

Valentine's Day tough on singles

BY DAVE STEWART

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For some, Valentine's Day is a time to celebrate love.

For others, it's one of the toughest days of the year.

"It's a day designated for lovers," says Ruth Claramunt, a professional matchmaker. "It's tough on the single crowd."

Claramunt owns and operates Hearts in Toronto. She has hundreds of clients across the country, including those seeking Cupid's arrow on Prince Edward Island.

Claramunt says her job is removing the stigma from meeting quality people. She personally meets

with all of her clients, finds them a match and supervises its progress.

The adverse effects of the recession and a general fear of AIDS have changed peoples' attitudes when it comes to romance, she adds.

"I think it's very difficult for people to meet," Claramunt says. "People are afraid they don't know who is out there."

More people are focusing on education and careers and less on relationships. And people are waiting longer before marrying.

"People want to make sure they meet the right person," Claramunt said.

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"People are fussy to the point where they want to make sure they meet the right person."

For the single crowd, staying home alone on Valentine's Day is the worst thing you can do, she said.

"You just end up brooding. Get together with your single friends and grab a movie."

Claramunt said the most important aspect of Valentine's Day — or any other day for that matter — is simple.

"Always tell that person that you love them. Never take it for granted."

Claramunt emphasizes romance isn't dead, nor should people treat Valentine's Day with any less enthusiasm.

Her advice is to be romantic and spontaneous, be yourself and have fun, don't be too analytical — and never, ever, talk about the ex-boyfriend/girlfriend.

"Go out and make memories. Look at it like you're meeting a new friend."

Lori Lawless, director of sales and marketing for the Prince Edward Hotel in Charlottetown, couldn't agree more.

What better time to relax and be romantic than after all the commotion which went with the East Coast Music Awards last weekend, Lawless said.

"People on P.E.I. need a break. What's more romantic than pampering your loved one?"

Islanders seem to be answering the romantic call.

As of Tuesday, all but two of the jacuzzi suites at the Prince Edward Hotel were booked. Flowers, as usual, are another popular seller.

Growers Direct in Charlottetown is expecting to easily fill orders for 400 dozen roses today.

Art Ciocca, spokesman for the New York company which operates the Maritime Meeting Place advertisement in The Guardian, said Islanders are the most romantic Atlantic Canadians. The ad is a dating column operated via phone.