

## **A Different Kind of Wonderful**

by Beverly Denver

February provides the perfect opportunity to remember and affirm the people we love and treasure most. Spouses, partners, significant others, parents, children, all those girlfriends! The list becomes long quickly. But we gals must not stop there! Important, you know, to put yours truly at the top of the list!

I adopted this self-indulgent attitude about February, and Valentine's Day in particular, when I was young, unmarried, short on beaus and anxious about getting through one of those particularly dreaded 24-hour periods – alone! More than anything, I just wanted to ward off a dark red cloud above my head, a bruised ego and a head full of fault-finding self talk.

The main thing, I reasoned, was to figure out a way to look forward to and enjoy the Hallmark holiday. I decided – way back then - to change my attitude! The fact I had a few extra bucks in the bank at the time was a Godsend. The money gave me options!

Take note: A woman with the right attitude and options can get through anything—even a less than idyllic Valentine's Day!

I decided to stop viewing everything associated with Valentine's Day as reminders of my aloneness; instead, I chose to see them as prompts to love and nurture myself. I decided it was OK—even healthy—on Valentine's Day, of all days, to love thy self, become a pleasure-seeking, self-gratifying female.

It wasn't that difficult. All it took was a quick stroll around The Galleria. There, I embraced the season of love with gusto, appreciating the romantic messages on the pretty greeting cards, the various likenesses of Cupid himself and the heart-shaped paraphernalia that seemed to pop up everywhere. Before I knew it, I was—most definitely—feeling the love!

I stopped grimacing at the sight of those fancy boxes of Godiva chocolates and the bountiful bundles of red roses artfully encased in green paper and ribbons. Instead, I answered the call of an inner voice, “Buy chocolates and flowers for yourself. They'll make you feel better. Anyway, you deserve to have them!”

It took me less than a minute to pick out the best box of chocolates. It was heart-shaped (of course), covered in red faux velvet and large. The box was filled with a double layer of rich and chewy morsels. “Sold,” I said without guilt, as I handed the vendor a brand new \$20 bill.

With that beautiful box of pecan-laden “turtles” in the shopping bag, I moved on to the flower seller: “Give me something wild, beautiful and exotic,” I said, “Like me!” OK,

the last two words I said with my head down and under my breath, but important thing is the fact I was thinking positive!

Clearly, I was experiencing the power and the glory of self-love!

As my excursion at the mall continued, I found myself strangely content, remembering happily other, more anticipated Valentine's Days and other sentimental, heartfelt tokens of affections—some given, some received.

I remembered myself as a little girl, with curly, long dark hair, bright eyes and a joyful smile. I was seated in my family's small kitchen, at a green Formica table with stainless steel legs. The tabletop was full of funny homemade valentines created for third grade classmates. And there, with all the others, sat one special valentine. It was larger than the rest, sweet and sentimental. (Down right mushy, if you must know!) I smiled remembering how it was addressed, *"To Ricky P. From A Secret Admirer!"*

I remembered (just as vividly) sneaking into my parent's bedroom later that evening to "borrow" a few drops of my mother's beloved Chanel #5. I laughed out loud remembering how quickly I took the top off the perfume bottle, tipping it over ever so carefully to allow the fragrant liquid to fall on the flap of the valentine's unsealed envelope. Later, when the bottle was safely replaced on the vanity, I escaped undetected from the master quarters. Seconds later, without thinking, I put my tongue to the seal. Nanoseconds later, I was screaming, spitting saliva like crazy and found out!

Yes, some Valentines are bittersweet!

Even so, indulging in the romance of the day is a good thing. It's wonderful when you share love with others, a different kind of wonderful when you remember to love yourself. With enough practice, you'll be able to do so often, effortlessly, and without shame, remorse or apology!

Lucille Ball, a beautiful, funny and smart lady, once said, "You have to love yourself first before you can get anything done in this world."

I love Lucy. She was outrageous but always right on!

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