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Letter to the Editor: “In the #MeToo era, how has Valentine’s Day changed for couples?”

By Matthew Dowling

Valentine’s Day is a romantic holiday that has been celebrated for centuries. However, with the rise of the #MeToo movement, couples have had to reassess what it means to show love and affection in a respectful, responsible way. In this article I explore how Valentine’s Day has changed in the #MeToo era, and how couples can continue to enjoy the holiday.

The #MeToo movement is a global, survivor-led movement against sexual violence. This movement is dedicated to creating pathways for healing, justice, action, and leadership. The #MeToo movement’s social and political framework documents its theory of change, illustrates the intersections of the survivor justice movement, and explores the disruption of sexual violence and the dismantling of systems of harm.

The #MeToo movement began in October 2017 after allegations of sexual assault were made against Harvey Weinstein. Since then, there has been a dramatic shift in attitudes to dating and relationships. This has resulted in people becoming more conscious of their actions.

American attorney and talk-show host Geraldo Rivera noted that the #MeToo movement was “criminalizing courtship and conflating it with predation”. This means that it is important to draw lines between courtship and actions that will make someone uncomfortable.

The #MeToo movement has been both lauded and criticized by men and women alike. While the movement has led to an increased number of allegations of sexual assault, it has also raised questions regarding false allegations and its representation of women in certain minority and social circles. In addition, the lack of a defined purpose or goal for the movement has led to confusion over its actual impact.

False allegations have been an unfortunate part of the #MeToo movement. While most survivors are speaking their truth, there have been cases of individuals making false accusations to get revenge or get attention. These false accusations can have long-term effects on both the accuser and the accused.

The accused may face immediate reputational damage, difficulty finding employment, and more. On the other hand, those who make false accusations can face serious legal consequences. This includes libel, slander, and perjury charges. Regardless of the consequences, false accusations can do immense damage to the accuser’s reputation and relationships.

It is important to remember that not all allegations are true, and that anyone accused of a crime should receive fair and due process before any judgment is made. In addition, it is important to note that some allegations may be true but without sufficient evidence, they can't be proven in court. If this is the case, those accused of sexual assault or harassment still have the right to defend themselves in court.

The #MeToo movement, while clearly raising awareness of sexual assault and misconduct in many circles, had no official purpose or goal. There was not a roadmap as to what success would look like to have the movement deemed successful. Many involved saw it as an opportunity to finally bring light to the often-untold stories of sexual misconduct and assault, but without any specific expectations of what the outcome should be, it was left open-ended.

This lack of definition made it hard for the movement to measure progress and for those advocating for change to know when enough was enough. It also meant that the public was unsure what was expected of them, making it difficult to hold society accountable and make sure that the change was lasting. Even now, after the movement has been underway for several years, there is still no clear understanding of its ultimate success or impact.

When approaching Valentine's Day in the #MeToo era, experts say communication and respect are key. Both partners should discuss their feelings, expectations and boundaries before any romantic activities take place. This helps to ensure that the day is enjoyable for both parties and that no one feels pressured or unsafe. Additionally, couples should always be conscious of the power dynamic between them, as this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or issues.

Relationship experts suggest that couples communicate openly and honestly about what they would like to do on Valentine's Day. This includes discussing the boundaries each partner may have when it comes to physical intimacy, as well as what activities or gifts they would be most excited to receive. Communication is key in any relationship, but especially important in the #MeToo era.

Finally, experts encourage couples to focus less on traditional gifts such as flowers and chocolates, and instead spend time doing activities that are meaningful for both partners. This could be anything from going for a hike to cooking a meal together, or even just watching a movie with takeout. The idea is that whatever activity the couple does should be something that both partners will enjoy and will strengthen their connection with one another.

Matthew Dowling is a husband and father who resides in Uniontown, Pennsylvania where he served as a State Representative for six years and currently hosts the podcast, Commonalities, on WMBS radio. He is a contributing creator with the national forum BabyBoomers.com and a published author. Write him at Matthew.Dowling@Coordinated360.com.

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