

Don't Be a Hater on Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day has always annoyed me.

I mean, it's been *done* already. The whole representation of the heart symbol for care and love and all the other good relationship juju is just so—well—*cheesy*. Big boxes of chocolates have never made me feel loved. As a self-professed sugar ho, I do what any five year-old or sugar ho will do: eat too much, get sick to my stomach and then regret it afterwards.

Then there's the, "I've been single more Valentine's Days than not," so that's a nice little slap to the single girl's face. Add to that the whole capitalism/contrivedness of it. I mean, really, if I do not feel special and loved in the relationship other than one "important" day of the year, well, then you're a sucky boyfriend and need to go back to remedial boyfriend school. And then there's also the pressure to get it *just right* and reserve just the right restaurant that everybody else and their girlfriend/boyfriend/lover/fiancé/spouse is also fighting over that will be too busy and too loud with crap service because they're not usually *this freaking busy!*

Really, I could go on and on about why Valentine's Day is lame, but even that's been done a thousand times at least already.

Here we are a few weeks out from yet another Valentine's Day, and I'm realizing my snarky little attitude is already rearing its little fang-toothed head. I decided it's time I dusted off my mindfulness practice and tuck it in nice and cozy with my resistance to all things heart-y. And what I realize is that it's not the hearts or the chocolates or the dinner or the expectations or even the capitalism that I have the real resistance to; it's that the symbols of love and care get mistaken for the being the love and care.

And then I have to wonder, "Well, yes, but *why* does that bother me?"

I had to come to a pretty brutal truth about myself.

As a yogini, massage therapist, meditator, and mindfulness-based movement therapist, I've got a load of language that speaks to mindfulness and love. You know, words like: *presence, slowing things down, easing up, practice, yielding, non-attachment*; you all know the same lingo. But in the last few years, a series of experiences has made me lose faith, I think, and fall out of love with the practice a bit. The loss of some physical mobility, the death of a dear friend, a relationship break that floored me, a mother whose memory collapsed—and I realize I have been less fully living from my heart, and more *presenting* that I'm living from my heart.

Just like the symbols associated with Valentine's Day, I have been mistaking the symbol of heart-felt living, to the actual living and operating from my heart.

So, today I have decided to choose to love Valentine's Day and all its symbols. Every time I see a heart, I will use it as a mindfulness tool to remember my own heart and see if it's big and juicy, or dehydrated and shrivel up behind some image of a heart. Every time I see a fat cupid and his sneaky little love arrow, I will remember the first few weeks of meeting my guy and our second yoga class together when we were laying on our backs, arms stretched out, and he touched my fingertips as our eyes connected; or those moments when I am holding my newest soft and innocent nephew. Every time I see chocolate, I will remember to find the sweet spot in myself and to offer it to another. Every time I recollect that Valentine's Day is nothing more than a marketing ploy, I will remember that there is nothing inherently wrong with marketing (I do it myself to keep my therapy practice thriving), and that it is this capitalist society that has allowed me, a girl from the hood, to get a higher education and to do work that I love.

So, to all you other devout Valentine's Day haters out there...wanna join me and see what comes of it? At the very least, it's gotta feel better than being all tight and judgey!

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