



# **Surviving Valentine's Day On Your Own**

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## Introduction

Ten years ago if you had asked someone what Valentine's meant to them they would probably tell you that it was really no big deal. It might have been important for a florist who has a promotion or a local restaurant that offers roses with its dinner but there was never a big deal about it and never too much money, time and effort that was spent on it.

However, these days Valentine's Day is such a big thing that you would have to be living on the moon if you didn't know anything about it. As early as December, you will be surrounded by advertisements, promotions, special offers and gift ideas in newspapers, on TV, on radio, on the Internet - basically everywhere you turn.

For some people all this hype is way too much and they prefer to ignore the slightest insinuation that Valentine's Day is on its way. Others will find it quite depressing that they see or hear so much about it everywhere, considering that they are actually single and find that they will have no one to celebrate it with.

Contrary to popular belief though, Valentine's Day is about love and not necessarily among couples only. It can also be shared amongst family, friends and anyone you would like to share love with. You can be 9 or 90 but love is something we all feel and it is definitely something we all need in both small and big ways. It keeps us happy so there's definitely no use in letting the commercial aspects of Valentine's actually ruin this thought for you.

A simple "I'm thinking of you" to "Mum, you mean a lot to me" can make a considerable difference in any ones life, regardless of whether you are the giver or the recipient.

## **Overcoming the Blues**

First and foremost you must at all times remember that self-pity never made the world a better place for anyone even if it is Valentine's Day. If being alone seems to be such a problem to you then it would be best to set yourself up for doing something about it. Don't wallow. The more time you allow yourself to spend on thinking how depressed you are then the more depressed you are likely to become.

The trick of overcoming that dreary feeling is to make sure that it has no chance of occurring in the first place by trying to keep yourself occupied at all times. Be it through activities, family or friends, don't allow yourself that opportunity to sit down and look at photographs or letters that are going to leave you feeling sad, morose and lonely. Even if you do come across these pictures or other mementos by accident, make it a point to remember that at one point you were happy and, as they say, you must not have regrets about something that made you smile in the first place.

Seeing that you need time to find a date and preferably one with someone that you at least like, you had better be quick about it. Even as you spot the ads and special offers that start coming out in late December, you had better put a stop to those self-pitying thoughts and get moving to try to get yourself a date, or at least working on a working up an optimistic attitude for Valentine's Day.

### **Look on the bright side**

Maybe for you, Valentine's Day is all about pretending not to be envious as friends and colleagues show off their Valentine's gift choices for their other half, whilst all you wish for is to be lucky enough to even receive such a thought before or on Valentine's Day.

Well here's another side to it. Whilst they are out spending all those hundreds and hundreds of dollars, wracking their brains about making the correct gift or celebration choice and spending time (not to mention a great deal of effort) making sure they have got it absolutely right, guess what? You'll be saving your precious dollars, time and effort and that means more of everything to spend on yourself.

If it is company bonus time, which it often is for many organizations, then now is the time to splurge on that stunning floral print or party dress that you've had your eyes on. Or, how about the latest mobile phone or (even better) what about gifting yourself some tickets to something that you really want to do – go to a top show, a football match, maybe even an F1 Grand Prix (with the season just about to start) and make sure that you have the best seats as well. So cheer

up, things aren't that bad after all and this is definitely a time for you to start appreciating and treating yourself.

For every spa or health resort trip the attached ones are considering taking their other half on, keep telling yourself that you can spend all that time on only yourself. Now, that's called delightful pampering.

### **What are the reasons you are alone?**

You must ask this and you must be honest when answering it. Have you just been through a divorce, have you just separated or are you just barely surviving a major break up? If you find yourself falling into any of the above categories then you may want to reconsider going on a date unless you are absolutely certain that you will not be ranting about your ex for most of the evening, or getting yourself blind drunk and then calling your ex in front of your new date.

Yes, your Valentine's date may be for one night only but why take the initiative to deprive someone else of a good time just because you are feeling miserable? In other words, make sure you are not carrying excess baggage with you and that this process of starting to see other people is indeed intended to be a way for you to start afresh.

Another point to note is that going to places that you used to frequent with your ex is also a complete no-no. Regardless of whether you hope to 'accidentally' intend to bump into your ex, just so that you can boast that you have moved on with your life, or if it genuinely is because you feel comfortable in that particular environment, Valentine's Day will not be the best day to test the waters! Also, try to think about what you say, and avoid phrases like "I got you roses because my ex used to like roses". Very simply, strike off anything that begins with "My ex said, thought, did etc."

Seeing someone other than your ex is a FRESH start. Keep it that way from the beginning to end or at least until both of you are familiar enough with one another to talk about past issues honestly and are both ready and able to deal with any outcome.

First dates during the Valentine's season will definitely not accomplish this, so they are to be avoided if possible.

### **Getting Support**

Maybe you spent ten years together or perhaps it was only one, but you loved this person with all your heart and now it's over. You're devastated. You're depressed. You feel like your life has almost lost its purpose entirely. You are feeling so many emotions at the same time and none of them are good or happy ones. And, yes, of course you will need time to yourself to run the break up through your head and to actually realize that it IS over.

