

How to Handle Valentine's Day When You Can't Handle the Day Itself

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NEW YORK (MainStreet (<http://www.mainstreet.com>)) — Valentine's Day is right around the corner, worrying anxious lovers who don't know what to get their partner for **Hallmark's** idea of the most romantic day of the year.

A lot of money is riding on those decisions, according to **TrueShip**, a Scottsdale, Ariz., e-commerce shipping services provider.

"Valentines Day is set to generate nearly \$20 billion in retail activity this year, with approximately 25.1% of sales occurring online," says Michael Lazar, director of online marketing at TrueShip. He says

(<http://www.trueship.com/blog/2015/02/05/valentines-day-2015-shopping-factoids-inspired-by-cupid#.VNjXOChXRUQ>) gift cards are the most popular shopping option, with more than 200 million cards sold for the holiday.

Another 200 million figure: the number of roses sold and given on Valentine's Day. Candy is another big seller, with sales surpassing \$1.5 billion.

Can you do better and get more creative? Sure, according to shopping experts.

Trish McDermott, one of the founders of **Match.com** and the site's dating expert for 10 years, recommends that budget-conscious couples wait until the day after Valentine's Day to capitalize on discounts — a recommendation based on her own experiences.

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From Spouses (<http://www.mainstreet.com/article/its-recipe-for-disaster-that-72-million-people-hide-spending-from-spouses>)

"Valentine's Day was my busiest day of the year," she says. "I would start radio interviews for East-Coast morning drive radio at about 6 a.m. and then spend the entire day running to various TV and radio stations for interviews."

"So my true love, and our children, saw little of me on Feb. 14 each year. If they were still awake when I finally finished up, I was too exhausted to function. That's why we invented a new holiday," she says. "We called it The Day After Valentine's Day."

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McDermott says there are "deals galore" available Feb. 15, including chocolate, flowers, balloons, cards and bigger gifts such as jewelry, all deeply discounted. "Also, more babysitters are available for busy parents, and restaurant reservations are easier to get," she adds.

Anxious about waiting a day to celebrate Valentine's Day? Don't be, McDermott says. "If you're romantic enough, you can pull off a Day After Valentine's Day date that will wow your one special someone, save you some money and be less stressful than a Feb. 14 celebration," she says. "Give him or her a note on Feb. 14 that says: 'I love you so much that I don't want to share you with all the lovers running around out there tonight. Instead, I'll build a fire, make you a fabulous dinner and we'll drink champagne and remember what we mean to each other.'"

The note can end with a promise such as: "Then tomorrow, on The Day After Valentines Day, when all the lovers are back to their daily grind, I'll lavish love, affection and attention on you and enchant you with an evening on the town as my way of keeping you all mine, even as I wine and dine you."

Madeline Carlson, a public relations executive at **Propllr**, a Chicago public relations firm, collects smartphone apps that make Valentines Day easier for harried couples. Among her collection: Parkwhiz (<http://www.parkwhiz.com>), which lets you find and reserve a parking space, often at discounts, and SendFlowers (<http://www.sendflowersapp.com>), which can make ordering flowers faster.

Experts also suggest you get creative on Valentines Day with ideas in or near your home. "For example, your garden is a great place to cut flowers, create a bouquet and give your loved ones flowers that aren't ordered from 1-800-whatever and cost a premium," says April Masini, a relationship expert



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and founder of the AskApril.com (<http://askapril.com>) romance advice website. "If you don't have extra vases in your own home, hit up any vintage store, garage sale or even a **T.J. Maxx**-type store for beautiful glass receptacles."

Masini also advises using your own home to make a great impression on Valentine's Day. "Your kitchen can beat **Godiva** and **Mrs. Fields** if you put in some time and make homemade fudge, chocolate chip cookies or even sugar cookies or lemon pound cake," she says. "Online recipe sources like Epicurious.com will yield easy recipes for the beginner or complicated souffles or mousse for the not-so-novice in the kitchen."

If you do want to head out on the town, opt for an early brunch — they're less expensive and reservations are easier to find, Masini says.

Making your spouse or partner happy on Valentine's Day doesn't need to be a wallet-draining process. Get creative, look for discounts and use apps that can make a difference. As the saying goes, "love will find a way." With the above tips, you can, too on Valentine's Day.

— *By Brian O'Connell for MainStreet*



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