

SURVIVING VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day is one time of the year when people can experience significant disappointment, whether or not they are in romantic relationships. For those in a romantic relationship, Valentine's Day can be a fun, whimsical time but may also create high expectations. For single people, Valentine's Day can be a painful reminder of a relationship they long for or of a lost past relationship.

Whether you are single or in a relationship, here are some survival tips:

For Singles:

- **Be okay with your emotions.**

If you are feeling lonely because you're not in a relationship or are sad over the recent end of a relationship, accept that you will feel sad. Talk to a supportive friend or write about the feelings this day stirs up. Remind yourself that it is only one day and will pass.

- **Socialize with loved ones.**

Organize a group of single friends to go out for dinner or a movie on Valentine's Day. Just because you aren't in a relationship doesn't mean you don't have people you love in your life. Celebrate these loving relationships.

- **Treat yourself to some Valentine's Day fun.**

Buy yourself something nice on Valentine's Day. You don't need a partner to do something nice for yourself.

For Couples:

- **Don't expect your partner to read your mind.**

If you have a specific desire for Valentine's Day, share it with your partner. If you want to be surprised, let your mate know. It is unrealistic and unfair to expect someone to know what you want if you haven't told them. You will be left feeling disappointed and hurt.

- **Give unconditionally.**

If you want to give a gift to your partner on Valentine's Day, do so without the expectation that you will receive something in return. You will be left feeling disappointed when you don't receive something and may create an unhealthy pattern of coercing or "guilting" your partner into gift-giving. Do you really want a gift that is given half-heartedly? Give a gift for the mere pleasure of giving.

- **Be realistic.**

If you are having problems in your relationship, do not expect Valentine's Day to solve or fix these problems.

- **It is only one day.**

Be careful how you interpret your partner's lack of enthusiasm over Valentine's Day. Just because your partner forgets to buy you a gift doesn't mean that they don't care about you. Reflect on your partner's actions over the duration of your relationship, not just on one day.

- **Do what you want.**

You and your partner don't have to do something big and crazy to express your feelings for one another. Attempting to meet some idealized standard will only feel contrived and will leave you feeling let down. Enjoy each other in a way that fits for you.