But try not to overdo things by spending too much time alone. The sooner you get out and start moving around with others, the sooner you will start to realize or perhaps remember that you are an amazing individual and that it is necessary to move on with your own life.

Talk to family and to friends. The chances are that someone else has been through what you are going through right now, and learning how they dealt with it would be a lesson in how you can pick up the pieces.

Alternatively, join a support group that will be able to give you some closure on your loss. You may find them online or you may even be able to locate them at your nearest community center.

Meet with other people who are also feeling loss. The chances are that there are many ways that you will be able to arrive at the closure you need, and by doing this you will be around people who understand how you feel and you will be able to make more friends.

Now, considering you were so shattered by your loss and hence there is the necessity of joining a support group, this may not be an ideal forum to actually immediately start seeing someone. Everyone is lonely. Everyone is depressed. Getting romantically involved with each other is not going to wash the empty feelings away and may just make it worse when you realize that this rush into something new with someone you just met is not that great after all.

Move around and mingle by all means, but give yourself enough time to heal. Don't go looking for more heartbreak that you really don't need.

### **Reuniting with an ex**

Now, here's a different twist. Years ago you dated someone, but then you separated and drifted apart. Now you have suddenly come into contact once again. You're both single at the moment and find that hooking up on Valentine's would be an excellent way to curb the Valentine blues for both of you.

Maybe this is no bad idea, but remember that whilst this may seem innocent enough, you should tread carefully. Years ago or one year ago, this person was your ex for a reason. Agreed, people change but that can work both ways, literally for better or worse.

He or she might not be the person you are expecting them to be. The time that the two of you have spent apart has given both of you room for new opportunities, growth, and different experiences. Perhaps you have even been moving and living in completely different environments from one another, so the one thing to actually expect is, simply, nothing.

You've somehow got in touch with each other and now you are going on a date. It is as simple as that.

Don't put yourself through the agony of thinking and wondering whether things, that is your feelings and emotions, might be exactly the way they used to be. Don't make statements like "But you used to love it when I did that." Look at this person with a new perspective.

This date will almost be like catching up with an old friend and may lead to nothing more than that. The less pressure you put on each other in this situation, the happier the two of you will be.

One other thing is certain though. You must be sure that both of you ARE single or you are playing with very dangerous fire, which can only lead to a very upset spouse or partner!

Even if there is an invitation to join your ex for dinner or drinks on Valentine's Day with their other half, do consider how you should actually deal with this. If there is no animosity or if you are all friends, then by all means go ahead. But if there is any inkling of "I don't really care for his or her new partner", then staying away is definitely a better idea.

If this is the first time you are meeting the other half, keep it polite. Don't accept the invitation with the sole intention of running the person down or to boast that you were definitely a better catch. Take it for what it is and move on. If this new person in your ex's life is really nowhere as good as you, then you'll have the satisfaction of sniggering about this in your own good time!

### **Till death do us part**

At all times, stay focused! Your aim is to get a date for Valentine's Day, not to get hitched and spend eternity together. Take into account the fact that while you are searching for someone with the intention of having a merrier Valentine's Day, the other person may also be doing exactly the same thing. So, beyond Valentine's Day, accept that maybe the two of you are not going to be an item and that this is not going to be the beginning of walking down the aisle.

However, give yourselves a chance and don't be too cynical. Give the person room enough to make an impression that may just take you both beyond Valentine's Day. Don't set out on the date telling yourself nothing will happen even before you have met the person. As mentioned earlier, there is a reason why you are single, but stop dwelling on it and give this new person a chance. Who knows, this might be your time for a nice surprise to find that special someone.

## **Feel like going surrogate**

This is an even newer trend that ties in with the age old phrase of “let’s give them something to talk about”. If you are single and enjoy your single status so much that you have no intention of giving it up anytime soon, but need to silence the annoying rumors about your sexuality or mental state, then you might choose to make your ‘statement’ now.

While your immediate friends and family will understand your need to be who you want to be, or your other personal priorities that you have placed before diving headlong into a serious relationship, mum and aunts may think you have issues that you are not expressing.

If you are up to it then go all out for it! Presumably you will definitely have friends of the opposite sex (or of the same, if this is the message you are sending) that you can rely on. Arrange a hot date in a very public place to make sure word does get around and rest assured there is nothing better than the grapevine. Even people who were not at the venue would have heard of it and probably have a better version of what your date was wearing.

Alternatively if you do not have close friends to go out on a date with, you may opt to place ‘date me ads’ on one of the leading social networking websites like [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) or [www.friendster.com](http://www.friendster.com).

This is an option some people have resorted to but do give yourself ample time to actually have a ‘screening’ session with the candidates or to go out with them at least two or three times before the actual Valentine’s Day ‘big’ date itself.

When posting information about yourself, make sure that you keep it honest and real. There is no need to get far-fetched or silly by claiming to be a Greek God (or Goddess) because the person still has to meet you and it would take you more time and a lot of effort to explain things when you meet, if your description isn’t really you at all.

Keeping it real also means that you need to find people within your locality and not somewhere so far off that air tickets would need to be included in the date package.

You know that phrase everyone tells you when it comes to dating - how you must “be yourself”? Well, rest assured it is the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Remember that your aim here is to make an impression not so much for yourself but for others to see and focus on the fact that you really want them raving on about the good stuff!

