



## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: February 2, 2006

# Valentine's Day Blues

Pink, red and white — classic colours for Valentine's Day. But don't forget blue. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, feelings of sadness, inadequacy and loneliness are not uncommon both during and after the build-up to February's tribute to love and romance. In fact, a European poll found that among the younger adults, in particular, one in 10 felt depressed, insecure, inadequate or unwanted on Valentine's Day. And more than 40% of those surveyed feel negative or indifferent towards Feb. 14.

This phenomenon is similar to feelings that can emerge during the December holiday season. In the case of both holiday periods, commercialism, peer pressure and unrealistic expectations coupled with a continuing lack of sunlight can reinforce negative moods.

While there is no definitive evidence that Valentine's Day causes depression, UK research suggests that a full three-quarters of suicide attempts are put down to relationship problems. This isn't surprising when we know that *not* having a strong social support network is a risk factor for someone already vulnerable to depression due to biological, genetic and/or environmental factors. Social support goes beyond romantic partners, but if it's this domain that's on your mind a lot lately, below are ideas to get through the Valentine's hoopla with your mental health intact:

- **Take time to appreciate the most important person in your life – you.** Make a list of everything you have going for you and post it on your fridge. Treat yourself to something: a movie (no romances!), a day at the spa, a trip to the museum, a sporting event, or even just a relaxing day at home with a good book and no chores. If you have kids, send them off with the babysitter so you can focus on a stress-free day with no distractions.
- **Being single can be fun.** Throw a singles-only party or attend one someone else is having. Or just hang out with friends and do something fun. You're not the only unattached one out there.
- **Remember that lovers may come and go, but good friends and family are around forever.** Call up pals just to say hi and go out for lunch or dinner. Tell your parents you love them. Buy something nice for your dog. Reach out to someone you love who might need your attention. Reminding people they matter reminds yourself that you do, too. If you'd like to boost your support network or learn how social support can help your well-being, see our link at [www.cmha.bc.ca](http://www.cmha.bc.ca)
- **Send Valentine cards.** Revive the ancient schoolyard tradition and send silly cards to old friends you haven't talked to in years, new friends you'd like to know better, your neighbours, and your family. Hand some out to strangers on the street and slip anonymous ones into mailboxes. It's not too late: Hallmark estimates that of the 192 million Valentine cards purchased annually, over 115 million are bought less than a week before the big day.
- **Don't forget to express feelings to the guys in your life.** A UK Valentine's Day survey shows 65% of men had said "I love you" to a partner, compared with only 49% of women. It also found a small proportion of the 1,000 people surveyed were more likely to tell their pets they loved them than male relatives.

—more—



- **If you've recently broken up with someone** and start to miss them around Valentine's, make a list of all the reasons it's better that you're apart. When all else fails, remember that up to a quarter of UK adults admit arguing with their partner on Valentine's Day itself. So it's not always about hearts and flowers.
- **Remember romantic relationships aren't without their share of negative feelings.** In fact, researchers have found that romantically-involved teens were more likely to be depressed than if they hadn't found romance, particularly the girls. The reasoning is that girls may tend to base their self-esteem and self-worth on romantic relationships more than boys do and will distort their own identities to make the relationships work. It's true, in part, for adults too; research shows that having an unhealthy marriage is worse for your mental health and can elevate the risk of depression more than not being married—and this is particularly true for women.
- **Hey, think of the savings.** According to the Retail Council of Canada, we spend a lot on gifts during the annual Valentine's Day season. In 2003, \$20 million was spent at flower shops, \$58 million was spent at jewellery stores, \$47 million was spent at gift and card shops, and \$144 million was invested in boxed chocolates and other confections.
- **The 'winter blahs' can't be helping either...** With unusually wet and dark weather across many parts of BC, fight off the 'winter blahs' which could only be worsening the problem. Fifteen per cent of us feel lower in mood during the winter, and 2-3% of us will have more serious symptoms. For more on how to tell the difference and simple tips anyone can try to keep the weather from keeping us down, visit our link at [www.cmha.bc.ca](http://www.cmha.bc.ca)
- **Focus on the greatest source of love currently in your life;** this is another positive way to reconnect with loving feelings. The source could be anyone or anything: a memory, a poem, a painting, spiritual or religious writings, even a beloved pet — whatever has positive meaning to you and makes you feel good when you think about it.
- **Look at the global picture.** A great way to gain perspective is to volunteer for a vulnerable group in the community.
- **For those who have lost a partner through death, divorce or separation,** Valentine's Day can remind you of Valentines' past and the fact that you are no longer part of a couple. Allow yourself to be sad and don't be afraid to acknowledge your regrets. Writing a loved one a letter (whether you mail it or not) and planning a special ritual can all be ways to help you say goodbye and 'I love you.'

## Provincial Media Contact:

Sarah Hamid-Balma, CMHA BC Division, 1-800-555-8222 or [shamidbalma@cmha.bc.ca](mailto:shamidbalma@cmha.bc.ca)

---

### references

- BBC News. (1999, February 8). Men missing out on romance. [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/273555.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/273555.stm)
- Fairbrother, N. (2004). Wellness Module 3: Social Support. BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. [www.heretohelp.bc.ca/helpmewith/wellness3.shtml](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/helpmewith/wellness3.shtml)
- Joyner, K. & Udry, JR. (2000). You don't bring me anything but down: Adolescent romance and depression. *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*, 41(4), 369-391.
- Market and Opinion Research International. (2000, February 14). Valentine's Day Broken Hearts. [www.mori.com/polls/2000/samarita.shtml](http://www.mori.com/polls/2000/samarita.shtml)
- Market and Opinion Research International. (2001, February 14). Almost 6 million British adults have argued with their partner and almost 1 million have split up on Valentine's Day. [www.mori.com/polls/2001/dealtime.shtml](http://www.mori.com/polls/2001/dealtime.shtml)
- Retail Council of Canada. (2005, February 9). Valentine's Day Giving Stands Test of Time. [www.retailcouncil.org/mediacentre/press/2005/pr20050209.asp](http://www.retailcouncil.org/mediacentre/press/2005/pr20050209.asp)
- US Census Bureau (2005, December 14). Valentine's Day: February 14. [www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/006116.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/006116.html)