

# BluesNews

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## History of Valentine's Day

Every February 14, across the United States and in other places around the world, candy, flowers and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. But who is this mysterious saint, and where did these traditions come from? Find out about the history of this centuries-old holiday, from ancient Roman rituals to the customs of Victorian England.

## The Legend of St. Valentine

The history of Valentine's Day—and the story of its patron saint—is shrouded in mystery. We do know that February has long been celebrated as a month of romance, and that St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. But who was Saint Valentine, and how did he become associated with this ancient rite?

The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death.

Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons, where they were often beaten and tortured. According to one legend, an imprisoned Valentine actually sent the

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first “valentine” greeting himself after he fell in love with a young girl—possibly his jailor’s daughter—who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed “From your Valentine,” an expression that is still in use today. Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories all emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and—most importantly—romantic figure. By the Middle Ages, perhaps thanks to this reputation, Valentine would become one of the most popular saints in England and France.

### **Origins of Valentine’s Day: A Pagan Festival in February**

While some believe that Valentine’s Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine’s death or burial—which probably occurred around A.D. 270—others claim that the Christian church may have decided to place St. Valentine’s feast day in the middle of February in an effort to “Christianize” the pagan celebration of Lupercalia. Celebrated at the ides of February, or February 15, Lupercalia was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

To begin the festival, members of the Luperci, an order of Roman priests, would gather at a sacred cave where the infants Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were believed to have been cared for by a she-wolf or lupa. The priests would sacrifice a goat, for fertility, and a dog, for purification. They would then strip the goat’s hide into strips, dip them into the sacrificial blood and take to the streets, gently slapping both women and crop fields with the goat hide. Far from being fearful, Roman women welcomed the touch of the hides because it was believed to make them more fertile in the coming year. Later in the day, according to legend, all the young women in the city would place their names in a big urn. The city’s bachelors would each choose a name and become paired for the year with his chosen woman. These matches often ended in marriage.

### **Valentine’s Day: A Day of Romance**

Lupercalia survived the initial rise of Christianity and but was outlawed—as it was deemed “un-Christian”—at the end of the 5th century, when Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St. Valentine’s Day. It was not until much later, however, that the day became definitively associated with love. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds’ mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of Valentine’s Day should be a day for romance.

Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages, though written Valentine’s didn’t begin to appear until after 1400. The oldest known valentine still in existence today was a poem written in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. (The greeting is now part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London, England.) Several years later, it is believed that King Henry V hired a writer named John Lydgate to compose a valentine note to Catherine of Valois.

### **Typical Valentine’s Day Greetings**

In addition to the United States, Valentine’s Day is celebrated in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France and Australia. In Great Britain, Valentine’s Day began to be popularly celebrated around the 17th century. By the middle of the 18th, it was common for friends and lovers of all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes, and by 1900 printed cards began to replace written letters due to improvements in printing technology. Ready-made cards were an easy way for people to express their emotions in a time when direct expression of one’s feelings was discouraged. Cheaper postage rates also contributed to an increase in the popularity of sending Valentine’s Day greetings.

Americans probably began exchanging hand-made valentines in the early 1700s. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland began selling the first mass-produced valentines in America. Howland, known as the “Mother of the Valentine,” made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as “scrap.” Today, according to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 1 billion Valentine’s Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine’s Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year. (An estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent for Christmas.) Women purchase approximately 85 percent of all valentines.



# SCIENCE REVEALS SEVERE CHILDHOOD TRAUMA CAN ALTER BRAIN DEVELOPMENT, CREATING LIFETIME OF RISK

BY AMY LINN, SEARCHLIGHT NEW MEXICO | JANUARY, 2018



Today, more than at any other time in history, science and medicine show the vast, interconnected dance between a baby's outside world and the core of its being: its brain.

The most basic human connections are being understood through the lens of brain science, neuroscience, behavioral science and beyond, revealed in magnetic resonance imaging at institutes such as Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child.

Today's studies show the harm down to the dendrites and DNA.