This particular dating 'style' also sends a message that you are taken and can rid you of some of the annoying aspects of singlehood, like 'blind date' invitations to parties that you are not interested in.

But do bear in mind when going through with this, that both parties must know where they stand - what to do and what not to do. It would be embarrassing and unnecessary for a misunderstanding to cause an unpleasant scene, so that you are left explaining the whole situation.

### **Click a date**

Technology has provided you with more than a fair chance of finding your 'soul mate', far away or nearby, with just a few lines of personal information and a 'submit' button. If you are up to finding a date online, numerous online dating sites have mushroomed all over the internet, so your ideal date could be just a click away!

Some dating sites offer you the chance of finding enduring love while others simply offer satisfaction in the form of consenting sexual partners. Whichever way you choose to go, just remember that the choice is yours and whatever you decide to do, as long as you are happy, then nobody else can be a better judge.

This is also a recommended step for those who feel that they are fed up with the conventional methods of dating and are in the mood for trying something new. If you have tried meeting people through support groups, friends, even blind dates and none of this has worked for you, then why not give this a shot?

Cupid strikes in ways you never expect, but do try to keep your options open and have minimal expectations. When you convince yourself that you will definitely meet the love of your life this way and it doesn't happen the only broken heart that's going to be around is yours.

A few tips though. First, be careful of the information you reveal and don't trust people you 'meet' online too quickly. Yes, the world is supposed to be full of love and all things nice like that, but there is more than a few schemers who are out to make a quick dollar.

Some of these sites allow 'online chats' to be carried out within the site whilst others require you to exchange information with regards to your Yahoo Messenger, Google Chat, MSN Messenger or Skype address.

If you are uncomfortable with how the person speaks or if you feel the person is being too pushy, you must always remember that saying 'no' to them is as simple as a delete button. Most sites and chats allow the "block" function, so use it to be rid of annoyances. Give yourself as much time as you need to meet your potential "one" and, more than

anything else, use such sites in a careful manner, always keeping your safety very clearly in mind.

Considering that these are people that you are 'meeting' for the first time, caution is to be practiced as it would be in any other situation. Personal phone numbers and addresses should be avoided long enough for you to get to know that this person is genuine in what he or she wants from you or until you are comfortable enough to share this information.

Bank account information or credit card details are a complete no-no. At the most, you may need to reveal this information when signing up for the site itself, but other than that, never tell anyone.

Some sites such [www.perfectmatch.com](http://www.perfectmatch.com) require you to make payment to be eligible to make contact with your matches while others, like [www.match.com](http://www.match.com), [www.friendfinder.com](http://www.friendfinder.com), [www.matchmaker.com](http://www.matchmaker.com), are free of charge, whilst still others require only men to pay for their member registration. There is no necessity whatsoever to reveal any kind of personal financial information when chatting or corresponding with someone you have met on the site.

You can even do an online search to find the site that best suits your dating preferences by typing in 'online dating' at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) or even browsing <http://www.100bestdatingsites.com>

And yes, the billing for these sites does appear on your credit card statements unless they specify that it doesn't. So, if you are carrying a supplementary card or you do not want anyone else to see that you are using these sites, then this may not be the ideal way for you to go.

For some people, the notion that you have to pay to become a member reflects a higher standard of whom you may potentially meet, although you must remember that this is not always the case. Someone who has money to pay for website membership is not necessarily different from someone who doesn't have funds! They all share one thing in common, which is that they have switched their preferences to online dating instead of going through the normal motions of dating.

If you would like to date someone in the physical form for Valentine's Day, then of course selecting a destination near you would be beneficial, whereas if you prefer keeping your dating activity online, then click away at all the destinations in the world.

First dates are also best conducted in reasonably public places and if possible, be sure to pick a place that you know well, in case there is an emergency and you need help.

Also, when meeting an online buddy it is usually best to tell a friend that you are meeting them, and where the meeting will take place. Some people might think that this is somehow not 'nice', but it is better to be safe than sorry.

What a person types in their computer to create your impression of him or her could be an entirely different picture from reality. "I eat healthy food and exercise 3 times a week" is very easy for even the laziest, most overweight person to type into their machine!

Online dating is also sometimes an opportunity for bored married folk to seek a little outside pleasure, and getting yourself involved in this situation is hardly likely to help your heart to mend. Be sure you are comfortable with the person's background before agreeing to anything.

Considering that you will need to sign up with the website, get to know the person online and then eventually meet the person, this is not an ideal method of finding someone if you're in a rush. This is without taking into account that there may not be anyone who captures your attention on the site anyway, and that you would require time to actually go out with these people before Valentine's Day.

And, who knows? Maybe in a couple of years, you will most likely be meeting your special someone in person anyway?

So, remember that there are no limits to where online dating can take you, but that this can work out to be an advantage or a disadvantage.

### **Getting the word out**

Getting the word out on the grapevine can sometimes be even faster than looking for a date online. But this also depends on who you get to help you get the word out. If there are people you can trust enough, tell them that you are looking for a date and they'll probably have this other friend of a friend who also told them the same thing and will probably arrange for a hook up.

