

**Editor's Note:** "Life in Balance" is a new feature written by Renée Kennedy Edwards, a Clinical Psychotherapist and Life Coach in Naples. Each month Renée will answer questions from readers and write about the challenges parents face in balancing their lives. If you have a question for Renée or want to suggest a topic for a future column please email her at [rkennedyedwards@netscape.net](mailto:rkennedyedwards@netscape.net).

**A.** Dear Sarah, Valentine's Day is traditionally meant for lovers, which can be depressing for those who don't have a mate to share it with. It's common to feel glum around this time because of the commercialization of romance. Our society has celebrated this holiday by focusing on the passionate ways of expressing love to our significant others. Romantic cards, boxes of chocolates and flowers define February 14th. These are all wonderful ways of expressing our love to a partner or spouse. However, what about the other side of society who are alone?

We need to step back and look beyond Cupid's arrow to get to the heart of the holiday—pun intended. Valentine's Day is about love. Love of family, friends, and even ourselves. It celebrates those closest to our hearts and goes beyond the romantic interplays of dating and marriage. It speaks of appreciation and admiration for those we hold dear. What better time to teach our children about true love than on February 14th? It's important to show our children there is more to the holiday than having a partner. So many teens (and adults) get swept up in the notion that they are unworthy if they don't have a mate. Deep down, we know that isn't true. But, how can we show our children that, when they experience society's pressure in dating—especially around holidays such as

**Q.** Dear Renee, My teenage daughter is dreading Valentine's Day because she doesn't have a boyfriend. She doesn't even want to go to school because tradition celebrates the holiday by girls receiving flowers from their boyfriends and my daughter will be left out. Do you have any suggestions on how I can support her?

Sarah P., Naples, FL



Valentine's Day? By expressing our feelings of love to

our children, we can start being the positive example needed to bolster our children's feelings of themselves. It sounds simple enough, but do we do it enough? It's so easy to take for granted the people that mean the most to us. Whether it's a child, parent, grandparent, lover, spouse or friend, we often don't take the time to express our feelings of admiration to the special people in our lives. The following are some great ways to support people in your life, especially during the holiday.

Think about it. When was the last time you told those closest to you why you loved them? I mean *really* told them specifically why you love them? A mother can easily say to her daughter, "I love you because you are a thoughtful person". But let's take that further by giving concrete examples of why she is so thoughtful. For instance, "I love you because you are thoughtful in so many ways. I love how you offer to help me around the house when you see that I'm busy. I also love how you remember to hug me good-night and

when you leave for school each day." You get the idea. By providing specific evidence of why you love someone, you personalize the meaning and form a stronger bond between the two of you. This form of expression can be used with your family member, partner, or friend. While it is encouraged to use this form of communication throughout the year, it can be further enhanced by applying it to the month of February. Beginning February 1st, write one specific example of why you admire your special person on a piece of paper to be given to them each day. Tuck it in a lunchbox to be surprised at school

or place it on a pillow before bedtime – be creative. If that seems too time consuming, you can condense the activity into one day creating a Top 10 or Top 20 list for each person you hold dear. This could be expressed in a card that you give to your loved one, or in the case of a family, it could

be something in which each family member could participate in doing. Explain the idea to each person, making sure they understand to be as specific as possible. Have each family member make Top 10 (or 20, 30 etc) lists for each member of the family. Then, during dinner on Valentine's Day, exchange your lists and share with each other the unique and special qualities of one another. By doing this, you

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can help take the focus off of romantic love and instead, celebrate the admiration and appreciation you have for all of the people you hold dear to your heart.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with flowers and romantic dinners on February 14th. But, why not expand the meaning of the holiday to honor all of those who are close to us? In doing so, we take some of the focus (and pressure) of having a significant other to celebrate the holiday and instead put a positive spin on Cupid's arrow.

**Renee Kennedy-Edwards, MS** *has combined her expertise as a Clinical Psychotherapist and Business Consultant/Trainer into an Executive and Personal Coach assisting others in reaching their potential and effectively moving through transitions. Ms. Kennedy-Edwards earned her Masters of Science degree in Educational Psychology –Community Counseling from the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee where she worked in private practice counseling individuals, couples & families. Renee also worked as a Consultant/Trainer to businesses offering group coaching and seminars. Renéeowns Coaching-4-Success, a business in the Naples area, in which she coaches individuals, couples and businesses on issues such as, burn-out, communication, motivation, and empowerment. She can be reached at (239) 272-2888 or rkennedyedwards@netscape.net. Renee currently resides in the Naples area with her husband, Robert and daughter, Britany. They enjoy sunsets, beaches and picnics together*

## **What is Personal Coaching?**

**Are you going through a transition in your life?**

**Do you feel stuck in your current situation?**

**Can you genuinely say you are living your business and personal life with passion and purpose?**

Life is about change. Often, change is met with uncertainty for a variety of reasons. Sometimes we feel stuck in a situation, other times we feel as if we are going in circles. Transitions can leave us feeling overwhelmed or confused. Or, feeling stuck in a dead-end job can lead us to feel bored and frustrated. Personal & executive coaching can assist you in moving forward through life's transitions and help you effectively reach your potential.

Coaching is most commonly known in sports for increasing human performance. Personal and Business Coaching applies the same concepts in a more structured format by enabling the client to attain insight and action towards specific goals in a variety of areas.