

Desperate for Romance

Dear Connie,

Valentine's Day has come and gone, and once more I am sad and disappointed. My husband, Jake, not only didn't bring me roses or take me out to dinner, I didn't even get a card. He came home from work, had a couple of beers, ate dinner, and watched sports on TV. When I told him he was the most unromantic S.O.B. I'd ever met, he went on a rant about corporations pushing holidays like Valentine's Day just to steal our money and he wasn't going to buy into any of that you-know-what. I can't seem to get him to understand that I want him to use the occasion to be romantic and show me he loves me. Help!

Sincerely,
—Hanna

Dear Hanna,

I understand your disappointment, and your desire for romance on Valentine's Day. It's hard, when everyone around you seems to be giving and receiving cards, flowers, and other expressions of love, to be married to someone who doesn't want any part of it. Valentine's Day has become a big deal in our culture. So of course you felt hurt. It's also possible that Jake may be holding on to a value that says, "I'm not going to let corporations run my life", and that may be more important to him than your feelings about Valentine's Day. Let's look at what else might be going on:

Have you talked with Jake



about what you would like when the situation isn't so charged, in other words not on Valentine's Day but at a time when you're calm and centered and Jake is not defensive because you're upset with him? It's always OK to make an observation, like "when Valentine's Day comes and goes and I don't get a card, or flowers, or some other expression of love from you, I feel hurt and disappointed." And then follow it up with something like "what I really want is... (one red rose, or dinner out, or a sexy negligee)." Tell him, in the most honest, compassionate way you can, that even though he thinks the holiday is over-commercialized, it would mean a lot to you if he were to honor it anyway just to show you he loves you. And then ask him about his feelings and listen carefully, without interrupting.

Do you give Jake a gift on Valentine's Day? Something that is meaningful to him? Or maybe create a romantic evening at home? If he perceives you as demanding (calling him an unromantic S.O.B. may not give

him the warm fuzzies) he may be resistant to you, but if you show him generosity of spirit, he may respond in kind... maybe not that day, but another time.

Does Jake demonstrate love in other ways? Many men see home projects as a way to be loving. Doing something helpful rather than buying a gift may be his way. If it is, do you acknowledge him for it, letting him know that you appreciate that he does those things because he loves you? Does he rub your back, fix your car, drive you to the airport? He may see actions like that, done in the right spirit, as more loving than buying flowers or a card.

What else might be creating distance between you and Jake and blocking you from creating more union instead of separation? Are you and Jake angry and resentful over some other conflict in your relationship? Is he possibly withholding to punish you? Is Valentine's Day the only occasion when these upsets occur?

Eros (romance) and sex are

both essential to creating true love and union between you and Jake. If you have been married for a long time, eros may have diminished and may need to be rekindled. Maybe one or the other has lost interest in sex, which can happen for a variety of reasons. Or it could be that Jake is interested in sex but doesn't understand that romancing you will likely make you a lot more interested than otherwise. All this is worth exploring together.

The Pathwork says "marriage is on the one hand the most difficult of all relationships, but on the other, the most fruitful, the most important, and the most blissful one ... so much can be overcome, so much can be learned; development can proceed so much better than in any other way. Love, kindled by eros and the sex impulse, can flower more easily than in other relationships—and love is always the ultimate aim!" [Pathwork.org Lecture #62]

From this perspective, you and Jake have an opportunity to understand one another more deeply, to learn and grow from this conflict. What is required is good communication and—the hardest part!—willingness for each of you to look at your own issues as well as one another's. ■

Good luck, Hanna!

—Connie

Do you have a relationship question? Connie is now offering sessions by phone and Skype from Colorado, and will be in Bozeman periodically to lead groups and workshops. Her phone number is 720-494-3044, and e-mail is mtlionlady@gmail.com. E-mail sent to Connie is read only by Connie Myslik-McFadden, MSS, LCSW, and will be held in strictest confidence. No identities will be published. Disclaimer: The responses to questions in this column are for information only. Never disregard professional advice or delay seeking it because of anything you read here. Working with a skilled professional is highly recommended.

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Connie Myslik-McFadden, MSS, LCSW, is a psychotherapist with 25 years of experience working with individuals, couples and groups. She leads workshops and retreats, and teaches Dreamwork and Pathwork. Connie devoted 9 years to Jungian analysis, training, and supervision, after graduating

from the Bryn Mawr School of Social Work. She went on to graduate from the Barbara Brennan School of Healing, and Society of Souls, a kabbalistic school of healing. She is the author of "Gathering the Soul, a True Story of Spiritual Healing." Pathwork (Pathwork.org) and Imago Relationship Therapy (GettingTheLoveYouWant.org) are two easily accessible sources for the theories upon which much of this column is based.

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