Remember that if you and your friends don't have the same taste or if they are unfamiliar with your preferences, than this is likely to land you in more hot water than you can imagine.

While your friend has tried to do you a favor by finding someone who he or she thinks meets your tastes, everyone involved must know and clearly understand that your friendship does not place you under any obligation to agree to a second or third date.

Do what works for you. If you like the person, then by all means go ahead and who knows it might just end up in more than a few dates?

But, if you are uncomfortable or have no interest in seeing the person ever again then you must be honest and lay your cards on the table for all concerned to see.

Just as you are searching for that perfect Valentine's date, the other person may be doing the same thing, and the more you hold back about whether you will be seeing the person again or not, the more time you are wasting for everyone.

If need be, you can even get dating tips from movies although don't expect the presence of an orchestra or for Enrique Iglesias' Hero to burst into song when you have found that someone special or when you kiss the person good night.

An excellent choice of a movie to actually catch the urgency of getting a date would be "See Jane Date" <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0371190>

The tagline of this movie is "Meet Jane. She's always one date away from finding the perfect guy" and it could not be a more apt description of the movie itself. She is a successful career person but allows herself to feel completely inadequate, solely because she doesn't have a man in her life. Her competitive cousin's wedding is just around the corner and she needs to the impression that all is well in her love life. She moves from one dating disaster to the next, always hoping that this may be the person she can take to the wedding and every time she ends up with a disaster worse than the previous one.

I won't spoil the ending for you but take the time to watch this if you really are in the "find me a date" mode. Make it a point to not look too hard, too fast. The rule of slow and steady wins the race works more regularly than you might think! Very often, when you rush into things you find that things are not quite what they seem to be.

Also (and this is a very important point), you must be very sure you know what you want in a person. Of course you may not find a person with every single thing you had in mind, but having some idea of the kind of person you would like spend time with will make things easier for you and the other person without taking up too much time. Rest assured that if you have no clue, you might go on 100 dates and still say that you have not found anyone to be with!

Dating friends of friends can sometimes end up in a little back biting or finding out things you didn't really want to know, so always be prepared for the worst. Don't necessarily expect the whole thing to fail but then again, don't expect it to completely succeed either. This may work but it may not, and so, if finding a date for Valentine's is that important, then have a back up plan for when this doesn't work out.

## **Family and friends**

No one is going to look down on you for choosing to be with these people rather than the conventional Valentine's Day date. If you have family and friends who love you and the feelings are mutual, then by all means spend the day with them. Cook a dinner at home, have a barbeque, a sumptuous picnic or even go pot luck.

You can even organize a range of fun indoor activities like Scrabble, Monopoly, Hide and Seek, Charades or other games that would keep everyone occupied and peeling with laughter.

The most important ingredient that you need is loads of fun for everyone to be happy. If this get together works for most of your family and friends but does not work for the dating members of your network, then don't force it on them. Invite them and their dates, of course, but if they would rather be on their own then don't make it into an issue either.

You can arrange for this to be held at a family member's home or even at a rented bungalow. The only criterion you would need to consider when picking a venue is having the necessary space. It has to be user friendly enough to cater for a crowd and for different age groups.

## **Playing babysitter**

So, your friends are all married couples who want to take an evening off to celebrate the season of love. If you don't have any plans and children are your forte, then you can give them a hand by playing babysitter.

But do this only if you are prepared for an evening of non-stop activity as children will definitely have you occupied from beginning to end. You can keep them busy with games and you're bound to be their champion for the evening.

If you are babysitting for more than one couple be sure to be fully aware of the kids' allergies and have your emergency numbers (especially their respective pediatricians) all ready. Be sure to know of the restaurant or place your friends are going to and have the relevant contact information or their mobile numbers.

In a nutshell, this tactic is one that would require experience and a little courage. Your best bet would be to have an ample supply of both!

## **Singling a night out**

So what if you are single? You also probably have friends who are single and they have friends who are single. Has it ever occurred to you what the possible outcomes of putting all these people into one room might be?

Why not give it a shot? There's really no right or wrong, so if you know that these are people (yourself included) would like to have a date before Valentine's Day itself, then organize a singles party at least three weeks or so before Valentine's. However, if you just want to keep yourself occupied on Valentine's Day, then there is no better day to organize a party that will most probably make you the talk of the town, with a date or without!

If your wallet is deep enough to really try to make a lasting impression, then go all out for it. You can even hire an event planner to assist you to come up with a theme, décor and catering. A venue might also be important, depending on many invitees are included.

Ideally, a big house somewhere by the beach or country would be ideal but if there are time and budget constraints, there is no place like home.

With some minor adjustments you can have your apartment or bachelor pad looking like a red-hot party spot, so more expensive doesn't necessarily mean making a better impression.

Even if an event planner is out of the question for budgetary reasons, opt for simpler options like a pot luck supper or a 'bring a bottle' get together. Keep tabs on who is bringing what and you should have an excellent mix of singles, great food, sloshing drinks and an absolutely great time almost guaranteed for all.

The best way to ensure that there will be enough singles is to get your friends to help organize things. Have an invitation list and an RSVP list to save yourself from unpleasant surprises such as an unwanted ex, not enough food or even worse not enough space.