Severe trauma, also known as adverse childhood experiences, can leave children in near-constant fear and anxiety,

always on the verge of fight-flight-or freeze mode, research shows. The result can be a constant release of stress hormones in the body, harmful enough to alter architecture in the developing brain.

"The biological response to this toxic stress can be incredibly destructive and last a lifetime," the American Academy of Pediatrics described the process in a 2014 policy paper.

Beatings that leave bruises, sexual or emotional abuse, domestic violence, a drug-addicted parent — those and other major childhood adversities can shrink key parts of the brain, MRI scans show.

"We've seen the impacts of adverse childhood experiences for years," said Deborah Harris, senior consultant for New Mexico's Infant Mental Health Teams. The program sees some of the state's most vulnerable babies, removed from their homes by Child Protective Services for maltreatment. "Now we actually have the brain research to support the theory."

Harris says the science shows how critical it is to give infants and children the services they need. They can't be expected to get over the abuse on their own.

"It's embedded in their brain and body," Harris said.

The concept of adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, was born in 1998 with a study of more than 17,000 Kaiser Permanente patients in San Diego.

It revealed that physical abuse, sexual abuse and other ACEs were far more common than previously understood. And as the study discovered, the more ACEs people experienced, the more likely they were to have bad outcomes, including drug abuse, alcoholism, mental illness, suicide, cancer and chronic, life-shortening diseases.

The ACE study offered the medical world a new way to understand human development. The brain science has taken it even further.

Brain scans show childhood trauma can cause shrinkage in the hippocampus, the area linked to memory storage and retrieval. The constant state of high-stress can alter the amygdala, the brain's fear-processing center, and affect the neuro-endocrine and immune systems.

Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child defines toxic stress as "excessive or prolonged activation of stress response systems in the body and brain." That sort of activation can lead to dysfunction in the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain linked to cognition and decision-making.



On one thing, all researchers agree: Trauma is particularly harmful from ages 0 to 3, when more than 1 million new neural connections in the brain are formed every second.

The stress from child maltreatment can hinder the formation of neural pathways, which let neuro-signals zoom across different parts of the brain to form critical connections, research shows.

A thriving neural network promotes health in the parts of the brain responsible for behavior, language, memory, motor skills, impulse control and executive functioning, according to the 1998 landmark study that launched the ACEs concept.

Chronic releases of stress hormones are also linked to changes in the way DNA is expressed. The study of epigenetics examines how stress can modify chemical “markers” on genes, switching them on or silencing them.

Scientists now theorize that toxic stress causes epigenetic changes that allow trauma to be transmitted over the generations. The mechanism offers an explanation for the historical trauma experienced by Native Americans, by children of Holocaust survivors, and others.

In response, the AAP has called for “a new basic science of pediatrics,” based on an “ecobiodevelopmental” model. It would take into account how children’s experiences — and traumas — can shape lives well into the future.

## HUMOR

AS TOLD THROUGH THE SIGNS OF INDIAN HILLS’S COMMUNITY CENTER



# HEALING FROM DAMAGE OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA IS POSSIBLE, EXPERTS SAY

BY AMY LINN, SEARCHLIGHT NEW MEXICO | JANUARY 2018

Reading about adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress can be, well, stressful. The problems they cause — brain impairments, mental illness and disease — are enough to make things sound hopeless.

They're not.

"We're not victims, and we're not unchangeable," said Christina Bethell, co-author of a 2017 report aptly called Balancing ACEs with HOPE (Health Outcomes for Positive Experience). Bethell, the director of the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative at Johns Hopkins University, works in what she calls "the science of thriving."

Positive, loving experiences build brain health and resilience in children; they act as a buffer against the bad things. They also counterbalance the harm from toxic stress, her research shows.

A groundswell of other researchers, brain scientists and mental health professionals say damage from ACEs is reversible and people of all ages — particularly those age 0 to 3 — can recover.

"There's no such thing as throwaway children," says Deborah Harris, senior consultant for New Mexico's Infant Mental Health Teams.

