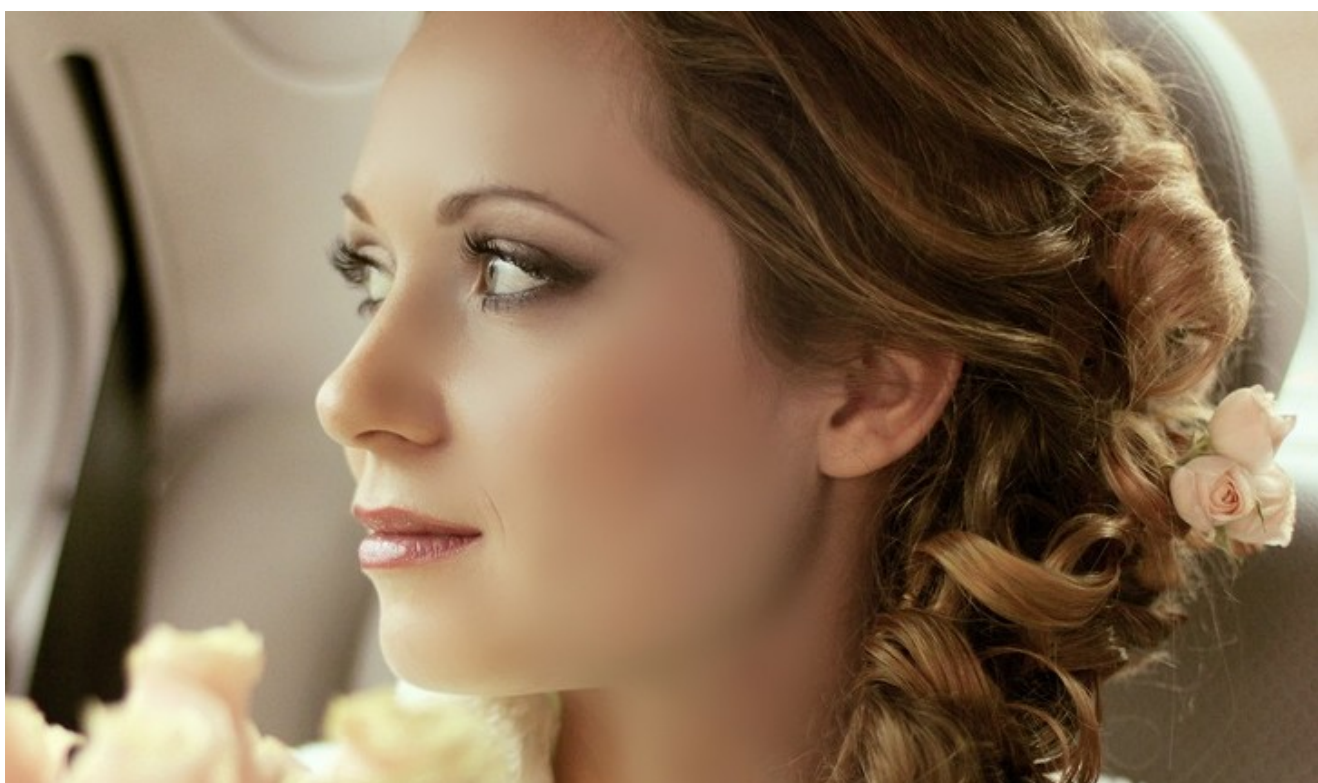


SELF: Reasons to Like February 14 Regardless of Your Relationship Status



From *SELF* Magazine

Love being single because...

1. You stay slimmer. Women who live alone gained less weight (about 9 pounds over a five-year period) than newly married women, a study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill notes. “Men have a higher calorie allowance, so if you have whatever he’s having, you’re going to gain weight,” says Tara Brass, M.D., medical director of Columbus Park Collaborative.

Advice for all from SELF: Shared meals and social obligations can wreck any woman's diet. Make sure you don't match every forkful with your man – just because he finishes his entire plate doesn't mean you have to. When dining out with friends, suggest that you both order something healthy, then split a dessert. Everybody wins!

2. You snooze more soundly. Sleeping solo has its perks: Two thirds of people who share a bed say their partner snores, costing some of them an average of 49 minutes of sleep per night, a National Sleep Foundation survey shows. "The noise created by snoring can be as loud as a kitchen blender," says Carol Ash, D.O., a sleep specialist in Jamesburg, New Jersey.

Advice for all from SELF: Use a white noise machine for more peaceful slumber, Ash suggests, and avoid alcohol or caffeine for four hours before bedtime.

3. You have steamier sex. Single gals report fewer bedroom issues such as lack of interest, low arousal and anxiety about sex than married women, a study from University College London reveals. "Excitement over a new crush creates a surge in neurotransmitters that crank up your sex drive," Dr. Brass says.

Advice for all from SELF: As you grow more committed, novelty can keep your love life hot. "Try new positions and locations, role-playing and, yes, even toys, which have been linked to increasing your chance for orgasm," suggests Debby Herbenick, Ph.D., a research scientist at Indiana University.

4. You enjoy more me-time. Single women luxuriate in seven extra hours a week that married women spend doing chores, finds research from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. "Women increase their housework after marriage; men reduce theirs," says study author Frank Stafford, Ph.D. (Thanks, guys.)

Advice for all from SELF: Leave the dishes in the sink, and reduce stress by taking a Zumba class or diving into a book.

Love being coupled because...

1. You're probably not hung-over today. Married women are 20 percent less likely to binge-drink than back when they were single, a study from Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois, indicates. Putting a ring on it may prompt women to put their wilder days behind them. And knowing your partner is watching may help you keep each other's vices in check.

Advice for all from SELF: Drinking a moderate amount of alcohol can be good for you. But indulging too heavily may increase your risk for breast cancer. Stick to no more than one drink per day.

2. You catch the happiness bug. Women who live with a mate tend to brighten up when their partner is in a good mood, according to a study from the University of York. "Emotions are highly contagious, and so is happiness," explains study author Nick Powdthavee, Ph.D.

Advice for all from SELF: The trickle-down glee can come from anyone we know and like, Dr. Powdthavee says, so take a friend out after her promotion or send a note of congrats for a relative's new baby and bask in her joy, too.

3. You have better health care access. Single women are 60 percent more likely to lack health insurance than married women, a Centers for Disease Control survey suggests. "Having a spouse increases your odds that you will have employer-sponsored coverage," says Mark Rukavina, executive director of the Access Project, a health research and advocacy organization.

Advice for all from SELF: Visit HealthCare.gov to search for the most affordable plans in your state and to find out how reform will improve your access.

4. You keep your brain going. Couples who marry or live together are half as likely to develop dementia later in life than those who live solo, a study in *BMJ* notes. Constant social interaction between partners (even bickering) may

strengthen the connection between brain cells and prevent cognitive decline.

Advice for all from SELF: Paired up or not, everyone can benefit from healthy social connectivity. With stronger mental health, you'll fare better with any health hurdles that come your way, suggesting all women build connections by prioritizing church or charity as well as friendships. How about throwing a February 15 party just for fun?

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