

FEBRUARY 2012

Reclaiming Romance...

It's that time of year again—a time when stores are covered in red hearts and die-cut shapes of cupid in their windows. A time of year that can make people who are not in a relationship feel alone, and a time that bombards couples with the idea that *love* is best expressed through cards, flowers, and chocolates. As a therapist, I spend time with people year-round, encouraging them to work on their relationships and rekindle lost romance. I am a self-proclaimed hopeless romantic, who will fight for love, even when it seems that all hope is lost. Surprisingly, in spite of my being in love with the idea of being in love, when I enter a store bedecked in Valentine's Day décor—I have a kneejerk reaction to roll my eyes and sigh quietly to myself. In writing this, I am reminded of an anti-Valentine's Day button that I once saw a friend wear every February 14th, which read: "Happy Unimaginative, Commercialism-Driven, Poor Excuse for Romance Day." I have realized that while I think the sentiment of her button is clever (and it still makes me laugh), I am not *anti-Valentine's Day*. I am; however, *anti* "being-romantic-one-day-a-year Day."

We need to reclaim romance. Thus, from this day forward, I suggest that we make February 14th a **reminder** that we need to show our loved ones how we feel about them all year round! If April 15th can "remind" us that we need to have our taxes completed for at least two and a half months prior to the deadline, than just imagine if we had a day that made us put that kind of mental energy into loving-kindness and romance for 105 days out of the year (the approximate length of tax season). Let's make it Valentine's *Season* instead of Valentine's *Day*. ☺

Let us reclaim romance to be more than greeting cards and little candy hearts that say, "Be mine." Some of you may be wondering, "What exactly *is* romance?" One definition of romance that I like is: "a feeling of excitement and mystery associated with love." In using this definition, one need not be in a relationship to have romance in their life. Romance can be obtained through self or other, in reality or in fantasy. Self-love is just as important to our happiness in life as partnered love. The excitement and mystery we associate with love can be as individual as we are. Let's get creative and break out of the store bought ideas of romance!

Romantic feelings can be experienced through each of the five senses. It may be through written word, with letters or poems. It may be through our sense of taste, with foods that we find particularly pleasurable. The scent of candles, bath salts, perfumes or colognes may be intoxicating for some. For others, it may be music that relaxes us or "gets us in the mood." Last, but certainly

not least, touch! As humans, we need loving human touch from birth until death. Again, this is something that we can do alone or with a partner...

ROMANCE 101

♥ If you are someone who believes you may be “romantically challenged,” don’t fret. There are wonderful resources out there to help you! For example, a very straightforward book is, “1001 Ways to Be Romantic” by G. Godek (approximately \$10 on amazon.com). The author gives wonderful advice, which ranges from sweet and simple ideas, to romantic vacation suggestions. It is a great go-to guide that can be used year round.

♥ Instead of buying a greeting card from the store, write your loved one a letter. While attractive stationary may cost more than a card, it will outlive the one-time use of a greeting card. Many stationary sets have 15-20 sheets of paper with coordinating envelopes. Not only will you save money on cards that are likely to be read once and then put away, but you will also show the person how much you care about them by taking the time to write them a note or letter. A resource that I love to share with my clients is a website that teaches the art of writing a Love Letter: www.writeexpress.com/How-to-write-a-love-letter.html. The author, Larry Barkdull literally shows you—step by step, how to write a love letter, including how to choose the best paper and the overall presentation of the letter. He even gives some fantastic ideas about what to say in the body of your letter. Here are some of his ideas:

- recall when you fell in love with him/her
- explain how your life has changed for the better
- explain that you can't imagine life without him/her
- tell how wonderful and complete he/she makes you feel
- recall some special moments you've shared together
- list qualities that set him/her apart from everyone else

♥ Finally, let’s talk about bedroom romance. If you have a television in your bedroom, you may want to consider moving it to another room. Research shows that couples who have a television in their bedroom are less likely to entertain themselves with each other, because they have an external source of entertainment via the TV. Couples without a television are more likely to engage with each other. Clients who have heeded my advice on this tell me that it has increased their communication, as well as their overall intimacy in the bedroom. As a side note, studies also show that watching television in bed can lead to insomnia as well as it being hard on your spine, as people tend to watch television in bed with their body in awkward positions for long periods of time. In summary, TV in the bedroom = less communication, less intimacy, increased insomnia, and increased body aches and pains. I say ditch it!

Now, we all know that candle light tends to add a feeling of romance, but did you know that there are some candles out there that are made of a special wax that is perfect for massage?? Indeed!

Massage wax candles can be a wonderful way to combine multiple senses, and create a sensual and romantic evening. Note that not all massage wax candles are of the same quality. My absolute favorite of these are made by a company called BURN. They have multiple wicks, so they burn more evenly; they have absolutely wonderful scents to choose from; and after you've poured the wax onto your partner, it massages into the skin like oil—leaving no waxy residue for clean up. One of my favorite scents is their Blood Orange Neroli (pictured below).



If you are worried about having real candles in the home due to fire hazard, you may consider a flameless, battery operated candle. Many of the nicer ones have a “flicker” effect and the candle appears to have a “melted edge.” This gives them the appearance of real candles, without the worry of remembering to blow them out!

♥ I hope that some of you will join me in “Reclaiming Romance,” and making February 14th a reminder that Valentine’s *Season* can be 365 days a year. Let it be a reminder to prioritize our time, at least once per week, for a moment of love, connection, and romance.

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