Childhood trauma is a serious matter. If you've experienced it, experts advise getting help from a trauma-informed specialist, someone experienced in helping people recover from toxic stress.

But everyone can begin the path to wellness.

Healing can start with simple steps like deep breathing. They're as basic as cooing to your baby.

All manner of solutions and research in this realm — as well as simple tools for parents — are available at prominent institutes, such as the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

## HELPING YOUR BABY

The mantra is "the earlier the better." Here are ways to promote brain healing while creating a loving, nurturing relationship:

Build positive experiences, whether it's through a game of peekaboo or a reading of "Goodnight Moon."

Coo, babble, point, and make silly faces. Scientists call this "serve and return," and it's key to building brain health.

Kiss, hold and talk to your baby. Repeat. Repetitive positive experiences build healthful new neural pathways that get stronger over time.

Ban tobacco at home.

Breastfeed.

Share a family meal at least four days a week.

Limit children to two hours of screen time a day.

Read to young kids daily. Insist that older children do their homework.

Participate in your children's activities.

Don't worry about being a perfect parent; be a "good enough" parent. What's good enough? Bethell found that children who are most resilient are those who can say "My family stood by me in hard times; I had someone I could talk to about difficult things."



## HELPING YOURSELF

Adults also need to reduce stress. Here's what helps:

Breathing: Yes, breathing. Inhale deeply. Exhale. Repeat.

Meditation: One of the top recommended interventions, it's restorative for the brain.

Progressive muscle relaxation: An effective way to relieve tension and anxiety by simply clenching and releasing muscles.

Exercise. Crunches and half-marathons are not required. The goal is to move and get outside: Research shows that simply touching a tree or hearing a bird sing reduces stress.

Get enough sleep, eat nutritious food, listen to music and spend time with loving (non-stressful) friends and family.

Hypnosis: Find a certified clinical hypnotherapist at the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis.

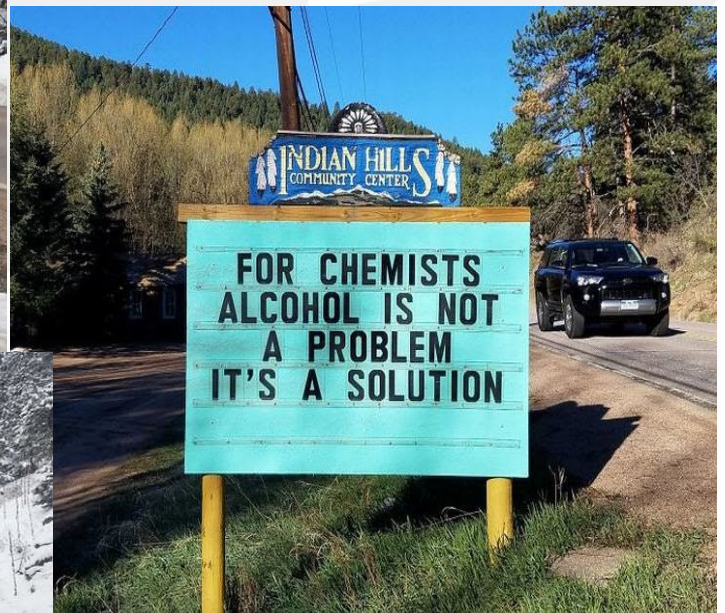
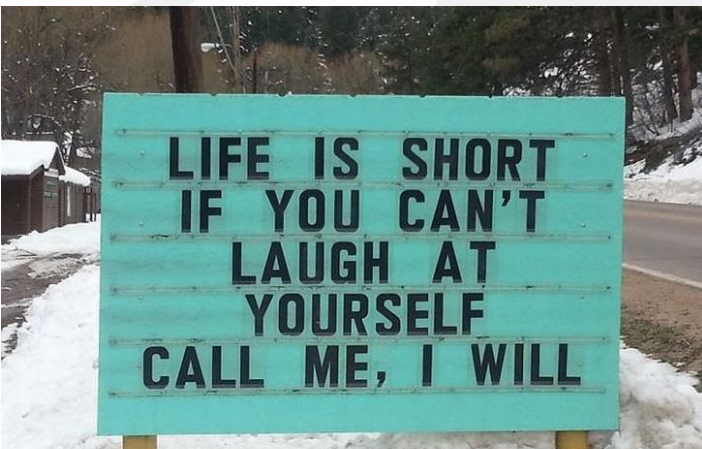
EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing has been used for decades to help people heal from traumatic memories.

