

A guide for every relationship stage, from single to spouse

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FIRST POSTED: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2012 02:00 AM EST



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We call it a Hallmark holiday, but it's more of a science than a holiday, because if you don't go about it right, you can blow up in your face.

No matter what stage of a relationship - or non-relationship - you're at, there's a formula to help make it work.

You want to ask her out on your first date: "Don't sweat it or make it about Valentine's Day," says Toronto dating coach. "You're not asking her out because it's Valentine's Day. You're asking her out to her." Just be strategic. Everyone claims they don't play games, that too is often a game. So, start by asking her out sometime. If there's interest, ask how the 14th is looking. If she's "busy" give a couple more days. If she's playing a game and she's outta there.

You've just started a new relationship: Talk. Christine Hart, dating coach and author of *A Woman's Guide to Successfully Dating Men*, suggests surveying how your lady feels about Cupid's fête. "(This) will kind of tell you if she's a 'doesn't matter simple is nice' kind of person, or a full on die-hard Valentine's fan." (But, if she says "no" and her intonation sounds more like a question, you know it matters.)

You're not sure if the relationship is official: If this is the case, Dwyer says: "You've got to figure out how you 'should' approach V-Day is secondary to talking about your feelings and concerns around your relationship."

You've been together forever - and she's expecting a proposal: This can make or break-up : if "Will you marry me?" isn't part of the planned Val Day dialogue, you should discuss this beforehand to set expectations. Should you decide to spring the ring, Dwyer suggests the day before or after will put the pressure on.

You're married: Just because you bought the cow doesn't mean you get milk without taking care of it.

refer to your wife as a cow.) Do something you never do. Go to the latest hot spot, indoor skydiving, i putting yourselves in a new situation, you'll find a new spark.

You're flying solo: Celebrate Singles Appreciation Day. You don't need to be in a relationship to h to wallow in self-despair over being single. "Be proactive and have an anti-V-Day party for every sing pro-activity might be the reason you hook up." Or as Hart advises, indulge. "Determine what it would dinner on Valentine's Day and go buy yourself a special treat gift."

Finally, perhaps the best advice for taking on Forced Romance Day is to celebrate it any day - when i be more special to share the day between you two than with millions of other couples.

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