Budget wise, organizing this as a group will also help, as you can split the expenses, as each of you may have different resources and this will be so much cheaper than one person paying for everything.

For example, if someone works in a restaurant then buying the food from there might be cheaper and obviously more reliable, which in turn saves you the time and effort of food preparation.

### **Movie marathon**

You can do this at home or you can even do this at the cinema. Of course, if you are at home, it will help to be familiar with a video rental place. Either way you can turn this into a fun filled day for yourself or your friends if they decide to join you too.

Pick a theme, say a favorite actor or a particular genre (even one that you have completely made up) and see how many movies you can actually watch in a day. For example, you can view all movies that

Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan have acted together in, or even Brad Pitt's pre Angelina Jolie days. There's more than one way of making this work and all you need is to be a little creative.

If you think soppy love stories are going to make you all teary eyed and sad, then staying away from them would be an excellent choice!

### **Charity begins with yourself**

If you are looking at keeping yourself completely occupied with something other than Valentine's, then this is one option that will have you turning the wheels.

Find a home or a care center, be it for children or adults and try to do something for them to spread some Valentine's cheer. This can be as simple as going on a collection drive for towels and day-to-day necessities or it could be something as eventful as organizing a visit to the zoo for an orphanage, for example.

Alternatively, you can team up with a local hotel or food outlet and organize a luncheon or a high tea session with these folks. If you are having children then you definitely don't want to forget the balloons and ice-cream, and a clown would be an added touch that would turn it into an unforgettable experience for them.

It sounds a little complicated but it really isn't. All you need is to find a food outlet that will work with you, get in touch with a clown and, rest assured, the rest will probably just fall into place.

Where the logistics are concerned, you will have to talk to the supervisors of the home that you are dealing with and they will usually make their own arrangements. However, if there is a problem, then there is no issue about making this a team effort by getting family and friends involved in the cause.

Picking a suitable date is best left to the people you are dealing with at the establishment itself, although you will want to have a say in this matter of course. But it might sometimes be more appropriate and convenient for them to decide because schooling, transport and staffing matters may have to be sorted.

So, whilst you are making a generous gesture, bear in mind that you cannot have control over everything. Some may even turn you down because the timing is inappropriate or because their benefactors do not make allowances for them to accept such a generous offer. If you are confronted with this, don't be disheartened. There are often more rules involved in running a charity than you might think.

You will also need to be fully aware of who is attending the luncheon, especially if it is held outside the charity establishment in question. For

example, some of these people might be physically impaired and inviting them to a place that does not cater for their disability is going to be an inconvenience and an embarrassment that might leave your charitable gesture falling short of what you meant it to be.

Enquiring about food allergies and food preferences is also a must as some charities are vegetarian and some individuals are allergic to food items such as nuts and milk.

So, go about this whole operation as though you are doing it for yourself and don't do it as if you have to! Nor should you be so offhand that it appears to others to be something that doesn't really matter to you. But, if you put in the necessary effort, then seeing the happy faces at the end of the day will be reward enough and well worth all your hard work.

Do not do it to make an impression and don't set out to make sure the entire community knows what you are doing. Do it wholeheartedly simply because you want to and know that doing so will make you happy, not to mention keeping you occupied enough to rid any thoughts of Valentine's from your head.

If you decide on making a trip to the charity center itself, timing is also an important issue. These places usually have routines and day-to-day tasks that run punctually, so be sure to ask the supervisors what a good time will be.

Ideally, if you are handing out more than lunch packs, it would be best to ask them what they need. Most always need items like canned and packet foodstuffs, bed sheets, diapers, towels and even cooking utensils. See what you can come up with, and of course you don't have to provide everything. Give what you can personally and try to accumulate much more by asking amongst family, friends and colleagues for donations to your cause.

### **Pajama Party anyone**

Just because you are an adult, there is no reason why you can't do this. Get your girlfriends over, try on each others clothing, end the evening with a fantastic home-made manicure and pedicure session. Try an outrageous photo session to find out all those angles that make you look absolutely fabulous or take it one step further by finding a beautician who actually makes house calls.

This might, however, be costly - so alternatively you can opt for some simple fun like doing each other's hair or makeup just for the fun of it. Make sure your apartment has enough space and that the people you invite really do mean something to you. The whole idea of doing this is

for EVERYONE to have fun and if you invite friends who are always bickering with one another, this tactic might not be the best.

### **Get-away from it all**

If you find that everyone around you is going off on romantic weekend breaks, who is to say that you can't have your own? It will be even better because you are single, so the choices and decisions are all yours to make. If you decide to spend the weekend bungee jumping because YOU like it, then the adrenaline rush and fun is all yours.

First, decide where it is you want to go. Be it a local spot or even somewhere distant, you must decide so that you can make the necessary bookings and transport arrangements. The earlier you make all the arrangements the better so as to avoid disappointment and not getting the destination you had in mind.

Talk to your local travel agent or look at any of the numerous travel sites on the internet. Some travel spots and centers even offer a singles package or a singles tour group. If you have the chance of getting involved in this, then you would probably have the opportunity to meet other singles from your area or even end up knowing people from all over the world.

When booking through a travel agent, make sure that you have a copy of all paid bills and you are certain of the arrangements that have been made. The last thing you need is to liaise with an unreliable agent who leaves you without a booking at your preferred hotel.