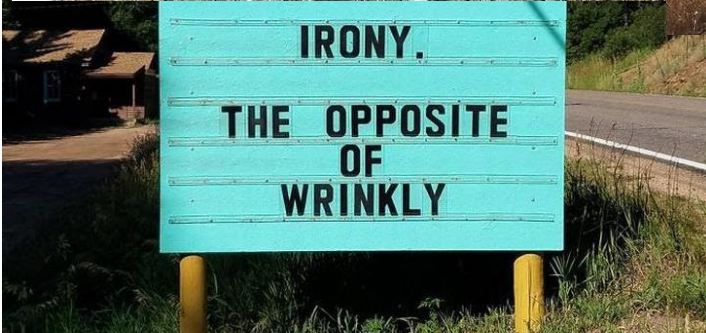
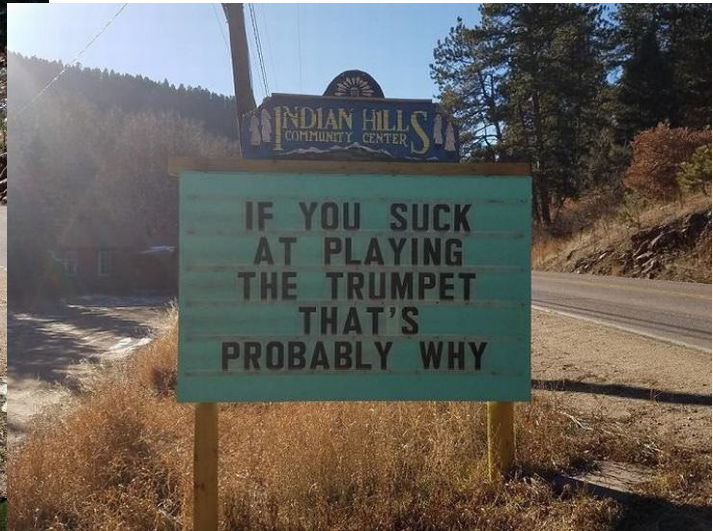
Trauma-Sensitive Yoga: This form of yoga was developed by the Massachusetts-based Trauma Center at the Justice Resource Institute.

Write the wrongs: Vincent Felitti, co-founder of the ACE study, recommends that patients write their autobiographies.

Try neurofeedback or its cousin, biofeedback.

Talk to a compassionate person; get treatment from someone trained in trauma care. Or walk into your doctor's office with the ACE survey.





## ENDNOTES

To realize  
The value of a sister/brother  
Ask someone  
Who doesn't have one.

To realize  
The value of ten years:  
Ask a newly  
Divorced couple.

To realize  
The value of four years:  
Ask a graduate.

To realize  
The value of one year:  
Ask a student who  
Has failed a final exam.

To realize  
The value of nine months:  
Ask a mother who gave birth to a stillborn.

To realize  
The value of one month:  
Ask a mother

Who has given birth to  
A premature baby.

To realize  
The value of one week:  
Ask an editor of a weekly newspaper.

To realize  
The value of one minute:  
Ask a person  
Who has missed the train, bus or plane.

To realize  
The value of one second:  
Ask a person  
Who has survived an accident.

Time waits for no one.

Treasure every moment you have.

You will treasure it even more when  
You can share it with someone special.

To realize the value of a friend or family member:  
LOSE ONE.



# WHILE TRYING NOT TO BE POLITICAL

Someone on Quora asked "Why do some British people not like Donald Trump?" Nate White, an articulate and witty writer from England wrote this magnificent response.

