



by KATE McEVILY

Kate's Kulture: Fifty Shades of Neigh

Remember Valentine's Day in elementary school? Classroom walls were adorned with red and pink paper hearts. Friends were dressed up in their finest holiday garb with "Be Mine" or "Friends 4 Ever" shirts. And the best part of all had to be the cutesy Valentine cards that you agonized over picking (puppies, princesses or Shrek?) and candy (sweet or sour?) for every classmate: a requirement of inclusion.

Now that I am 18, I understand that Valentine's Day is not the pink and rosy holiday of my youth. In fact, my friends call Valentine's Day one of six things:

- 1) Singles Awareness Day (SAD): A day dedicated to those not in a romantic relationship (usually celebrated in *spite* of Valentine's Day).
- 2) *Galentine's Day*: A day for lady friends to come together, leave their boyfriends at home, and go out for a fabulous breakfast or brunch.
- 3) "A fake wannabe holiday created by the greeting card industry": A day for those to feel bitter, alone and resentful.
- 4) Feast of the Valentine: A day for religious love.
- 5) Forever Alone Day: A day where people get the biggest box of chocolates they can find, turn on their Netflix cue, and gorge on chocolate while binge-watching as many rom coms as possible before falling asleep due to a chocolate-induced coma.
- 6) Valentine's Day: A day where a person and their significant other get to love all over each other.

That's a lot of names for one holiday!

Valentine's Day stirs up a lot of emotions in many people. Not surprisingly, the commercial greeting card industry starts to create expectations for what the "perfect" Valentine's Day looks like when we are really young: sweet, romantic cards, big teddy bears, red roses by the dozen, boxes of chocolates, and boom boxes blasting Michael Buble from below your second-story window. That's what "romance" and "love" is packaged to be.

We know it's garbage, and yet, we are disappointed when Valentine's Day rolls around and we feel excluded from love because we don't have a significant other, or our Valentine's Day doesn't live up to the hype.

There isn't one definition of love, so why does there have to be one "perfect" definition of Valentine's Day? Some people were planning to see *50 Shades of Grey* on Valentine's Day.

Others were going to be experiencing *50 Shades of Neigh* at the horse barn. Some people will experience *50 Shades of Cray* with an off-the-rocker significant other.

Who's to say what's better? Hallmark shouldn't be able to dictate our expectations or make us feel that we are inadequate because our Valentine's Day does not include red roses and declarations of love.

Valentine's Day makes some people feel sad, lonely or unloved because of a lack of romantic love. Don't give Valentine's Day that power.

Instead of thinking that Valentine's Day is about finding someone to love you, choose to love

yourself.

If you think you're hot and awesome, make Valentine's Day the day of you. Valentine's Day should be about self-love, about celebrating your love for yourself and then others.

The fact is that not everyone is going to get an oversized teddy bear and a sunset dinner in Malibu, and that's OK because you don't need a Prince or Princess Charming to rescue you. Would that be nice? OF COURSE! But you also know you are strong and confident, capable and kind, and you can validate yourself.

I would like to think that Valentine's Day is about spreading the love. It's about being thankful for the love I have in my life. It's about inclusion and kindness, not about someone bringing you chocolates and roses.

It's about genuine affection and care. It's telling someone you care about them. It's about celebrating your awesome friends, the love your family has given you, and maybe eventually a romantic partner.

Get rid of your unrealistic expectations. Don't feel less than because you are single. Don't hold your romantic partner to ridiculous fantasies. Valentine's Day is only one day out of a whole year... and should be filled with real love and connection.

So I hope you had a wonderful Valentine's Day, *Galentine's Day* or Single Awareness Day filled with 50 shades of whatever you please. Now enjoy my post-V-Day happy singles playlist....

"Jumping for Joy" My playlist for a single's day

"Bust a Move": Young MC

"Fantasy": Mariah Carey

"Happy": Pharrell Williams

"Walking on Sunshine": Katrina and the Waves

"Forever": Chris Brown

"That Lady" (Part 1 & 2): The Isley Brothers

"I Gotta Feeling": Black Eyed Peas

"Gettin' Jiggy Wit It": Will Smith

"Good Life" (ft. T-Pain): Kanye West

"Summer": Calvin Harris

"Hey Ya!": OutKast

"Rather Be" (ft. Jess Glynne): Clean Bandit



by LYDIA KRAUSS and ERIN NORDLUND

Peer Mentors respond to your FAQs

How do you view Peer Mentors? How do you want the Chadwick community to view you?

Lydia Krauss: I see Peer Mentors as, just like any club, a group of students who come together to discuss and develop a common interest. Just like CSAB works to organize service events and Wells Bring Hope works to fundraise the building of wells in West Africa, Peer Mentors works towards a goal of our own. We aim to create a support system of students for students. The skills we work to develop are rooted not in advice-giving but rather helping someone (including ourselves)

they are concrete tools that everyone, Peer Mentor or not, can use to be supportive of someone in a tough spot.

To answer the question's second part, we don't want the Chadwick community to view the program as "you." Every student, both "within" and "outside" the program, has the capacity to be a good friend and develop these skills. In fact, our workshops, almost every other Thursday during 7th period, have become open to anyone who wishes to work on personal and communal wellness skills. We have maintained a formal group with an application process because we



STAFF PHOTO

The students and faculty members of Peer Mentors gather outside Roessler.

it's challenging to efficiently run these activities without a smaller group of committed members. The application process aims to keep us accountable for our responsibilities.

Erin Nordlund: I agree! On another note, I feel sad when I hear people label Peer Mentors as students who think they are "perfect." The group is, of course, made up of imperfect people interested in more strategically working towards helping to create a more cohesive community of happier, healthier individuals. Similar to any campus activity, some members remain more genuinely invested in the program's mission than others, and that's

fine. I'm proud of the Peer Mentor mission and to be at a school that prioritizes learning how to take care of ourselves and others.

We understand that Peer Mentors is a program to help our peers, but what steps are actually taken in order to help those peers?

Nordlund: We have created a workshop curriculum that teaches strategies for helping ourselves and others. We have recently focused on cognitive techniques—for instance, figuring out the root of problems and identifying emotions instead of leaning on the blanket term "stress." I love when people

e-mail me after workshops and excitedly describe how they applied what they learned to a dilemma or situation with a friend. Also, we aim to incorporate relevant wellness topics—issues such as drug and alcohol education, body image perceptions, and how to deal with unhealthy expectations—that we think could be a bigger part of the Chadwick learning experience.

Krauss: Another way that we aim to help our peers is to create an overall connected, supportive community. From a committee that runs monthly Middle School advisory groups, to a committee that helps teach ninth-grade life skills classes, to committees that organize the ninth-grade big brother/sister program and events such as movie nights, we work with classmates at various stages of their Chadwick experience. Although each committee is tailored to an individual group within our community, they are united in their mission to foster connections between students, and create a community in which all students feel they have access to wellness resources.

Lydia Krauss is a Chadwick senior, and Erin Nordlund is a faculty advisor for Peer Mentors.

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Erin Nordlund
Peer Mentors faculty advisor

think through difficult situations. None of the students claim to be mental health experts, but skills such as attentive listening, asking meaningful questions, and empa-

spend quite a bit of time and energy developing the events we create—such as Middle School advisory groups, life skills classes, flow nights and the talent show—and