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Although candy remains a popular gift to give during Valentine's Day, kind gestures and attentiveness are often appreciated more. Charles Rankin/The Omega

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Valentine's Day tips for dummies

At one point or another, many of us may struggle to show our partners that we care at Valentine's Day, but showing your affection doesn't have to cost a dime

By LiFei Liu-Calver  February 11, 2026  0 Comments

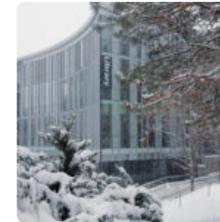
Every year on Feb. 14, Valentine's Day is the one day that many people go all out to impress their partners and show that they care. Love doesn't have to be proven by dramatic candlelit dinners, big teddy bears or even an expensive box of chocolates. A lot of these tasks are easy to do, but what really matters is the action performed to show your partner you truly do value them.

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Small compliments

Compliments are important to keeping someone's esteem up. Compliments, not the ones we say out of habit, but the ones that are smaller and more specific, can show we are paying attention.

A compliment that acknowledges your partner's effort, strengths and achievements can help them feel seen and recognized, reinforcing why they should feel good about themselves. These kinds of compliments can feel genuine and show your partner that you appreciate them. Paying attention is sexy.

Defend

Standing up for your partner is important, especially when they cannot speak for themselves. Actions like this include shutting down jokes others make that go too far, setting boundaries on what is and isn't okay to say, and making it clear that you respect your partner as a person.



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When you protect your partner, it demonstrates that you truly do care about their feelings even when they aren't present.

Celebrate small wins

It is always important to celebrate victories with your partner. Of course, big achievements such as a job promotion and graduation are worth celebrating, but the small achievements people overlook are just as important.

Whether it is finishing a major assignment that has been stressing them out for weeks, tackling a large pile of dishes, or finally getting the courage to speak up during difficult situations. While some moments seem small, it is important to recognize them.

Recognizing these small wins means recognizing the work that went into them and helps your partner feel seen.

Show up when it matters

Being there for your partner is always important, even in moments that aren't convenient or unplanned. Staying there when someone is nervous, overwhelmed or stressed can make a big difference.

It doesn't mean fixing a problem or trying to find a solution. Sometimes people just need their partner to lend an ear to their troubles. Other times it means that you are being reliable, consistent and willing to stand beside someone when it really matters.

Take note of things they enjoy

Paying attention when your significant other discusses their interests, however brief, and remembering for it later is very important to show that you're attentive to what your partner likes.

If they have a favourite flower or snack, that item may make a good gift for a random Tuesday after work. Taking interest in what interests them can make all the difference.

It's a passive kind of care where it involves listening to little details and remembering them without being asked.

Spend quality time together

Choosing to be with someone, even in the most common parts of each other's day, is important for relationships.

This doesn't include just being around them, but also giving them your attention, engaging in activities together, sharing a space, watching a movie or going out together. It can also include quieter, simpler activities like couples study sessions, going for walks or even just sitting in silence.

Quality time does not have to be planned, and should make both partners feel like attention isn't something they have to compete for.

Encourage

Encouraging someone is incredibly important.

Encouragement isn't for show and shouldn't be treated as something performative. Reminding your partner that they're capable of doing something even when they have doubts and don't feel confident shows them you notice their efforts and believe in them.

Love never has to be loud or dramatic, but smaller actions can make so much more difference in showing your partner that they are valued, seen, appreciated and loved.

Fancy dates are nice and gifts can be thoughtful, but true love exists in everyday moments.

Whether it's in the kitchen, on a walk, or sitting in silence together, these are all ways that you can express little bits of appreciation for your partner this Valentine's Day.

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