



H A P P Y

Valentine's Day



Better Marriages
Educating Couples - Building Relationships

Table of Contents

3 Ways to Embrace Valentine's Day	1
Beyond Happily Ever After	4
John Gottman Love Journal	6
Valentine's Day Goals	8
Timeless Quotes by David Mace	10
Sharing Perspectives	11
Relationship Growth Plan	12
What is a Relationship Coach?	13
Online Relationship Academy + Special Offer	14

3 Ways to Embrace Valentine's Day Differently this Year

[prepare-enrich](#)

There's certainly some truth to the idea that Valentine's Day is a manufactured holiday that coerces us to spend oodles of money on special chocolates, lackluster flowers, heart-shaped pizza, and jewelry we're not even sure we want. A quick internet search will tell you that Americans spend somewhere between \$20-30 billion on Valentine's Day. That's a lot of money to spend to show your love. And it's not just money! The holiday brings all kinds of other pressure, too. Pressure to connect, feel close, and be *head over heels in love* with your partner.

Between that pressure and the money you'll spend, it's easy to say to your spouse, "Hey, this year, let's just skip the whole 'Valentine's' thing. We know we love each other, so let's save the money and avoid the hoopla."

But should you? Should you skip out on the chance and opportunity to celebrate your relationship and love for one another? We don't think so. This post is not about urging you to skip Valentine's Day. Quite the opposite. We're encouraging you to make Valentine's Day a bigger deal this year. It absolutely does not have to be expensive, but it should feel meaningful.

Here are three ways to embrace Valentine's Day differently this year:

1. Think about Valentine's Day as a pre-scheduled date night.

You know that you should keep dating your partner throughout your relationship – but as you can probably attest, it's hard to get that on the schedule. Oftentimes, that's literally the hardest part: picking a date/time and prepping the stuff you have to do to [make that date happen](#). In this case, treat Valentine's Day as a date night you don't even have to think twice about. It's just a given that it's happening. And as always with dates, it doesn't have to be fancy meal at a trendy restaurant; do what works for your relationship in the season you're in.

3 Ways to Embrace Valentine's Day Differently this Year (Cont'd)

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2. Throw the cheesy gift idea out the window.

If you know your spouse's love language, gift with that in mind instead. Whether it's acts of service, physical touch, words of affirmation, time together, or material gifts, keep this insight front and center when selecting a gift to show your love. You can take a cheesy moment and make it into something meaningful that ultimately brings you closer to each other.

3. Model expressing love for your kids.

Love isn't just for adults. Kids learn about love from a very young age watching their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, family, and friends interact. They see it on TV, hear about it in the books you read to them, and as they get older they'll learn about it in school. Be intentional this year in how you express love to your spouse when your kids are present. [Talk](#) about it. Share with your kids [why you love your spouse](#), and while you're at it, share why you love each of them, too. There's a caveat to this one – keep in mind what's age-appropriate for your kids, and if you don't have kids at home, consider this for any little ones you interact with (nieces, nephews, grandkids, etc.)

No matter how you choose to celebrate, the reason why you should is simple. Your relationship is built on love, and love deserves to be celebrated and enjoyed. If we don't take the time to do the things that feel cheesy or live into a day that could be just another day in February, it's a slippery slope to no longer putting in the effort. Your relationship deserves the effort.

You've Got This!



Beyond Happily Ever After

David Steele, [Relationship Coaching Institute](#)

“What you can conceive you can achieve.”
— Napoleon Hill

As couples we want to live “happily ever after” and achieve our dreams. This is cool, but there are big limits to dreaming-

You might have a desire (“love”) but not a clear idea or dream or vision for what it looks like, so you’re stuck with “what is”
You might have a clear dream, but don’t believe it’s possible or realistic, so you’re stuck with what you’ll allow yourself to have
Your dream is limited to what you can conceive or envision, so you’re stuck with a narrow range of possibilities

However, a good [Relationship Coach](#) will help their client dream big and reach deep down to uncover and envision dreams they didn’t know they had. So there’s a “next level” to this dream stuff. This is what we’re doing with Radical Marriage – exploring what’s possible in relationships and providing strategies to go far beyond what would be most people’s dream relationship, because we can’t envision something we haven’t seen or experienced before.

This is new territory in the field of relationships, and since each relationship is unique, each couple’s “radical relationship” would be unique to them and they would be the pioneer of their relationship and discover uncharted territory together. We can provide them with the support, skills, strategies, and a roadmap, but the journey is theirs to take.

Isn’t that exciting?

Read on for some key ideas. . .