A few things spring to mind.

Trump lacks certain qualities which the British traditionally esteem.

For instance, he has no class, no charm, no coolness, no credibility, no compassion, no wit, no warmth, no wisdom, no subtlety, no sensitivity, no self-awareness, no humility, no honour and no grace - all qualities, funnily enough, with which his predecessor Mr. Obama was generously blessed.

So for us, the stark contrast does rather throw Trump's limitations into embarrassingly sharp relief.

Plus, we like a laugh. And while Trump may be laughable, he has never once said anything wry, witty or even faintly amusing - not once, ever.

I don't say that rhetorically, I mean it quite literally: not once, not ever. And that fact is particularly disturbing to the British sensibility - for us, to lack humour is almost inhuman.

But with Trump, it's a fact. He doesn't even seem to understand what a joke is - his idea of a joke is a crass comment, an illiterate insult, a casual act of cruelty.

Trump is a troll. And like all trolls, he is never funny and he never laughs; he only crows or jeers.

And scarily, he doesn't just talk in crude, witless insults - he actually thinks in them. His mind is a simple bot-like algorithm of petty prejudices and knee-jerk nastiness.

There is never any under-layer of irony, complexity, nuance or depth. It's all surface.

Some Americans might see this as refreshingly upfront.

Well, we don't. We see it as having no inner world, no soul.

And in Britain we traditionally side with David, not Goliath. All our heroes are plucky underdogs: Robin Hood, Dick Whittington, Oliver Twist.

Trump is neither plucky, nor an underdog. He is the exact opposite of that.

He's not even a spoiled rich-boy, or a greedy fat-cat.

He's more a fat white slug. A Jabba the Hutt of privilege.

And worse, he is that most unforgivable of all things to the British: a bully.

That is, except when he is among bullies; then he suddenly transforms into a snivelling sidekick instead.

There are unspoken rules to this stuff - the Queensberry rules of basic decency - and he breaks them all. He punches downwards - which a gentleman should, would, could never do - and every blow he aims is below the belt. He particularly likes to kick the vulnerable or voiceless - and he kicks them when they are down.

So the fact that a significant minority - perhaps a third - of Americans look at what he does, listen to what he says, and then think 'Yeah, he seems like my kind of guy' is a matter of some confusion and no little distress to British people, given that:

\* Americans are supposed to be nicer than us, and mostly are.



\* You don't need a particularly keen eye for detail to spot a few flaws in the man.

This last point is what especially confuses and dismays British people, and many other people too; his faults seem pretty bloody hard to miss.

After all, it's impossible to read a single tweet, or hear him speak a sentence or two, without staring deep into the abyss. He turns being artless into an art form; he is a Picasso of pettiness; a Shakespeare of shit. His faults are fractal: even his flaws have flaws, and so on ad infinitum.

God knows there have always been stupid people in the world, and plenty of nasty people too. But rarely has stupidity been so nasty, or nastiness so stupid.

He makes Nixon look trustworthy and George W look smart.

In fact, if Frankenstein decided to make a monster assembled entirely from human flaws - he would make a Trump.

And a remorseful Doctor Frankenstein would clutch out big clumpfuls of hair and scream in anguish:

'My God... what... have... I... created?

If being a twat was a TV show, Trump would be the boxed set.



## Professional Development / InService

Leamington

1st and 3rd Wednesday

Sept 19

Oct 3

Oct 17

Nov 7

Nov 21

Dec 7 (Christmas Luncheon— Kingsville Golf & Country Club)

Parkhill

2nd and 4th Wednesday

Sept 26

Oct 10

Oct 24

Nov 14

Nov 28

Dec 12 (Christmas Luncheon— Bluewater office)

## 2019

Jan 16

Feb 6

Feb 20

March 6

March 20

April 3

April 17

May 2

May 15

June 5

Jan 9

Jan 23

Feb 13

Feb 27

March 13 (March Break)

March 27

April 10

April 24

May 8

May 22

June 12

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