

## A MONTH OF CONNECTION

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In the month of February we think of the color red, chocolate, and flowers. We think about gift giving and Valentine sharing. We think about school parties and special meals. All these things serve to remind us of those we care about and love. In a winter season when the weather is bitterly cold and the sky is dreary and gray, February can bring warmth to the starkness of the harsh Minnesota winter. But when we speak about the themes of February and acts or traditions associated with Valentine's Day, what are we really talking about? Have you taken time to consider what February seeks to make us all aware of?

One of the best parts of February is it's reminder to us of emotional health- the vital importance of true connection. Not simply the idea of love, but the very act of showing love, kindness, and other's importance in our lives. Valentine's Day is a holiday dedicated to the acts of giving, sharing, and extending ourselves to the people around us in meaningful ways. This, in turn, gives us a sense of connection to the world we live in.

So how can you connect to the people in your life this February? The following is a short list of ways you can commit to the act of connecting:

- 1) **Say your feelings toward another OUT LOUD!** Whether it is "I love you." or "You mean so much to me." Take a moment and verbalize these.
- 2) **Plan a date night in.** Consider making a meal together, play a game, and turn off technology for the evening.
- 3) **Send a handwritten letter.** Putting a pen to paper is a fantastic way of showing another what they mean to you, by having taken time to write to them. It can also be a wonderful way to process through thoughts and experiences we want to share.
- 4) **Volunteer.** Instead of heading to the same old hang out spots with friends, family, and co-workers, dedicate a time to helping others. You connect to your loved ones and your community at the same time!
- 5) **Go on a family date.** Pick a time and place, then challenge each family member to come with a conversation question to ask the family.
- 6) **Visit a neighbor.** Make or purchase a small Valentine and hand deliver this to a neighbor you have not yet met, or one you have not seen in a while.
- 7) **Begin a gratitude journal.** Each day, take time to write 3 different things you are grateful for in your life. Challenge yourself to make the list of 3 different each day! Do this with your significant other or children as well.
- 8) **Remember to laugh!** Commit to laughing at least once a day and make an effort to laugh with another person. Happiness is contagious!

This February, may it be Valentine's Day every day of the month. May you seek to remind yourself of those who are important to you and acknowledge it to them in positive ways. May you smile at the understanding of how happy it makes you to interact, laugh, and smile with another. And may you begin to recognize that we all feel how we live and live how we feel. Simply changing our actions has the ability to change our outlook, thought process, and sense of connection to the world around us. Happy February!