

YOUR TURN JAIME VINCK

Coping with Valentine's Day during a rough patch



Today is Valentine's Day. Holidays often provide us with an opportunity to celebrate with our families and friends as well as practice our much-loved traditions.

This year, I have been reflecting on those who struggle with myriad challenges that make enjoying the presence of Cupid, hearts and chocolates virtually impossible.

Following are some likely "firsts" that you may endure and basic tips that will not only help you survive Valentine's Day but thrive as well.

First Valentine's Day alone

Whether from a breakup, death or other separation, being "alone" does not have to mean being lonely.

Let's start with taking the pressure off you to appear that your life is perfect. Why not take a hiatus from social media? Imagine Valentine's Day without looking at the Snapchat or Instagram photos of couples who always appear to be having the most amazing time.

Follow that with the realization that no one has the "perfect" life — work hard not to compare yourself with others.

I also like the gift of a rainy-day letter to self. This is simply an affirming letter that you write when feeling grateful and positive. Tuck it away and read it when you need it. Remember, you are lovable, and being lovable begins with self-love.

First Valentine's Day in recovery

How about getting real with the im-

pact that drugs, alcohol, food or other substances have had on your relationships — including the relationship to self?

It's much easier to idealize the romance with substances than remember the hangovers, fights and lost days due to excess use or obsessive thoughts and behaviors.

It is also a blessing to embrace relationships in an authentic way, rather than being numb or in a fog.

Finally, how about going on a hike, enjoying a play or watching a movie rather than an activity that revolves around champagne and chocolate?

First Valentine's Day with a recovering loved one

Let's start with embracing the gift of recovery and that your loved one is "back."

This gift can look differently for everyone, so I recommend keeping realistic expectations. It is a process, not an event; a journey, not a destination.

The best way to stay in gratitude is to be mindful of the present. Looking into the past can fuel resentments, while looking into the future can produce anxiety.

Peace and contentment live in today, where new traditions can be created.

I often suggest that individuals start a daily gratitude journal, and then share their gratitude with one another as a family or couple.

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