

Combat single status with what you desire

BY NIKKI WERKING
DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR

For every Valentine's Day since the eighth grade — the year when my first boyfriend dumped me three days before the lovey-dovey holiday — I've had a tradition.

I dress in black and generally sulk all day, sneering at mushy, starry-eyed couples cuddling in the windows of Italian restaurants and on benches tucked away in quiet corners of campus.

Bitter and clichéd? Well, yes. But can you really blame someone who's been flying solo for every Feb. 14 of her life?

When we were kids, it was fun — I glued glitter to construction paper and had an excuse to eat lots of cookies laden with sprinkles and pink-dyed frosting.

But now that we're all grown up, or at least pretend to be, let's be

honest: Valentine's Day is impossible to escape, especially when there's nothing you'd like to do more than make like an ostrich and bury your head in the sand until the day has come and gone.

Pink hearts, fuzzy teddy bears donning Cupid costumes, overpriced chocolates and every other red-tinted, tasteless gift imaginable line the aisles of every department store, grocery store, drug store and Wal-Mart.

My roommate actually found a box of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles valentines that said "Cowabunga!" in the center of a bubble-gum pink heart.

The Hallmark holiday has desecrated Michaelangelo, Leonardo, Donatello, Raphael and, yes, even Splinter and Shredder. It's disheartening.

Even the most unromantic of

locales fall to Cupid's reign of terror — a friend last year went Bojangles and found four couples cozing up over deep-fried dinners.

I've tried different things to take my mind off the day — working, gorging on ice cream, consuming too much vodka, watching that episode of "Friends" in which Monica, Phoebe and Rachel ritualistically burn memories of ex-boyfriends.

But this year, I've found a different strategy, one that has worked so well in many other areas of my life: apathy.

Really, what's so wonderful about being romantically attached? It's one more person who gets mad when you forget to call and one more person to suck the meager savings out of your bank account.

No flower, no chocolates, no cards, no fancy dinners? You might actually save enough money to buy that "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" DVD you've been wanting. Or the unrated version of "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy." Or both. Whatever.

Better yet, bust the piggy bank on something you've really been eyeing but know you don't really need — like those Steve Madden high heels at Nordstrom or "Madden 2005" for your Xbox. Your gift to yourself will be infinitely better than any cheesy card your flavor-of-the-week date could have picked for you.

If nothing else works, a friend suggests a foolproof answer: Case to the Face.

Men drink 24 beers, women drink 12, and by the time the ordeal is done, no one remembers what day it is — or his or her own name, for that matter.

But really, the important thing to remember is that it's just one day. Feb. 15 will come, and Hallmark will have failed to get any of your money. All will be right in the world again.

Understanding key in long-term love

BY CHRIS COLETTA
MANAGING EDITOR

This probably won't come as a surprise to many of you, but it's not always easy to make relationships last.

The initial rush of getting one's heart intertwined with another's is one of life's quintessential experiences. Then again, so is dealing with the sordid aftermath of that emotional flurry: the division of mutual collections, the 3 a.m. drunk dials, the pity hook-ups.

The only way to avoid this unpleasantness, of course, is to stay in a relationship. And I guess you could say I'm pretty good at doing just that.

As I write this story, I've been in a relationship for a year and some change. My previous missus and I saw each other for 2 1/2 years and remain friends to this day.

I admit it's kind of sick, probably too much like an episode of "Full House." So sue me. Some of you like screwing around; I like monogamy.

So does my girlfriend. Or at least I imagine so.

At this point, it's probably time for a full disclosure: Her name's Laura. She works at The Daily Tar Heel, but only twice a week, so we don't really see each other too often.

And, like I said, she enjoys monogamy. You might be asking, "How do I know?" Easy: I asked her. Over AOL Instant Messenger.

At first, she was confused. "Monogamy can be important for many reasons," she typed. "STDs, security. ... I'm just trying to figure out the angle here."

Um. "The romantic angle," I type hopefully.

And then I wait. She's poring over some Securities and Exchange Commission document on some company I've never heard of before.

It makes me feel stupid, but I can't help but admire her tenacity.

I guess this is how you make long-term relationships work.

Finally, she responds. "Specifically seeking a long-term relationship doesn't really work because you can't force it," she writes. "There is a certain amount of work that is involved in any relationship, but the focus shouldn't be labels — it should be those involved and where they are headed."

I think that's her special way of saying she likes me. Insightful.

Now, at this point, I'll stop and throw all of you bitter single folks a dime: I think, and my girlfriend thinks, that Valentine's Day is stupid. Who decided that a day smack in the middle of wintry February — by all logical thought processes, the real cruelest month — would be the day in which you celebrate your relationship?

Don't get me wrong. It's probably going to be a nice day Monday, and I'm sure our advertisers wouldn't mind you chowing down at any of their fine establishments or buying their flowers.

But this entire "ooh, baby" schtick? Spare me. If you're not able to celebrate your relationship every day, it's probably not going to work on Valentine's Day. Simple as that.

Says Laura, "I personally don't see any significance behind the day besides a chance to sell several billion greeting cards, so I don't expect any presents or sweeping romances. What counts isn't what they do for you on one day, but what they do in the day-to-day."

Word. And not just because it'll save me 30 bucks.

So if you're going to dress in black and listen to Joy Division all day Monday, it's cool. You can come find me — I'll be the one in the DTH office looking disheveled under a picture of Randy Travis.

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