

GIVER'S GAIN

Life coach Fléchelle Morin offers advice to singles on how to keep those holiday blues at bay. BY FLÉCHELLE MORIN

Q. I am 42 years old, single with no children. I used to have big dreams for myself which included having a successful career, and, like many women, a family. Though I have attained a certain level of professional success, I desperately want someone to share my life with. I can't believe I am facing yet another holiday season by myself! Just thinking about it makes me cry. I have tried everything to find 'the one': internet dating; single's parties; I even hired a matchmaker, but nothing has worked. I know this time of year is all about family, but I just can't sit through another holiday at one of my married sisters' homes wishing for what I don't have. Am I horrible for feeling this way?

A. Being single around the holidays can make you extra seasonally depressed. Everywhere you go, you see couples shopping together, picking out Christmas trees or kissing under the mistletoe. It's enough to make you want to bolt the door and curl up with a 5-lb box of See's until spring.

But before you turn your holiday invites into kindling, there is a kinder, gentler, calorie-free way to feel better while making others feel better, too....

Giving is the perfect antidote to loneliness. I don't know anyone who can stay sad for long when she is giving to others. In fact, giving is actually therapeutic, releasing powerful endorphins into the blood stream that help you think more clearly, feel more vital and boost your overall mood.

Don't know where to start? The following are just a few of the many ways you can give this holiday season...and all year long:



Stay merry when all you want is love.

1. Cheer up some soldiers. Get a few boxes from the post office and fill them with your favorite books, games, snacks and DVDs. Include a letter telling each soldier how much you appreciate his/her sacrifice. Contact your local military office for help getting the boxes overseas. If you'd like, include a picture of yourself. Remember: Strangers are only friends we haven't met yet!

2. Give the gift of hope. Go to a women's shelter and ask if you can speak to a group about your trade. Bring your laptop and teach a computer class. Offer to teach the women how to knit as a way to release tension or teach them your favorite stress-relieving yoga positions. (While you're there, do a few extra *Downward Dog's* for yourself!)

3. Put a smile on a child's face. Buy a popular kid's toy and drop it off at a local Toys for Tots collection location, children's charity organization or church. You may not have a child of your own yet, but you can experience the joy of giving one a wonderful Christmas.

4. Give to yourself. When you start feeling sad, allow yourself to really feel your feelings. Sit down in a quiet place and give yourself a full five minutes (time it on a clock) to let it all go.... You know, a funny thing happens when you try to feel sad while timing yourself...It's hard to do! In fact, you'll probably end up longing for the five minutes to end so you can move on to something else.

Trying to hold onto your sadness is like trying to hold onto your happiness. Nothing lasts. Besides, pain only means that change is occurring or change needs to occur. So this holiday season, find a giving project that opens your heart and embrace it. And, in return, it will embrace you.

Fléchelle Morin is a Dating to Marriage Coach, motivational speaker and author of the book, "Kissing or No Kissing; Whom Will you Save Your Kisses For." For more information, visit nokissing.com. Copyrighted 2009 by Fléchelle Morin