Traveling on your own will not only give you a sense of discovery about a certain destination, but it will also give you a sense of independence and probably more appreciation for being single. There won't be any issues about where to go, what to eat and how to do what you want to. This is your time away from everything and you can probably even give yourself a shot at that holiday romance if the opportunity does by chance arise.

If you are traveling alone then the obvious first word of caution would be to be very careful with your personal belongings, especially where cash and identification documents are concerned. If you are traveling to more than one destination then have a "check in" system with a close friend or a family member, so they will have less to worry about. Make it a point to call or send a text message at least once a day.

Very few holiday destinations do not have internet AND phone access so most places will definitely have at least one or the other. So, even if phone calls or mobile phone contact is not possible, then an email a day would settle some nerves.

If you do have a medical condition or are on medication, then make it a point to write this down and include it with your identification documents. This also applies for emergency contact numbers. Sometimes when things happen, you might panic and the necessary contact numbers will become extra-difficult to find. Write it down and if you have a loved one's business or calling card, place this with your identification documents as well. Should anything untoward happen, this will make things easier for you, your family and for the locals at your holiday destination.

Maybe you are thinking "What can go wrong?" Not to dampen your spirits but the horrific Tsunami in 2006 happened and left many loved ones in utter panic simply because so many caught up in the dreadful bents at that time were traveling alone and could not be located. Yes, of course, that's the absolutely worst case scenario, but there's really no point in taking chances, is there?

Identification documents are always best kept in safe deposit boxes and if you are staying in a place that does not provide one, be sure to have these stored in water proof sealed packets and kept somewhere safe. Request a locker or have this kept with the hotel manager itself.

Always, always keep a copy of your documents with you at all times with the original stored away safe and sound. Should you lose the documents contact your embassy and/or make an immediate report to the local authorities.

In fact, it is always best to have an idea of your embassy's address even when selecting your destination, as this allows you to be taken directly there in cases of emergency. So, if traveling out of the country is too much of a hassle, then just stay relatively local. Travel to a different state or even pick a hotel which is within your vicinity.

Make full use of your stay by checking in on time and you will find that it is a perfect opportunity to laze around, luxuriously. Order room service and spend the day in bed or even at the hotel's spa enjoying a deliciously relaxing massage or even a manicure and pedicure. Remember that this is your day and you have no one else to share it with and that this is a very good thing!

If the hotel has a beach area that you can walk out to, this is even better. Take a long walk or grab the opportunity to be involved in some water sport that you especially like or even want to try for the very first time.

Enjoy the sunsets and perhaps make arrangements with the hotel to pack you a picnic to take with you as you walk along the beach and enjoy the outdoors.

## **Sail Away**

Time, weather and budget permitting, this is one luxury you can definitely accord yourself, especially when you are single. If you know how to sail, perfect. This would be the best time for a little sun and fun in the water.

If you don't know how, no matter – there is still a perfect way that you can make this delight happen. Rent a sail boat along with a captain or book yourself on the next available cruise.

You can do it alone or with friends, because either way, this a chance to let your hair down, feel the wind in your face and have a completely relaxing time while the couples you scurry around in a frantic rush to make sure they are all set for their day out.

## **Sporty Actions with some twirls**

Perhaps there's always been this longing in you to get yourself involved in a sport, an exercise program, a dance session or even yoga. Well, here's an excellent chance for you to get with it.

Sign up with a local gym or salsa away with a dancing school. The good thing about getting yourself into something like this would be that you are actually getting into the regime of keeping yourself healthy whilst enjoying a wonderful opportunity to meet new people. All this while keeping yourself occupied and not harping on about your single-hood.

If you feel too shy to do this alone then do it with a friend. There's no harm in the two of you staying healthy together. But, please, do NOT do this because you saw this really hot looking person and you wish to sign up for the same course.

This will not work. You will almost inevitably force yourself to like this person and even try to force them to like you as well. It may work for a short period of time but once all the excitement has died down, you had better have something good to replace it.

## **Armchair travel**

You're on a budget and don't have the opportunity to venture to the places you would love to see. So, here's a thought. There's no harm in taking all the time you want and need to get some armchair traveling done.

Use the internet, spend time at the local bookstores or even visit travel agents to gather information on places you'd like to visit.

Once you've identified the places you'd like to go to, compile the information and spend the day finding out every detail about the place. While it may not sound as thrilling as the real thing, you will probably have a fun time poring over all of the information you find, and learn something about the world as well.

You can start with places to stay, places of interest, where to eat, where to shop and by the end of it, you will have created your very own guide, making this destination so fascinating that you are bound to be putting your pennies away to make this trip possible.

### Getting organized

You've been looking for an ideal time to sit down and organize your DVD collection, your CD collection, your entire book collection or even your iTunes list and you know what - there is just no time like the present.

Set aside some time and get on with doing it. You may realize that you have more than your fair share of organizing to do, and would probably be so preoccupied that very little can disturb you.

Sort it alphabetically or by artiste, take your time and revel in the items that you have so lovingly collected along the way. Some may even evoke memories of good times while some may bring on that shower of sentimentality, so whatever happens - remember that, today of all days, it's happy thoughts only.

