

## Making Ripples

by Amanda Bancroft

Valentine's Day can be a controversial subject these days, but all that really matters is respectfully expressing love for others and ourselves in ways that make ripples in the world. Here are some non-controversial ideas that are sure to make not just one day, but the whole year more loving.

Valentine's Day is just one day, and many people feel conflicted celebrating it on the "day of." If that's you, then celebrate with love for family and friends every day of the year, not just on Valentine's Day itself. But let's be real, taking a few hours on one evening or spending a day away from work is a lot easier than celebrating every day of one's life despite school and work schedules (not to mention the flu). You may want to think about blocking off some time regularly to express your love; otherwise, vows like "I don't need Valentine's Day to show love, I will show it every day!" may become pretty hollow promises. The calendar, like the movements of the seasons and astronomical bodies, just reminds us that time is passing, things are constantly changing and life is short. So express love!

If you are a creative type, by all means get crafty in that expression. Card making, sculpting, drawing, painting or collage are just a few options. By recycling items like toilet paper rolls into pretty candy boxes, or using salvage or sustainable paper and materials, you can help the environment while making someone feel special. If you'd rather buy a gift, consider fair trade options that pay workers fairly, or sustainable products.

Buying gifts is great. Crafting gifts is dandy. Receiving gifts is really fun. But if you don't want to, or can't afford to, you don't have to. There are so many alternatives! Experiential gifts are becoming popular. If you know someone well enough, you probably know where they like to spend time, a concert they would enjoy, an experience they've always dreamed about, or perhaps a place where you both like to hang out. It's your choice to select a location that's completely free or comes with a cost. You can even call someone you love who lives long-distance and leave a loving voicemail, or send an e-mail that will totally make their day but cost nothing. Don't overlook the obvious options.

Lonely singles may loathe the day, but it doesn't have to be that way. Recently, Valentine's Day has become a reminder to love ourselves in addition to loving others. The internet is full of articles on loving our bodies, accepting our imperfections, celebrating our strengths and taking ourselves out to dinner and a movie. "Me time" doesn't need to be selfish, but rejuvenating. Loving others and living as a beacon of compassion requires emotional balance, clear-mindedness, knowledge of self, and physical health. These things don't typically arise from being a workaholic. If the schedule is too packed, self-love suffers and difference-making diminishes. This can be seen when someone doesn't get enough sleep: how grumpy are they the next day? In whatever ways work best for you, show some love – as often as possible – to yourself and others.

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