

Advice from the Trenches: Valentine card quandary

Dear C and Dr. B.:

Valentine's Day is approaching, and I was looking at cards for my girlfriend. They all have some message to the effect of: "You're my everything. I'm nothing without you."

Nobody is anyone else's EVERYTHING, that's a lie. It is also a really dysfunctional message to send. I don't want to say anything like that to my girlfriend - we promised we would never lie to one another. Why can't I find any other choices, something like: "You mean a lot to me, but you're not my everything"? Now I am at a loss as to what to do.

-Valentino

Dr. B. Says:

Let me point out a few things. First, it's a lie that you and your girlfriend will never ever lie to one another. Some things are best left unsaid. You should never just spout every thought that pops into your head.

Yes - marriage, romance, and Santa Claus are all at core based on what are, in the strict sense of the word, non-truths, but they are ideas that are accepted within our culture. That is the sort of lie that it is OK to play along with, if you have a girlfriend. But cheating on your girlfriend would be the kind of lie that is not acceptable as part of the cultural norm in this country. In some European countries it is acceptable - but even there, cultural rules are carefully observed as to how to cheat in an acceptable manner. In the US, the same behavior would likely end in a messy divorce.

Know your girlfriend. If she wants to believe in romance, be romantic. If romance makes her vomit then do something else.

C says:

I just don't think you've looked very hard, Valentino. There are tons of V-Day cards out there for people who don't want to send sugar-frosted hooley to each other. Take a look at this collection from Bored Panda:

https://www.boredpanda.com/funny-valentines-day-card-ideas/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic.

These days, even Hallmark has a collection of off-the-wall greetings.

So much angst over a card is kind of nuts - Valentine's Day isn't a mass conspiracy to undermine your relationship or a plot to force you to lie to your girlfriend or agree to some ideology you don't support. It is simply a nice, made-up day for couples to express their affection for each other in whatever way they choose. Or not.

I have another question for you, Valentino - how do you expect to keep a relationship going if you feel this pressured and conflicted over a single card? If you ever have to plan a wedding, or raise children, your head is going to explode.

But back to Valentine's Day. Yes, businesses try to make money off of the holiday; that's what the gift industry is all about. This is a fantastic opportunity to sell us a huge amount of stuff that we probably don't need at all. But, that's a rather cynical way of looking at it.

The positive thing that V-Day does is to create a little warmth in this merciless month. Winter has frozen our hearts - doesn't it feel nice to cuddle with someone warm?

Here's my suggestion - make your own card. Ignore the commercial pablum and say how you really feel, in your own words. Well, maybe not in your own words. "You're not my everything" is a little bleak. What if you simply told her that you really like being with her - and right now, in this moment, there's no place else you'd rather be?

You could also take a look at Dr. B's Quick Romance Status Guide:

Optimistic: you're my everything

Realist: you're a lot but you're not my everything

Pessimist: you're going to disappoint me but please not too bad

Masochist: you're not much but I don't deserve better

Masochist is my favorite. What woman wouldn't want to get that in a card?

Good luck!

- Cathren Housley

You can visit Dr. B's blog at drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com