Beyond Happily Ever After (Cont'd)

Your “dream” is what you can currently conceive, but you can go far beyond that

To do so you must be aware that “you don’t know what you don’t know,” be open to possibilities, and be willing to continually progress forward into new territory with your partner.

This is not for everyone and requires a good, strong partnership with willingness to embrace the journey, the learning, the adventure, and to be a pioneer (instead of seeking comfort, tradition, and familiarity)

The dream beyond “happily ever after” only seems to further reveal itself as you progress forward. Each step forward allows you to see more of the possibilities and the horizon. So there is really no such thing as “achieving” a dream because when you get to where you’re striving, you see more, can do more, want more, and continue striving.

This requires a leap of faith and willingness to embrace and enter the unknown. There’s a great Indiana Jones scene here that illustrates this- Only after Indy made that first, frightening step into the abyss did he discover the path across. Embracing your fears and not letting them hold you back is a big theme here as well.

“To Infinity and beyond!”

— Buzz Lightyear

John Gottman Love Journal

Fondness and Admiration

- I am most grateful for _____ in my relationship because...
- Three things I admire most about my partner are...
- I am most attracted to my partner when...

Love Maps

- I first knew I loved my partner when...
- My favorite memory with my partner is...
- My favorite ritual my partner and I observe together is...

Goals and Dreams

- I can better support my partner's goals and dreams by...
- Ten things I want to do with my partner in the future include...
- Our shared goals for the future include...

Being Seen and Heard

- I can be a better listener by...
- I felt supported by my partner when....
- One small thing my partner did for me this week was _____ and it made me feel...

Fun and Playfulness

- My favorite thing my partner and I did together this week was...
- The activities I enjoy doing most with my partner include...
- My partner and I flirt together by...

Conflict Management

- One thing my partner and I regularly argue about is _____. It makes me feel...
- Three things I've learned about myself or my partner from past conflicts are...
- I need to work on _____ when my partner and I disagree. I will work on it by...

John Gottman Love Journal (Cont'd)

Use these additional prompts for inspiration

- One thing I can improve about myself in my relationship is...
- One question I have for my partner is...
- Something new I want to try in our relationship is...
- The best date my partner and I went on was...
- I felt the most vulnerable in our relationship when...
- I imagine our relationship will change in these ways as we grow together...
- The perfect way to start and end my day with my partner is...
- I laugh when I remember this time with my partner...
- If I had to guess my partner's top five favorite things, they would be...
- Some habits that my partner has that I find cute are...
- My partner makes me a better human because...
- The piece of relationship advice that has helped us the most is...
- Reflecting on the past month, I'd say our relationship is...

Valentine's Day Goals

[Priscilla Hunt](#), CRCC

Valentine's Day is a *great* day to decide what kind of relationship you want!

Resolutions are simply goals – they can be set at *any* time. There's nothing magical about January 1. How about setting a goal or two for your relationship today? On Valentine's Day?

The idea of setting goals for couples isn't a mystery. We simply take stock of where we are and determine where we want to be. We don't have to vow to change the world or give our relationship a total overhaul. We simply have to move forward.



What will it take to get you from where you are to where you want to be? One thing for sure, you won't get there by accident. We need to be pro-active about our relationship instead of re-active. We need to own our part in making it good.

Make a date with your partner to sit down and evaluate where you each see your relationship – the strengths as well as the areas that need improvement. Start with the positive. What are you getting right? Celebrate it!

What needs to change for you to move forward in your relationship? To make it better? Don't try to change everything at once. Choose one thing. Baby steps are enough. Add little things as you go.

Take off your rose-colored glasses and put aside the myth of happily-ever-after. It takes work. Think growth. Think movement.

Valentine's Day Goals (Cont'd)

Don't get discouraged about the areas that aren't so positive. ALL couples have those areas!

Make a plan. Write it down. Seek the support of a [Relationship Coach](#) to get you in touch with what you really want and help you set specific goals to achieve it.

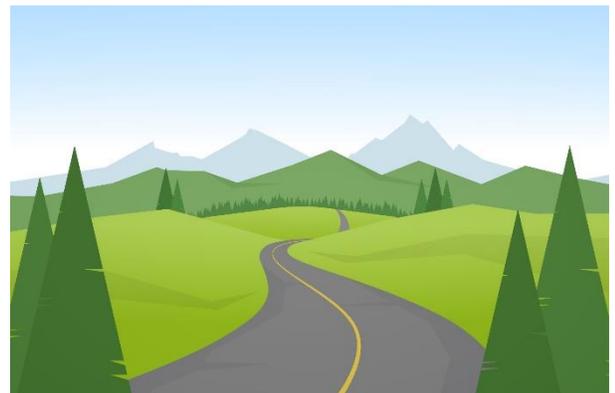
What's your plan for getting to where you want to be?

