Valentine's Day, actually

By Yana Bottigliero
SECTION EDITOR



"Valentine's Day is one of the worst holidays," seems to be the consensus among most people these days. In fact, a 2018 AARP study found that 23% of adults harbor negative feelings towards Valentine's Day, including loneliness, stress, and dread. For good reason, it appears. A day where love feels more like a superficial competition than genuine affection, and single people are socially blacklisted? Yuck. No, thank you. So, isn't it a sure thing that Valentine's Day is actually an overly commercialized, worthless holiday? Well, not quite.

Around half of America's population is reportedly single, according to Pew Research. Despite this statistic, it is easy to think of bachelor(ettes) as being in the minority when it comes to relationships. TV shows such as "Love Island" and "Love Is Blind," along with countless rom-coms, feed an obsession with finding love. And social media doesn't help either. Shoving dating terms like "talking stage," "roster," and "the olive theory" into our throats makes love seem like a checklist rather than what it actually is. With the mainstream's encouragement of all-consuming devotion, it's no wonder that 53% of single 18-29-year-olds report feeling societal pressure to find a significant other, according to Pew Research.

As someone who is single, and has been for all of my 15 Valentine's Days spent on Earth, I understand this sentiment and how it often bleeds into a general hatred of the one day dedicated to romantic feelings. However, instead of resenting or hating this controversial date, I find myself following a different philosophy.

You see, Valentine's Day hasn't always been solely romantic to students like us. It used to be a day when we expressed our love for everyone in our lives. When we were in elementary school, for instance, we would have a class party where we would send candy and cards to all of our classmates in cute homemade mailboxes. And when middle school came, we would send little candygrams of candy necklaces and little stuffed bears to our friends and receive some ourselves. It was even celebrated within our families, with our parents giving us those adorable heart-shaped boxes of chocolates and Hallmark cards.

To sum it up in a quote from one of my favorite movies, "Love, Actually," "If you look for it, I've got a sneaky feeling you'll find that love actually is all around." Not just between romantic partners, but your family, your teachers, your friends and everyone you look up to in your life. So why not use this holiday to celebrate those meaningful relationships, too?

Take Galentine's Day, for instance. An unofficial holiday on February 13th, originating from the TV series "Parks and Rec," dedicated to celebrating female friendships and platonic love. As someone who hosts an annual Galentine's Day party with my friends, I consider it an amazing way to celebrate the bonds you have with others. My favorite activities my friend group does are sharing a potluck, watching a bunch of rom-coms and even making a "hear-me-out" cake of our fictional crushes. In a world where about 73% of Gen Z reports feeling lonely, setting a day to emphasize your friendships and spend quality in-person time with them is so important.

You can also extend the festivities in other ways. Opting for a gender-neutral alternative to Galentine's Day, Palentine's Day is another fun gathering you can host to promote the bond you have with your confidants. Besides friendship, showing your love in other ways, such as baking cookies for your teachers or writing heartfelt cards for your family, are other great ways you can celebrate Valentine's Day with platonic love.

With everyone putting great emphasis on romantic relationships, it's easy to forget the significance of prioritizing other meaningful connections in our lives. This is part of the reason why I always look forward to Feb. 14 every year, to take a nice walk in the park with my dog and call my grandparents to tell them how much I love them. Moments like these remind me to not just celebrate the fairytale romantic love that we idolize so much, but the everyday kinships we love and appreciate. Perhaps instead of viewing it as a manufactured and delusional cash-grab, you can see Valentine's Day as an opportunity to toast to the forms of love that exist all around you.

and delusional cash-grab, you can see Valentine's Day as an opportunity to toast to the forms of love that exist all around you.



North's voice

How do you celebrate Valentine's Day?



SOPHOMORE MAYA HILL: "I like to make brownies that are Valentine's Day themed, and I just hang out with friends. But if I have a Valentine, we'll probably just hang out."



JUNIOR VINNY BONASO: "I am celebrating Valentine's Day in Florida for soccer."



SENIOR GENEVIEVE HARDY: "My parents will usually get me and my brother a little cute little basket of different goodies, body scrubs, new lip balms, and chocolates. But ever since having a boyfriend, it's been fun to just pick somewhere cool for a date and check it out."



STAFF TAMERA SHEPARD: "My sons and I have a tradition of driving them to a candy store in my town and having them pick out a bag of candy."