

Single Parent Networker

Ascension, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit,
Corpus Christi, St. Anne, St. Mary, St. Joseph,
Christ the King, and Spirit of Life

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Are You Dreading Valentine's Day?

By Laura Retherbridge

When I went through my divorce Valentine's Day was one of the most dreaded days of the year. I hated it. The endless scenarios of people falling in love or frolicking on sun baked beaches all confirmed that I was a failure. During that season of loss and grief my friends tried to tell me I was a terrific person. But I felt like an ugly, rejected loser who couldn't keep a husband, and Valentine's Day was the proof.

Engagement ring commercials inflicted the worst torture. I'd watch the lovers proclaiming a life of endless bliss, pledging eternal love to each other. And the sparkling emerald-cut diamond ring somehow made it all delightfully perfect. My cynical tongue would hiss, "Yeah, someone made that vow to me once to - don't believe it!"

After several years of helping others during their divorce, and time spent listening to truth instead of the media, I discovered a handful of encouraging ways for single people to cope with the day for "lovers."

I'm not talking about an unrealistic "just don't think about it" mentality, or pretending the day doesn't evoke nostalgia or a longing for someone special. We were created for companionship, that's a God-given need.

However, my suggestion is an optimistic approach to Valentines

Day, instead of focusing on what is lacking. What if our yearnings caused us to look for beneficial ways to heal our wounds rather than tolerate them? When we take positive steps toward mending a broken heart, the result can be a healed life that thrives - whether single or married.

Here are a few practical "Survival Tips" to help a person refrain from an emotional meltdown on Valentines Day.

Connection

- Don't hibernate or wait until February 13th to make a plan. Force yourself to be with other people, even if only briefly.
- Gather same sex friends and visit a "family focused" restaurant. Avoid ones that cater to couples or have romantic overtones.

- Look into a church or community support group. They often have fun activities planned.

- Non-custodial parents: Bring your child a valentine or small, inexpensive gift that communicates your love.

Creativity

- Think of new, fun things to do this year such as: making handmade heart-shaped decorations, pizza, cakes or cookies.

- Try something that is completely different. Go roller-skating, skiing, hiking, bowling, climb a mountain or a walk through a museum.

- Immerse your family in assembling a model airplane, a Lego adventure, or a jigsaw puzzle.

- Have a potluck supper with each person bringing a favorite chocolate treat.

Care

- Help your child make a valentine for your ex-spouse or former in-laws. This communicates your permission for the child to love the other family, which greatly reduces his or her fear or tension.

- Splurge on a cappuccino or a box of Godiva chocolates - for yourself!

- Notice a married same-sex friend who may need encouragement or a hug. While others are receiving cards, gifts, and flowers, Valentine's Day may be a reminder of a spouse who is thoughtless, cruel or unloving.

- Take a small gift to someone who is lonely or hurting such as: an exchange student, a widow or widower, an unmarried pregnant girl, someone out of work, an elderly neighbor, or a handicapped homebound person.

Considerate

- Invite friends over for dinner and use the good linens and china.

- Ladies: Indulge yourself to cozy bed linens, a new nightgown, a massage or a pedicure.

- Guys: Treat yourself to a ballgame, model train exhibit, or car show.

- Send a valentine or flowers to someone who has comforted and loved you. This day isn't solely for romantic love.

Calm

- Try a new pillow or neck exercises. They work wonders for tension.
- Make yourself a warm, comforting drink of hot cocoa or chai tea.
- Get enough sunshine. Winters's shorter daylight hours can produce depression.
- Exercise produces natural stress reducers, and it's a great way to meet new people. Many gyms have childcare available.
- Calligraphy your favorite Bible verse (Suggestions: Deuteronomy 31:6, Philippians 4:6-8, 1 Peter 5:7) or try your hand at drawing or sculpting.

Caution

- Refrain from anesthetizing loneliness with drugs or alcohol. These chemicals can induce despair which often leads to a greater sense of isolation.
- Shun the temptation to frequent bars or use sex as way to ease the pain. This decision often leads to disastrous long-term consequences.
- Avoid photographs, memorabilia, fragrances, restaurants or atmospheres which trigger memories of "what used to be."
- Steer clear of movies that focus on weddings. People falling in love, adultery, or emotionally wounded children. Instead choose films with a lighthearted, fun plot.

Laura Petherbridge is an international author and speaker who serves couples and single adults with topics on relationships, divorce prevention, and divorce recovery. She is the author of *When "I Do" Becomes "I Don't"—Practical Steps for Healing During Separation and Divorce, 101 Tips for the Smart Stepmom*, and *The Smart Stepmom*, co-authored with Ron Deal. She resides in Summerfield, FL. Laura's website is www.LauraPetherbridge.com



Have a Heart!!

Lent is a perfect time to reflect on the ways we show our love for God through our love of neighbor. Think about creating a heart valentine with each of the Works of Mercy, the Seven Corporal and Seven Spiritual Works represented on each heart.

Works of Mercy are;

- ♥ Feed the Hungry,
- ♥ Give Drink to the Thirsty,
- ♥ Clothe the Naked,
- ♥ Shelter the Homeless
- ♥ Visit the Sick,
- ♥ Comfort the Imprisoned,
- ♥ Bury the Dead.

Spiritual Works are;

- ♥ Instruct the Ignorant,
- ♥ Counsel the Doubtful,
- ♥ Admonish the Sinner,
- ♥ Bear Wrongs Patiently,
- ♥ Comfort the Afflicted,
- ♥ Forgive Offenses Willingly,
- ♥ Pray for the Living and the Dead.

Each day during Lent these hearts will be a reminder not only of the depth of the human love we commemorated on Valentine's Day, but also of Jesus' call: "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13:34).

