Making Valentine's Day Fun Again!

By Eleanore Wells

When did Valentine's Day become such a BIG deal? At some point when I wasn't looking, it went from being a lighthearted, fun, semi-holiday to another over-the-top, loud, commercial holiday that comes with feelings of annoyance and angst for so many. It's not really about who you love anymore; instead, it's about gifts and lavish displays of…well, I'm not sure what.

As a kid, I loved this holiday. I got such a kick out of giving out cards with big red hearts on them to all the people who made me happy. I gave them to my parents, my teachers, my favorite classmates, my playmates and even my mailman. Back then, Valentine's Day was fun, and it was an excuse to tell

the people who make you happy how much they mean to you. Romance had nothing to do with it when I was ten years old.

Years later, I received a beautiful bouquet of roses from a guy I'd broken up with about seven months earlier. We weren't really speaking, and he's not the sentimental type, so I was more than a little suspect. I called the florist and learned that, back when we were still dating, he had set up an automatic "send her flowers on Valentine's Day" thingy. So each Valentine's Day, when I was so pleased with his thoughtfulness, he really hadn't given it much thought at all. Well, maybe the first time…

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I laughed and said nothing. It took him another two or three years to remember that he had me on automatic delivery, and I continued to enjoy my flowers each year. It had nothing to do with him or the romantic day. I just like pretty flowers.

Then, there was the guy who "surprised" me with a ginormous ten-pound box of chocolates. It was a surprise because I don't really like chocolate, and he certainly should have known that because we'd talked about it many times. I guess he only *pretended* to be listening.

Jennifer Lopez has been quoted as saying, "Love to me is someone telling me, 'I want to be with you for the rest of my life, and if you needed me to, I'd jump out of a plane for you.'" Can you imagine the pressure her guy feels on Valentine's Day?!

For too many single women, Valentine's Day is a loud reminder that they have no man (or woman, in some cases) in their life to love. It's a loud reminder of their sad, lonely lives…even though, on most days, their lives are not very sad and not that lonely. And the lead-up to it is fraught with anxiety

because "whatever will she do" on this day when happy couples all over the country are celebrating? (Even though that isn't really happening.)

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When I'm not in a relationship on Valentine's Day, I like to enjoy a dinner or some other outing with people who make me laugh. Not a gloomy, woeful dinner with whiny people who are miserable about being single, but a fun dinner with interesting and delightful people who happen to be single…single for now or single forever.

And that — or something on the list below — is what I recommend for everybody. I wish Valentine's Day were less about romance and more about an opportunity to remind people that you love them or tell them for the first time that you enjoy their company, that they matter to you. Let's reclaim Valentine's Day and experience it like we did when we were kids by injecting some much-needed lightheartedness into it.

1. Go bowling or plan some other group outing for people you know and enjoy but may not see as often as you'd like. It's a great excuse to reconnect!

2. Volunteer at a nursing home or children's organization and surprise them with Valentine's Day cards and trinkets so they can share in the day's fun too.

3. Treat yourself — and maybe even someone else — to flowers. Flowers can brighten anyone's day.

4. Buy a pack of Valentine's Day cards and give them to anybody and everybody you want.

Let's make Valentine's Day about love instead of romance: love of great people, love of laughter, love of life. And you don't need a date for that!