### **Secret Valentine**

Ideal for when you are working in an office environment to enable you and your colleagues to have a little fun. Start about two weeks earlier, and come up with a box for everyone to drop their special wish into (the piece of paper must include wish and recipient's name). You may want to come up with some guidelines such as budget preference or even a list of items that people can actually wish from. These can range from gift vouchers or even gift packs from local stores.

Organize a draw for everyone to pick out the names from the box and come Valentine's Day, single or not, everyone will find it easy to get into the mood knowing that they have their special Valentine's gift.

If you have a big family or a large circle of mutual friends then this would be an ideal tactic to rid the blues for all of the singles on Valentine's.

The one thing you would have to be cautious about when doing this is the budgetary restrictions. Settle for a figure that you know all parties would be comfortable with and can afford. Also you would need to bear

in mind that not everyone will be willing to spend an exorbitant sum on people that they are not particularly close to.

### **Single parents unite**

Being a single parent is never the easiest task at any time. You may be a single parent through separation, divorce or even through the death of your much loved other half. Valentine's is not the season to be thinking about what you have lost.

Instead, pick yourself up and if you detest the thought of going through the dating process, go through your child's school network or even a carpool network to find other single parents in the same vicinity who may have similar experiences or even more to share.

Organize a get together in the form of a meal or even an activity such as a football match and you'll find that your feeling of "I am all alone in this" will disappear without you even noticing it.

You could come up with an activity for both adults and children or something completely separate for both parties to enjoy. Depending on how many people are actually attending, the children could be kept entertained with a coloring competition, TV show or movies, whilst giving the adults a chance to mingle.

Bear in mind this is also an excellent opportunity to find dates who are most definitely on the same wavelength as you. There is no chance of hearing the usual "Oh, I didn't know you had children" which leaves you wondering if you will ever have a second shot at happiness.

Even if you don't have the time or budget to organize something big, a simple movie meet with drinks at a local café afterwards should be sufficient to get the blues out of all your minds whilst at the same time keeping the children occupied.

One other way of spreading some Valentine's cheer is to talk to your children's school and organize a little tête-à-tête on the school grounds after schooling hours.

It can be in the form of a pot luck meal or it even a charity bazaar filled with trinkets, food, clothing and accessories that would have you and probably many other singles too occupied to think about Valentine's.

Either way, this will take time and effort where planning is concerned so start at least one month ahead. You can have the kids make posters or flyers to distribute. Having these made shouldn't be so difficult, as you can speak to the art teacher who can make arrangements for each child to make a special Valentine themed flyer or poster to take back home.

Don't leave the kids out of this and you will be surprised that they can contribute more than you think. Have them make clay hearts or other decorative items that you can use to fill the area with on the actual day.

If you have the resources and the school is willing to co-operate there is no reason why you can't go about organizing a Valentine's play or a session for the children to express what Valentine's means to them. There is a good chance a few adults may learn a thing or two.

Whilst you don't want to get too engrossed thinking about being single during the Valentine's season, don't brush it off all together either. Children need to know that Valentine's isn't all about the commercial aspect that they are so often exposed to.

A parent-child poetry reading session or even reading out excerpts from particular books might give parents, children and others time to get closer to one another, and help everyone remember or understand that Valentine's is not necessarily only about roses and romantic dinners.

Keep the Valentine's theme but get busy in getting so many people involved, both and old, that you can look at it as spreading cheer for a very good cause in more ways than one.

With all that said and done, it may be that the only reason that you are alone on Valentine's is because your other half is not around. Don't despair, because this is definitely something that you can get through.

The simplest way, of course, is via phones and emails but there is also the option of coming up with a steamy web cam date. You could be in separate locations for many reasons, but there's no reason to not make the best of it. Set a time and go all the way from wearing your best (sexiest?) clothing to candles and even flowers if the need be.

Making the time to actually make sure you at least have a digital date also goes to show that no distance can come between you!

## Twelve Things You Definitely Want To Do Alone On Valentine's Day

- 1 Hold your belly laughing when thinking of your friend who had to spend half his salary on keeping his or her other half happy.
- 2 Curl up on the couch watching the movie that YOU want while eating the food and desserts that YOU enjoy. Please make sure not to overdo this though, it is meant to give you a freedom of choice not an opportunity to binge because you are depressed.
- 3 Bubble bath - and it's all yours! Take as long as you want soaking it up in the tub. No pressure to get ready, no rush. Set a more soothing mood with candles or dim lighting with aromatic scents and Valentine's will probably see you more relaxed than anyone else you know.
- 4 Send out your own greetings, be it the form of cards, e-cards, cookies, chocolates etc., and send them to friends and family. Show them you are better than someone who sits and sobs simply because Valentine's is around the corner.
- 5 Spend the whole day doing exactly what you want. If you like baking then bake or if you want to go through the entire Star Wars trilogy stopping, pausing, rewinding and fast forwarding then by all means go ahead.
- 6 If you're in the mood for dressing up and making a statement then get that chic outfit on and have a wild night! This will make a statement that you love the fact that you are single. However, if you do bump into another Ms. or Mr. Lonelyheart somewhere in the evening out who catches your attention, then make sure the two of you talk about anything else apart from how both of you are single and your respective ex-es.
- 7 Spend the day at a place of interest. If you are alone on Valentine's because you have been traveling or you are at new place then pick a local spot that fascinates you. This can be a museum or even a local shopping mall. Explore every bit of it that you can and you'll find that learning more about a new place might be more fascinating than you expect it to be.
- 8 Waking up with a positive attitude is a definite must. Even as you open your eyes and get ready to face the day, Valentine's or not, don't allow your single-hood to become an issue. Revel in the thoughts of not having to wait for the shower or for your toothpaste to be squeezed in ways you don't like it to be.