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18.



Parenting Pointers

610. Feb. 6: February is Black History Month. No matter what our skin color, religion, or economic status we need to learn to get along with people who are different from us. As a family, learn about a race different from your own this month. [Click here](#) for ideas or try this [Erasing Racism](#) family activity.

611. Feb. 13: Next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday which begins Lent. But before Lent comes Tuesday, Feb. 17, Mardi Gras. I guess it is human nature to want to splurge before taking on a sacrifice. Decide a family penance for Lent, but plan a family treat for next Tuesday.

612. Feb. 20: "I establish my covenant with you." (Genesis 9:11) God's covenant with Noah was a solemn promise. Talk with your child(ren) today about what it means to make a promise. Is it ever OK to break a promise?

613. Feb. 27: "When your child marches to a different drummer, your main task is to support them when the culture may not." (Parenting Your Adult Child) This applies to gender identity, a special needs child, or simply one in crisis. Love them but don't pamper them.

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Valentines Fun With the Kids

Use this Valentines Day as an opportunity for teachable moments with your kids while having fun baking.

- Give a job to each child based on their age so no one feels left out.
- Remind them about proper hand washing before beginning any baking.
- Show them how to properly measure ingredients the difference when measuring flour versus brown sugar.
- The importance of cracking an egg just the right way to avoid any shells.
- Talk about the importance of safety when using the oven.
- Above all, don't forget to tell them what a wonderful job they have done.

Cupcake Surprises

1 box cake mix or a favorite homemade cake any flavor. Make as directed.

Pour batter into cupcake holders. Place an unwrapped Hershey kiss in each cupcake. Bake at recommended temperature, frost with your favorite frosting and decorate with sprinkles and hearts.



Positive Steps to Take in a Stepfamily Situation

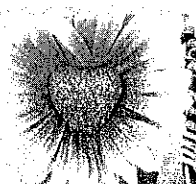
The primary relationship in a marriage should be that of a couple. Create an on-going pattern of communication with each other.

- ⇒ Provide couple unity in family issues for the benefit of the children.
- ⇒ Be aware of the different lifestyles and value systems, which are being combined into your stepfamily situation.
- ⇒ Show the same respect for your stepchildren as you expect from them.
- ⇒ Consider the combined children as *ours*, not *yours* or *mine*.
- ⇒ Remember that your biological children know you better than your new spouse. Be aware of your over protectiveness as a biological parent.
- ⇒ Consider the children living apart from the new stepfamily as being as much a part of the stepfamily as those living within.
- ⇒ Keep communication open, whenever possible, with ex-spouses for the sake of the children.
- ⇒ Appreciate the individuality of each child in the stepfamily.
- ⇒ Provide a reasonable territorial space for each family member.
- ⇒ Address financial issues before the marriage to a mutually acceptable term. Continue to negotiate monetary adjustments with each other.
- ⇒ Be flexible in resolving issues and be willing to try various alternatives. Everyone makes mistakes. If you find yourselves unable to come to a solution, see professional guidance and counseling.
- ⇒ Keep a sense of humor.
- ⇒ Raise the consciousness of your family, friends, teachers, and clergy about the uniqueness of a stepfamily.

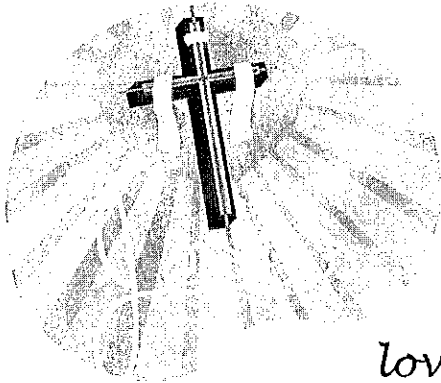
This article first appears on the web site of the Chicago Marriage and Family Ministries Office, www.Familyministries.org. Used with their permission.

"Train a boy in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6



Happy
Valentine's
Day



Forgiveness Prayer for Lent

Loving Father,

Our family gathers here together
with you.

Help us to listen carefully to our
hearts, to see if we have shared our
love and peace with each other or if we
have hurt each other.

We know you love us very much.
You are always ready to forgive us.
Help us to forgive each other.

Beginning Experience:

Separated, Divorced, Widow
Tara at 701-426-8303

Level I—Charity Lutheran

Level II—Faith Lutheran

Level III—Good Shepherd

Each level is 10 weeks. All levels run
concurrently. See website below.

Children's Beginning Experience:

Susan at 1-701-258-3152

Free Preschool for 3&4 year olds for
eligible families; contact BECEP at 701-
323-4400 for school year.

Caring for Children Program—health
coverage to uninsured children. 1-800-
342-4718. www.ndcaring.org

Single File Newsletter

For information
www.bismarcksinglefile.com

Parish Information:

Cathedral—222-2259

St. Anne—223-1549

Ascension—223-3606

St. Mary- 223-5562

Corpus Christi—255-4600

Spirit of Life-663-1660

Christ the King -663-8842

St. Joseph -663-9562

Office of Family Ministry—Diocese of Bismarck—

Joyce McDowall 701-204-7209

Toll Free 1-877-405-7435

www.bismarckdiocese.com

jmcdowall@bismarckdiocese.com

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Parents Forever-Education for Families in divorce Transition, call NDSU Parent Resource Center, 667-3342 or 667-3340

WEBSITES THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST:

- www.celebratesimply.com
- www.bereavementmag.com
- www.beginningexperienceofwesternnorthdakota.org
- www.vibrantfaithathome.org
- www.usccb.org

www.fambooks.com/moms.htm

www.singleparents.about.com

www.bridgetobenefits.org