



**A Personal Note from Single Steps Strategies Founder
Mary Grace Musuneggi**

Surviving Valentine's Day

It seems we have barely finished taking down the Christmas decorations, when in every store Valentines appear. And, although Valentine's Day should be something to look forward to in the doldrums of the winter; for many women, Valentine's Day can bring them into the cold reality of defining themselves in terms of their romantic relationships... or lack thereof.

Remember how in elementary school, you would spend days decorating that shoe box, writing out your cards and choosing the best card for that "someone special"; only to watch that "someone special" walk past your desk to give his "someone special" card to that too adorable, too sweet, "teacher's pet" little girl, who wouldn't have much as given him the time of day. She would take the card and put it in her box with the other 15 "someone special" cards she got that day. By the end of the school day, the amount and size and shape of the cards we received defined us as popular... or not; in the right clique...or not; pretty... or not ... and so on.

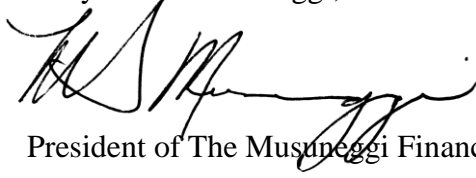
And somehow 20, 30, 40 years later, nothing has changed. Unless our current relationship is with our prince charming, soul mate; or we are the adult version of the "teacher's pet", Valentine's Day defines us as single, divorced, widowed; unhappily attached; sadly attached; in the wrong relationship with the wrong person; or living with the guy who just will never think to buy us flowers and candy, but he will get our car washed. No matter what, we will define ourselves in terms of our relationship on that day. This holiday can attack self-esteem, produce anxiety, create confusion over lifestyles and cause a sense of inadequacy for women who are normally intelligent, successful, self-confident and self-assured.

The whole reason for this is that we all have the need to be loved. And thanks to Cinderella and "Pretty Woman" Julia Roberts, we believe that romantic love is the ultimate form of love. And Valentine's Day is all about romantic love. So how do you survive this if you are not currently in a romantically loving relationship?

You can begin by focusing on who you love and who loves you. Even if this is your kid sister or your mom, you can be reassured that you are a lovable person. Hang out with your mom. Take your little sister shopping. Spend some time being grateful for who you are and what is special about you. These thoughts will reassure you and remind you of your self-worth while restoring your self-esteem. Plan to spend February revisiting the goals you had set for yourself going into the new year. Concentrate on the things that are important to you.

Do something special for yourself. Go to a spa, get a professional pedicure, or get a massage. Send Valentine's cards to everyone you know. You will feel good for doing it and they will feel great for receiving it. And for someone, this may be the only card they get. Write on each card, "For Someone Special". Prepare your favorite dinner, have a glass of wine and watch your favorite movie. Use this time to become the kind of person you would love or the person you would love to be. Use the day to do something you've always wanted to do. Create a special memory. Valentine's Day will come and go. Memories can last forever.

Mary Grace Musuneggi, author and motivational speaker

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Musuneggi', written in a cursive style.

President of The Musuneggi Financial Group

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