- 9 Go running or for a long walk. Burn off all that pent up energy from your system in a good way. If you have not yet picked out a hobby or a sport then this may be a good time to consider one. Remember, the key is in keeping yourself occupied.
- 10 Picking out something that you wouldn't normally do. This may be a complete sane thing like arranging your underwear drawer or something as drastic as skinny dipping at the beach. Do whatever you wish, as long as you are happy and if you have a friend who can accompany you on this grand feat, then even better.
- 11 Pen love notes to your family and friends, as this would be a great time to feel loved and to keep yourself occupied. It may be as something as simple as "I value our friendship" or "It's nice knowing you" or a full message on why you love them and the things you appreciate about them. This will definitely not only make your day, it's bound to make theirs as well.
- 12 Have a deliciously long no alarm day! Spend the day lazing around in bed if rest is what you need. No alarm to start your day, no one pressing you to get moving. It's just you, yourself and knowing that rest is all you need.

## Twelve Things You Must Not Even Think Of Doing Alone On Valentine's Day

- 1 Wallow. Wallow. Wallow. Yes, we know you are single. Sitting there complaining and asking "why?" 1000 times is just not going to help you either.
- 2 Call your ex. Regardless of whether you want to say, "I am sorry" or share the 100 other emotions running through your body, mind and soul, don't do it. Whether you dumped or you got dumped, it happened and it's called a break up because it's already broken. Patching up still doesn't take away the cracks, so give it a rest.
- 3 Staying at home, lying in bed accompanied with every variety of junk food possible watching sappy love stories and crying your eyes out is not going to help you one little bit.
- 4 Sit in a bar by yourself hoping to be besotted with cheesy pick up lines and somehow think that you may just get a date that way.
- 5 Showing up at the same place where you know your ex will be. Somehow you found out where your ex is spending Valentine's evening. Yes, you are better off than when you were with him or her but stop being a sourpuss about it and move on. Showing up in that sexy black dress or absolutely devastating new car may not generate the response you want and you are probably going to be more miserable than when you started. There is getting over a break up and then there is stalking. The first option is obviously so much more gracious and dignified than the latter, and never allow yourself to forget that.
- 6 Being sensitive about your single-hood is not going to help you in any way. People will have a lot of things to say and even more things to recommend but it can only get to you if you let it. So every time someone says something utterly annoying, take a deep breath and let it roll over your head. Snapping back is not going to help either party.
- 7 Yes, those boxes in your closet have been demanding your attention for some time now. But if there is any chance those boxes are actually filled with things that bring the memories racing back, or (even worse) your ex's stuff, you may want to pick another day to clear them out. No matter what you say, going through the items is going to have you recalling the times

- you had together and this could leave you feeling exactly what you don't want to - depressed.
- 8 Make fun of couples you know directly to their faces. Yes, you are single and they are a couple. You made your choice and they made theirs. We each have our preferences and making fun isn't going to make anyone feel better.
  - 9 Sitting down and writing hate notes. Yes, writing is an excellent way of expressing yourself and getting pent up emotions out in the open but sitting down on Valentine's day writing hate notes about your ex is not helping anyone, especially you.
  - 10 Don't settle for the first person you meet. You were out at your local mart and bumped into this gorgeous looking person and the two of you very quickly hit it off. Within a matter of days you decide that this will be your Valentine. Never throw caution to the wind. Remember, everyone is single for a reason. Enough said.
  - 11 Spend the day by yourself feeling entirely miserable. If you think that you can be strong by yourself then do it. We all need some time by ourselves, but if you know that being alone is going to leave you walking aimlessly from room to room wishing for things to be different, call for back up. Get some friends over to your place or see if you can make a trip to a friend's place.
  - 12 Listening to love songs all day that evoke every memory you had with your ex. Horribly bad choices of songs if you are in a sappy mood is Goodbye My Lover by James Blunt, Say Goodbye by Deborah Gibson and Jordan Knight or even He'll Have To Go by Elvis, to name a few. Keep the mood bright. Think happy thoughts. If you need help, then you had better voice it out.

## Conclusion

Always, always remember (and you will never hear enough of this notion) that being single does NOT equate to being insignificant.

Everyone has their own reasons for doing what they do. Relationships, marriages, the notion of the big white house with little picket fences works for some and it doesn't for others.

Do what makes you happy. You may decide to marry in your 40's and there is nothing wrong with that. You may even decide to be single for the rest of your life. The choice of how you stay happy is not what someone else thinks - it is what you want and what you decide.

Have a lovely Valentine's and do not ever allow yourself to forget to appreciate being single and know that when you decide to eventually give it up for that very special someone - you'll never regret what you've just given up!