

Ask a psychotherapist

Question: This past Valentine's Day was a bust. My boyfriend gave me a card that looked like it came from the dollar store! No flowers, no chocolates! I was really hurt since I got him a nice card and a sweater. He didn't take me out either. This is a big change from how he acted when we first got together. I'm wondering what this means. Can you help me?

Answer: A recent article in the Globe and Mail stated that many relationships end just after Valentine's Day. Maybe all the commercialized hype about true love and the expression of romantic feelings cause some couples to feel critical about the quality of their own relationship at this time of year. Also, the seeming endlessness of winter by February can sap enthusiasm and even cause some people to feel less hopeful about the future, including the future of a relationship.

You don't say how long you've been in this relationship or how committed it is. Whether it's a fairly new relationship or a longer-term one, a change in behaviour by one or both partners is always worth talking about. Guessing about the meaning of a partner's behaviour can lead us to make false assumptions and to worry unnecessarily.

Why not ask your boyfriend directly about the change in his behaviour this year? You may discover that he's been sitting on a hurt or resentment that he hasn't told you about; the crummy card and lack of roses may have been an indirect way of hinting at his feelings and hurting you back. Once out in the open, hurts can be talked about and resolved. He may have just gotten lazy, mistakenly thinking that only new partnerships need romance. Or, in the worst case scenario, he actually may be losing interest in your relationship. In any case, it's better to know. Only by talking together directly, can couples resolve their differences and keep love going.

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