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Keeping the Burn Alive

By M.J.L. EVANS
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Should I renounce Valentine's Day? That special day where the ideal is to spend it with the one I love?

I sometimes think too much expectation is put on this day, so when it actually arrives, so does disappointment.

Today, for example, is Valentine's Day. I'm wearing the sexy thong with matching lace push-up bra, but do I feel sexy?

No. I have yet to see my partner and everywhere I go I see freaking chocolate! I'm trying to stick to tuna salad for lunch, but of course temptation is all too tempting and I eat some melt-in-your-mouth chocolatey goodness.

I'm impatiently awaiting the arrival of flowers, a card, and a poem expressing his undying love and devotion to me.

Yeah, like that's going to come any time soon.

That's when I wish I could turn back the clock on the relationship, and regain that intense magic that was so prominent in the beginning. Romantic love is supposed to be something that everyone can attain-however, it takes work. Even the best relationships need some kindling for the fire. In my case, it feels like I need a propane tank and a blow torch.

In the beginning, there was lusty romance-our relationship was filled with late-night rendezvous, hand holding, flowers, sex, long phone conversations, poetry, more sex, going for coffee, dinner and movies, spending each waking moment together in uncontrollable anticipation and-did I mention sex? In the years that followed-a peck on the cheek and a hearty handshake. No, it hasn't really gotten that bad . . . yet.

So what happened? Are we so comfortable, there are no surprises left? No magic beyond the everyday routine? The romance-killer called everyday life brought down the hammer. Now it's a series of conflicting schedules, financial hardship and visiting teenaged children. How did it come to this? I'm sure this is something many people can relate to-if it wasn't, marriage counselors would be out of work, adult boutiques would foreclose and pay-per-view porn would not exist.

I think to myself, what can I do? What can anyone do to keep the spark alive? I am reminded of the basics-the things we did at the beginning. The highly controversial concept of communication for instance; after all, how else is my partner to know what I'm thinking

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and feeling unless I tell him? ("Dear, I know we both work one-and-a-half jobs each and we're still in the poorhouse, but I feel we need an evening together, just the two of us.")

Successful events generally come from careful planning. I'm not talking a United Nations-sized luncheon-a simple dinner for two with a bit of candlelight will suffice. Perhaps some rose petals strewn in the bedroom? Send the kids packing to the nearest relative, mall or street corner, and really make some time to reconnect with each other? Maybe there is something new that I can discover if I simply dig a little deeper.

But it seems to be me who take the initiative-why is it I'm always waiting for him to come up with some brilliant idea for something we can do together? The pyramids did not build themselves-someone said "hey, let's do this thing!" Sometimes I think he just needs a push. Yes, it is easier to just stay in and watch television with your butt glued to the couch-no one can dispute this irrevocable fact. But I want to initiate something different even for just one night-maybe a dance lesson? Fencing? I would settle for an evening drive to the ocean to watch the sun set.

I think it's important to be spontaneous. This does not mean go out and rent a porn movie. This puts unrealistic expectations on both sides-the image and performance is false and does not reflect the average person. When I say spontaneous, I mean doing things you would not normally do. When was the last time I called him up from work and we met for lunch? Went to a movie? Just got up and went for a walk? I'm sure there's a huge list of activities, like skinny dipping in the ocean, going for a weekend get-away to Vegas or rolling around in dessert toppings-the possibilities are endless.

When you really think about it, the possibilities are endless. After all, isn't that what having a partner is all about-to experience new things and enjoy each other's company?

Which brings me back to my original question: should I renounce Valentine's Day? No, I think not. I'm going to try to keep the romance alive, because when I do look into his puffy, red, sleep-deprived eyes, I see the same person I fell for four years ago. The light may have faded, but it is still there-an ember in the fireplace. Now, pass the freaking chocolate! M

M.J.L. Evans is a Victoria writer, who, in her heart, is truly a die-hard romantic . . . no really, it's true.

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