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Seven Valentine's Day Tips for Spouses in "Less-Than-Perfect" Marriages

By Nancy J. Wasson, Ph.D.

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Valentine's Day can be a depressing day when you're in an unhappy or shaky marriage. In every store or advertisement you see romantic cards, heart-shaped boxes of candy, or select jewelry for the special lover's day.

Restaurants publish their special menus in advance and give food items names such as "lover's delight chocolate dessert." Radio stations sponsor contests focused around the theme of Valentine's Day, and newspapers run pictures and stories about spouses with long marriages. Everywhere you turn, you are bombarded with pictures and stories of happy lovers.

What can you do to survive Valentine's Day when you are worried sick that your marriage is on the rocks? How do you deal with all the love hoopla when your spouse doesn't know if he or she really loves you or wants to stay married?

The following seven tips will help you to keep your perspective and sanity:

1. Be your own valentine this year and celebrate the wonderful person that you are. Make an appointment to have a massage or pedicure on Valentine's Day as a present to yourself. Or make plans with a friend to dine at a gourmet restaurant either on Valentine's Day or the day before. Buy yourself a new CD or book that you've been wanting. Leave work early, if possible, and do something fun such as going to a movie in the middle of the work afternoon.

2. Make a commitment to love yourself and to treat yourself with care and respect. Resolve to take good care of yourself by exercising, eating right, taking time to relax and see friends, and getting enough rest. Throw any martyr tendencies out the window and make your health and wellbeing a top priority. This is not being selfish. If you don't nurture yourself first, you won't be in any shape to give quality energy and time to your marriage.

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3. Commit to being okay no matter what happens in your marriage. It's essential that you make yourself a promise that you'll have a quality life with or without your spouse. By showing respect for yourself and belief in your ability to thrive whether married or not, you'll be coming from a place of empowerment and strength. The attributes of personal strength and confidence attract others and engender respect, making you a more desirable partner.

4. Accept uncertainty and see it as an opportunity to flex your faith muscles, build resiliency, and develop the discipline to live in the present moment as much as possible. With practice, you can learn to curb your tendency to worry about the future and can expand more of your energy into making the most of the time you have now. Everyone has periods of time when everything is up in the air and how things will turn out is unknown. And as poet Walt Whitman reminds us, "The future is no more uncertain than the present."

5. Practice having fun, even when you're feeling miserable! Don't wait until your life is perfect to plan fun activities. Do something that you've wanted to do but have put off. You might have said to yourself, "One day I'm going to take piano lessons." Now is the time to get started. Make a list of things that you'd enjoy doing and pick one to put on your schedule. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to wait and see what happens in your marriage before you take steps to create a more satisfying life. The time to start enjoying life is now.

6. Expand your support circle. Stay in touch with your friends, even though your first impulse may be to withdraw when you're feeling blue. Look for ways to increase your contact with others such as taking a night class, going hiking with a local hiking group, or attending services at your church, synagogue, or mosque. Don't let fear of questions keep you at home. You can be discrete and give a response such as, "I can't get into it, but I appreciate your caring and concern so very much. Thank you."

7. Find your strong woman or strong man warrior energy. Go rappelling, learn to scuba dive, ride in a hot air balloon, try para-sailing, plan a backpacking trip, go horseback riding, lift weights, explore river rafting, dance around a campfire, sing powerful songs, or sign up for a martial arts class. Do whatever empowers you and make you feel strong and energetic. Stretch out of your comfort zone and surprise yourself by doing something different. Then congratulate yourself for your spunk.

Tips adapted from the book *Keep Your Marriage: What To Do When Your Spouse Says "I don't love you anymore!"* by Nancy J. Wasson, Ph.D. and Lee Hefner. Available only at <http://www.KeepYourMarriage.com>.

Nancy J. Wasson, Ph.D., is co-author of *Keep Your Marriage: What to Do When Your Spouse Says "I don't love you anymore!"* Available only at <http://www.KeepYourMarriage.com>. Nancy can be contacted at Nancy@KeepYourMarriage.com.

Valentine's Day Gift Ideas For Married Couples

By Jill Renee

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For young dating couples that are still experiencing the passion and all-encompassing rush of new love, Valentine's Day can hold great importance. Impressing someone with elaborate gifts can be one way of telling the person that you are dating that you think they are special, and that you have great hopes for the relationship. Valentine's Day gifts in this stage of a relationship can tell people a lot about each other, and can be a good indicator of where the relationship may be headed.

What about people who have been married for a while?

For married couples Valentine's Day isn't less important...just different and, in many ways, better. It is a time to celebrate love and reminisce about all the Valentine's Days that you have spent together. Gifts given on Valentine's Day to a spouse can have much more significance, because you should know your spouse well enough to give something that has special meaning. A diamond anniversary band or three stone ring given to a wife tells her that you are glad that you married her and that you value your life together. A gold watch given to a husband tells him that you appreciate him and want him to have the very best.

Married couples don't have to give elaborate gifts on Valentine's Day; a meaningful gift that says you care or a sweet gesture of love are just as special. When you are married, the thought that is put into the gift is the important factor. A jewelry gift that says "I know you, and I know what makes you happy" goes a long way toward making someone feel that they are special and valued. If your wife likes heart shapes then giving her a diamond heart pendant or bracelet with heart-shaped charms can mean much more to her than simply handing her a gold chain. It shows that you know what she likes, you listen to her, that you put thought into the gift. Jewelry that celebrates each other's individuality as well as the life that you have made together can be priceless, no matter what the actual cost.

Giving your spouse something they have been considering buying for a while is a good way to show your love. To come up with an original Valentine's Day gift think about what is important to your spouse; what makes him or her happy. Does your husband love to golf? Give him a gift certificate for a round of golf at his favorite course. Does your wife love classical music? Tickets for a night out to see the symphony let's you plan a second night to spend together. A gift of jewelry is a lasting reminder of this Valentine's Day and your relationship - and jewelry is always appreciated. And don't forget about giving flowers - they may seem traditional but flowers brighten a winter day and are romantic. One of the reasons that successful marriages stay that way is because the spouses try never to take each other for granted, and the right gift on Valentine's Day can go a long way in proving your commitment to that ideal.

Jill Renee is the president of Danforth Diamond, an online jewelry store specializing in quality engagement rings-on the Web at

. With 50 years in the jewelry

business, the Danforth family developed their site as a resource to help you find the perfect engagement ring.



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