

# 5 Ways to Celebrate Valentine's Day All Year Long

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## **Confession: I am a huge fan of Valentine's Day.**

Oh, I know it's not hip to love Valentine's Day — we're supposed to scoff at this Hallmark holiday that has brainwashed us into thinking that loving our spouses means buying them manufactured boxed chocolate and wilted grocery store flowers.

And truth be told, my husband and I are doing precisely *nothing* for Valentine's Day. I actually went to the store today just to buy my kids some little Valentine's treats, considered picking something up for my husband and then thought, "*Nah. He won't care.*"

Romance = my life.

But here's the thing — to me, Valentine's Day is all about a subtle (ha)! reminder to pay attention to that person we have pledged our life to. A little poke-in-the-ribs, if you will, to force us to choose love, even if for a day, because let's face it, it's not always chocolate and roses.

I'm all about that reminder, because frankly, I need all the help I can get. I'm a bit notorious 'round these here parts for being a bit of a crappy wife and overall failing most days at marriage, so for me, Valentine's Day isn't so much about a cheesy stuffed animal and moving

on with my life, but about reminding myself to celebrate the love in big and small ways like these, all year long.

## 1. Throwing away my scorecard.

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Don't pretend you don't do it too — it's our dirty little secret of marriage. When you spend 24/7 with someone, you start keeping track of the little digs, slights, and tasks you both do or don't do. But really, how is it helping to keep track of whose turn it is to change the baby or take out the trash? Throwing away that mental score card will ultimately only help me and my marriage.

## 2. Choosing love.

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There are probably a million and one articles out there about how *love is not a feeling, you guys. It's a choice*. And I get that. But I confess that I haven't really got what that really means. It means that even when I am seething at my husband, I still have to love him. It means even when I'm sulking over not getting to work out that day, I still have to be nice to him. It means that even when I don't want him to get any ideas, I still have to kiss him good night. Choosing love in everyday, practice life is actually a lot less glamorous than it sounds on paper. Or screen.

## 3. Making the small sacrifices.

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I'm ashamed to admit to you that this week's #chooselovechallenge inspired me to get up and make my husband breakfast before work for the first time in ... well, forever. As in literally probably the first time all school year. The man's not much of a breakfast eater and I'm not much of a go-getter in the morning, so why bother? Well, turns out, when I actually made the effort, the hubs was thrilled. It's definitely more about making the effort than the actual end result, so apologies for the last slacker seven years of marriage.

## 4. Taking care of myself.

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Do you know what I really wanted for Valentine's Day this year? Flowers. It's a pretty simple thing that I never, ever buy for myself but they are fresh and remind me of spring and make me happy. But I know my husband won't buy them for me. So I bought myself a little flowered plant and called it a treat to me. Nothing wrong with a little self-care and trust me when I say that there is a freedom in knowing that I don't have to play mind games with my husband to drop "hints" and hope that he will be the one to make me happy. If I need something, I can ask him directly or do it myself. Done.

## 5. Touching my husband.

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Oh, so scandalous. It's like I just admitted to you I have my own personal Red Room of Pain (is that what it's called)? to you, right? But really, am I the only mother out there who ever just feels "touched out" at the end of the day? As in, "if another person touches my body I will just

scream?" There are people — well just one — eating off of my body, there are toddlers trying to fling themselves out of my arms to inflict bodily harm on themselves, there are preschoolers using my shoulders as personal tissues, there are dramatic first-graders slamming doors in my face and you get the drift right? So, honestly, some nights I have nothing left to give to my husband. And I can either make myself feel guilty about that, talk about it honestly with him, or make more of an effort to just be physically present (and it's not always about sex) with this man.

Happy Valentine's Day everyone. Allow me to raise my toddler's sippy cup to us.

Because that's all I got right now.

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