

## Valentine's Day Is Not a Test

"I thought my first Valentine's Day with Brad would be so special," sighed Shelley to her best friend Kate. "But instead, it's like he already just takes me for granted."

"What happened? Did he forget?" asked Kate.

"No, he brought me flowers and a card and then we just had an ordinary night. I was thinking a nice dinner, maybe theatre tickets, something really romantic. Since he didn't say anything, I thought it was going to be a surprise-but not this kind of surprise!"

Valentine's Day is the perfect time for a romantic date, flowers, and "just us" time. And as Shelley is finding out, it's also the perfect time to learn some essential relationship wisdom.

When we start a relationship, we hope we've found the person who will make us feel special, loved, and appreciated in a way that no one else has. When we decide to get married, we're counting on it. If it doesn't happen the way we imagined, we can feel horribly disappointed and think our partner doesn't care.

Here is where we make our mistake. Valentine's Day is not a test. It's an opportunity to learn what makes your partner feel loved. Here are some ideas to help you make the most of this learning.

1. The gestures that make us feel special are different for each one of us. Did your family make a big deal out of birthdays? Did they plan parties in advance, build up the excitement, and spend a lot of money? Chances are that for you this style of celebration symbolizes love. But it may not symbolize love for your partner. What if his family took a low-key approach to special occasions? He probably will as well. This doesn't mean he doesn't love you or that he "takes you for granted," as Shelley thought.
2. Love does not turn anyone into a mind reader. I don't know where we got the idea that if our partner REALLY loves us, she will know what we want. The truth is, sometimes she will be tuned into our needs and sometimes she won't. **AND THE SAME IS TRUE FOR US.** It has nothing to do with whether we love each other; it has to do with being human.
3. Sometimes even YOU don't know what you really want. Have you ever had a bad day at work and didn't know how to make yourself feel better? You felt restless and wondered; do I want a workout, a movie, or a chat with a friend? We've all been there. Most of us don't automatically know what makes us feel nurtured. We learn through a process of self-discovery. And until we do, we can't communicate it to someone else.

4. You need to be the kind of partner you want to have.

Question for Shelley: Why is it your boyfriend's job to make you feel special on Valentine's Day? What are you doing to make him feel special?

Watch out for the "you first" mentality. It goes something like this: I don't feel special and so I can't come up with any romantic energy to make you feel special until you make the first move. A stalemate is inevitable.

Don't turn Valentine's Day into a test. Look at it as a day to learn more about what makes each of you feel loved. If you do, you really will have a special Valentine's Day.

Copyright ©2004 Claire Hatch, LICSW

[www.clairehatch.com](http://www.clairehatch.com)

**Claire Hatch Counseling & Communication**  
**10827 NE 68th Street, Suite C, Kirkland, WA 98033**

Claire Hatch, LICSW, is a licensed counselor who specializes in turning marriages around. She works with clients in her Seattle area office and by phone around the world. Claire also gives seminars on how to turn conflict to connection, build a strong marriage, and balance family and work. For more information visit her website [www.clairehatch.com](http://www.clairehatch.com). Claire can be reached at 425 823-2273 or [claire@clairehatch.com](mailto:claire@clairehatch.com).