Without a goal and a plan for how to have the relationship you truly want. . .

If you want to have a happier, closer relationship, a [Relationship Coach](#) can help.

Take baby steps, and before you know it – you've co-created the relationship you truly want!

- What kind of relationship do you want?
- Where is your relationship now?
- In what areas does your relationship need to grow?
- How are you going to make that happen?



Remember, it's a journey, not a destination. Enjoy the ride!

Timeless Quotes by David Mace, MD, PhD Co-Founder, Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment dba Better Marriages, dba Close Companions

These quotes represent the beliefs of Dr. David Mace, co-founder of Better Marriages with his wife, Vera, in 1973. They are as true today as they were then.

The only basis for a secure sense of identity and self-worth is the knowledge that you are fully known and at the same time deeply loved.

For two people to live a shared life it is necessary that they share themselves; that each should know, in considerable depth, who the other is.

One of the great illusions of our time is that love is self-sustaining. It is not. Love must be fed and nurtured, constantly renewed. That demands ingenuity and consideration, but first and foremost, it demands time.

Without understanding of the intricacies of loving, the best-intentioned couples can blunder and extinguish the flame that once brought warmth and light into their lives.

Many more of our marriages could reach a far higher level of satisfaction, if only the couples could be motivated and helped to realize their potential.

What is needed to stir married couples out of their lethargy and seeming indifference? I believe we must find ways to kindle new hope in them that their marriages can really be much more satisfying and rewarding.

In every marriage the two dynamic forces are love, which seeks to draw the couple together, and anger, which tends to drive them apart.

Sharing Perspectives

Ask yourself these 3 questions and share your answers with your partner. Keep in mind that your answers represent your perspective, they aren't *fact*. Your partner might have a very different perspective. Be open and curious to understand their point of view. Learning more about each other builds intimacy!

1. What's good about our relationship right now? What do I feel really good about?
2. What about our relationship could be improved? Where would I like to see us learn and grow?
3. What are 3 things I'm personally willing to do to make that growth a reality?

Congratulations! You're on your way to co-creating the kind of relationship you really want.



Relationship Growth Plan



How about a simple plan to grow together as a couple in the weeks and months ahead?

Each of you individually write your responses to numbers 1-3. When finished, share your answers with each other before proceeding to numbers 4-6.

You might want to sign and post this agreement where you can see it every day and be reminded of what you've set out to accomplish.

1. What words or phrases would you choose to describe your ideal relationship?
2. List several areas in your relationship in which growth is needed in order to reach this ideal.
3. List 3-4 things you are personally willing to do during the next month to move your relationship closer to the ideal.
4. Together, agree on 3-4 goals you want to accomplish during the next month. Write them down.
5. Sign and date below as a record of your agreements.
6. Keep this Growth Plan where you'll see it every day to be reminded of your commitment to build a strong, happy relationship. You can do it!

Signature

Signature

Date

What is a Relationship Coach?

Coaching is a positive, goal and results-oriented approach that helps you achieve your biggest dreams, more than you ever thought possible.

A relationship coach helps a couple identify their vision and then partners with them to create an action plan to help move them toward it - together. A coach walks alongside you through a process of discovery in which you are empowered to make the relationship choices that are right for you.

Coaches believe that you are fully capable of achieving your goals, and support you into action. A relationship coach assumes a relationship is part of a journey, not a destination, and is a partner in the process.

A coach helps you become aware of the connection between your attitudes, beliefs, choices, and consequences and supports you to make your own judgments and decisions without teaching or giving advice.

Coaches partner with a couple to design an effective Relationship Action Plan to help the couple develop a conscious, intentional, pro-active and empowered relationship.

Coaching is action-oriented, not problem-focused, and helps the client move forward - always forward.

Let a coach help you identify your vision, purpose, requirements, needs and goals. And achieve them!





Close Companions Online Relationship Academy

Commit to Developing a Strong, Healthy Relationship 24/7

Relationship support when you need it – on-demand, 24/7

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OFF**

**Coupon Code VALENTINE20
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(Hurry – expires 2-15-22)

[LEARN MORE](#)

“The Close Companions Online Relationship Academy has fed the soul of our relationship! Several courses have gone right to the heart of our relationship and have helped us communicate in positive, constructive ways. We will be sharing this resource with all of our friends!”

Kim & Nathan, GA