



Darts to the hearts; Not everything connected to Valentine's Day is a good idea

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Page: 41

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It's hard to cut through all the Valentine's Day chatter swirling out there, not to mention hundreds of weakly-related-to-Feb. 14 surveys boasting possibly suspect methodology. For example, the American bedspring giant Leggett & Platt, who in a pre-Valentine's Day survey this week revealed that of 1,000 respondents asked, 68% prefer inner bedsprings to foam or air while getting it on. Here is -- in my opinion -- the best and worst of 2008's V-day news:

SINGLE AND READY TO MINGLE?

An Aussie company called SHI Symbol International -- SHI stands for single, happy and interested -- might have your answer. The company sells their intertwined male-female signs on everything from earrings to pendants (they have same-sex symbols too) so other people can know you are looking and hit on you accordingly. SHI just announced a major U.S. expansion plan, with Canada to follow.

THERE IS SOMEONE FOR EVERYONE

No longer is it necessary to wonder, "is the fact that I have herpes/am a chronic pot smoker/morbidly obese going to end this relationship?" Now a host of specialized dating sites -- some of them still available only in the U.S. -- purport to take away that guesswork. They include: STDFriends.com, PotPartner.com and LargeFriends.com.

IT IS NOT WINDY AT WORK

Apparently what men and women fear most about Valentine's Day is not the associated forced romance. A Wal-Mart survey reveals it's finding the appropriate gift. So this month, the shopping giant brought back its popular Helpaguybuy.com while unveiling Helpachickpick.com, which provides a profile and corresponding gift suggestions. I appear to be a Busy Bee, yet though Wal-Mart suggests it, I do not wish to receive a personalized heart-shaped paperweight.

DATING DOWN?

A new speed-dating service in New York City, Sugar Mamas & Boy Toys, requires only that women be 35-plus and rich and men be under-35 and hot. Organizers of the first event say thousands of men applied for just 20 spots. The website blurb explains: "Symbiosis has allowed ugly rich men to attract young, gorgeous, money-hungry women for centuries; it's now the women's turn."

PETS OVER PARTNERS

According to a national Purina PetLover survey of 1,000 American pet owners, more than half plan to include their pet in Valentine's Day activities, preparing them a special meal and treat. Some 4% of men polled say they actually prefer their pet because it lowers stress, while 30% of women report their pet is tops because it's more in tune with their feelings than any human could be.

FIX FOR OUR NATIONAL NIGHTMARE

Canada's largest online drugstore wants everyone to know we as a people are so embarrassed to buy condoms and lubricants they are among the top stolen items at traditional drugstores. (Because getting caught shoplifting condoms and lubricant would be so much less mortifying, right?) **Well.ca** offers a solution: Discreet, pre-packed sets with massage, romance and even singles themes.

NOW THIS IS KIND OF SAD

A Valentine's Day survey by Bill Me Later/Ipsos Insight has revealed eight million Americans admit to sending themselves gifts on Valentine's Day. It also showed 22% of men are planning to give lingerie to their ladies, but just 2% of women polled would want it.