically set table and dine by candlelight on Valentine's Day. For the sweetheart with a sweet tooth, make a decadent dessert such as a chocolate fondue with melted chocolate mixed with a touch of heavy cream, and serve it with fruit or cookies.

- Give the man in your life a personalized gift for his favorite hobby such as per-

sonalized golf or tennis balls that say, "I love you," "You're a hit!" or "Be mine," or a monogrammed humidifier for cigars.

• The gift of togetherness is precious, given today's busy lifestyles. Plan a romantic, surprise getaway. Take lessons together to share in each other's interests like dancing, cooking or sailing. Hire a personal trainer to inspire you to exercise together, or visit a spa together.

Spent a night out at the theater and have dinner at a quiet and romantic candlelit restaurant.

- If you plan to propose on Valentine's Day, hide the engagement ring in a box of

candy or at the bottom of a heart-shaped flute filled with champagne.

Buy a pair of monogrammed champagne flutes and make a toast with your favorite bubbly.

- If you want to propose at home, sprinkle rose petals around the house. Place heart-shaped candles around your home to create the right mood.

Then, enjoy a quiet, romantic evening. Create a banner that says, "Will you marry me?" and hang it outside her home.

For more information, visit www.lillianvernonproducts.com or call (800) 901-8758.

Being single on Valentine's Day: A survival guide

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Valentine's Day — a day of exchanging flowers, cards, and loving sentiments punctuated with warm feelings of admiration, affection, and infatuation. But for millions of Americans, there is one thing preventing them from participating in these celebratory acts of love: a date.

Being dateless on Valentine's Day can evoke feelings of loneliness and self-doubt, especially for those who are believers in the mythology of true love. Embedded midway through the frosty season of winter, it is portrayed in the media, particularly in

relentless flower, fragrance, and jewelry advertising, as the singular day of year set aside for love, romance, and passion. But what is a person to do when he or she is feeling the chilling blues of being single instead of embracing the fiery desire of love?

Dr. Laura S. Brown, professor of psychology at Argosy University/Seattle, offers tips on how single guys and gals can celebrate Cupid's Day, instead of being defeated by it. "Love is not about a particular day, or about cards, flowers, or even being in a relationship. The illusion that cou-

pled people are happy and well-loved can feed feelings of loneliness or isolation for people who aren't with someone, and wish they were," says Brown. "Seeing the illusory nature of this holiday can be the first step in feeling better about being precisely who and where you are."

According to Brown, the most important message that singles should remember on Valentine's Day is that love is not just for couples; it is for all of us. The following are more ways that single men and women can enjoy Valentine's Day without worrying about the

pressures and pitfalls that often come with the holiday:

1. Do not define yourself by your relationship status. Your relationship status is not your identity.

2. If you are single because of a recent loss, allow this to be a day of grieving. Do not pretend that it's not a hard day. Get support and sympathy.

3. Realize that Valentine's Day is a commercial holiday. It is not about love and relationships; it is about selling flowers, candy, and diamond jewelry. Think of all the money you are saving.

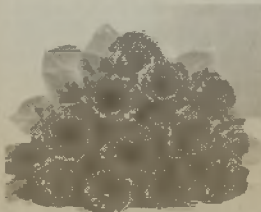
4. Plan well in advance to do something that will not place you in the path of billing and cooing couples. Even if you usually like dining out alone, do something else on Valentine's Day.

5. Get together with people who do love you — friends, family members, the people who already have relationships with you.

6. If you are single and you don't want to be, start now to think about what is in the way of you creating the relationship you want. Find ways to work on becoming the person your

dream partner would fall in love with. Start therapy. Take up yoga. Begin to volunteer. Create art. Make meaning. Act to change the world. It is into the fullest lives that love is most likely to fall.

7. If you are single and you like it, now is the time to affirm your choice. People who never marry or partner have close, loving, emotionally intimate relationships and lives worth living. Do not let a couple-driven culture define your choice as something wrong. For more information, visit the Argosy University website at www.argosyu.edu.



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Keep the beauty of Valentine's all year

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A gift of red roses is one of the most popular tokens of affection exchanged each Valentine's Day. You can keep the memory of this lovely gesture alive all year long by preserving your roses. Whether used in arrangements, wreaths, or even as potpourri, dried flowers can be enjoyed for months, or even years.

The floral experts at 1-800-FLOWERS.COM offer the following tips for drying your roses and making the love last long past the holiday: The easiest method is air-drying. Roses can be dried individually or in small bunches. Remove leaves from stems and make sure that they are bunched loosely and that there is enough air circulating throughout the bunch.

Hang the rose bunches upside down in a dark, dry, warm room. When the stems are dry and rigid (which should take about one to two weeks), the flowers are ready to be stored or used. Another method to dry your roses is to press them.

Weight pressing is a simple way to preserve individual or small bunches of roses. Simply place roses (whole buds or just the petals) between the pages of a heavy book. You may want to line the pages with wax paper, so as to preserve the book.

Close the book and place something heavy on top. After two or three weeks, the flowers will be ready to be

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