

Valentine's Day Toolbox for Couples + Singles

"Why celebrate yet another Hallmark card holiday that is just a ploy to get us to consume more? And why make single people miserable by having a holiday like this?" wailed my client Sue.

She was right, of course, and fed up.

"What if you turned Valentine's Day into an excuse to celebrate LOVE? And why limit love to couples?" I suggested. *"Aren't there infinite ways to love? Whether it's with your partner, your dog or yourself, you can make this day about celebrating love and connection...."*

This conversation with my client spawned the birth of this article, where I would like to suggest some Valentine "tools" from my toolbox that don't have to cost a penny and that can be applied to people who are single or in relationship.

For Couples:

This is a day to put your partner first and let them know they are your #1 priority.

In fact, this is something that renowned couples therapist Dr. Stan Tatkin says is an essential ingredient in creating a strong and secure "couple bubble." Secure couples know how to create a strong and happy couple bubble by ***giving each other the message that the other person is a priority and comes before anything else***. That's right—before work, family, pets, you name it! There are 101 ways to let your partner know they come first, but a Hallmark card is *not* one of them. You do it by your actions and what you prioritize. This is a day to prioritize your partner and put them right up there on the front burner. In fact it's probably a good idea to do this on more days than just Valentine's Day...;)

Do something different and unusual together.

This is especially important for long term couples where it's all too easy to get into a rut. When you do something new or different together, it provides the opportunity to look at each other in new and different ways, and this creates bonding moments. Think about early on in your relationship when you were just getting to know your partner. This happened all the time! ***When was the last time you really looked at your partner and were curious about them? It's important to keep this early bonding element alive in your relationship, and doing new and different things together can facilitate this.***

Celebrate or gift your partner in a way that speaks to them.

Here it helps to consult the idea of Gary Chapman's "The 5 Love Languages," which is basically the theory that we all have different ways of feeling loved. It's important to learn your partner's primary love language and speak to it as often as possible—and definitely on Valentine's Day!

So here are the 5 Love Languages:

1. Physical touch
2. Quality time
3. Receiving gifts
4. Acts of service

5. Words of affirmation

For more details about each of the love languages go to this link: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/communication-and-conflict/learn-to-speak-your-spouses-love-language/understanding-the-five-love-languages>

For Singles:

This is a day to put yourself first and let yourself feel fully loved by you.

After all if you can't give this to yourself who can? ***In a sense, you could see doing this as a way of creating a landing pad for that love you want to attract in your life, or you could view it as a way of magnetizing "that special someone" to yourself.*** Do something today that is just for you and will make you feel loved. Try that new recipe and light a candle and play your favorite music when you sit down to enjoy it. Pour a bath with your favorite scents and put on some music to pamper yourself. The ways are infinite but ***try and bring in as many of the five senses as you can so you see, taste, touch, smell and hear the love!***

Do something new and different for yourself.

Why not try that yoga class you've been putting off for months, or check out that dance class you've been curious about? Try a Meet-Up activity or that cooking class that you've been eyeing for a while but couldn't attend because of your schedule. Don't want to go out? Invite all your single friends over for an "Anti V-Day" party. My client Sue gave me this idea. She got to feel loved and connected this way and that's what mattered.

Spread the Love.

Sometimes the best way to feel love is to give it. So call that friend who's been going through Hell or volunteer at your local shelter or spend some time with your elderly aunt whom you know would appreciate your visit. Being around animals can show you so much about love, too—no questions asked! If you don't have a pet, then offer to walk your neighbor's dog. The possibilities are endless, but do what speaks to you.

It's true that Valentine's Day is yet another consumer or Hallmark card holiday, but it's also about love and celebrating love. Why limit this to one day of the year? Perhaps Valentine's Day can be a reminder that love and celebrating love need to be on the front burner more often!

In closing, I have to quote one of my favorite poets, Rumi, who wrote numerous poems about love. Here is one of my favorites:

***Lovers don't finally
meet somewhere.***

***They're in each
other all along.***

—Rumi