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Valentine's Day is lonely for some, exaggerating their singularity, but students can get over that feeling.

How to beat common Valentine's Day blues

Music, poetry and rest can help ease the romantic commercialization that surrounds Valentine's Day

Andrew Shipley
 Freelance Reporter

It is February, and for many weeks a massive pink tide has been rising — washing through stores and swelling up in residence halls, coloring lives a rosy shade of romance. It is time to make hugs a little stronger, kisses a little more thoughtful.

Or maybe not. For many, Valentine's Day is not a time of joy and candy hearts, but a time of loneliness and regret. It can serve as a reminder of just how alone people feel. But students have different ways of chasing away the blues.

"I eat," freshman Matt Damkroger said. "Honestly, I just try to get over the feeling that I'm single." However, Damkroger said he does not think it is bad to be single.

"Sometimes it's nice to take a break," he said.

Not everyone, however, is satisfied by internal monologues of encouragement or by food. Freshman

Zak Bennet seeks respite from February's romantic bombardment in music. Emo, or Emotional Punk, is an emerging genre that has already garnered great popularity among angst-filled followers of indie rock.

"Just sitting down and listening to songs that echo what I am feeling — it can be a big relief," Bennet said. He urges music lovers to go beyond Emo favorites, such as Dashboard Confessional.

"There is a ton of stuff out there," he said. "Music can be quite cathartic."

More traditional than the acoustic guitar, a timeless resource for melancholy is the love poem — tragic or otherwise. Lyrical tales of love found and love lost can provide a soothing escape for those overrun by commercialized romanticism.

Freshman Heidi Zlatek said poetry, much like music, "can speak to exactly how we are feeling. Poetry is not simply the Shakespeare people read in school."

Zlatek suggested reading "The Hell With Love: 8 Poems to Mend a Broken Heart," edited by Mary Esselman and Elizabeth Velez, which she said is an amusing collection of poetry with works ranging from es-

tablished poets, such as Emily Dickinson, to more modern poets, such as John Ash. The chapters lay out the tale of betrayed emotion, beginning with "Rage and Sadness," and building steadily toward the final chapter, "Moving On."

"It just makes you feel better about everything," she said.

Dr. Brooks Morse, a psychologist at the University's Counseling Center, also has some advice for the lonely this Valentine's Day.

"This is a socially constructed holiday," Morse said. "It says, 'We are not adequate by ourselves.' We need to realize that our own company is good company."

In response to the methods of managing sadness mentioned above, Morse said, "It all depends on the purpose. If the purpose is to embrace the sadness, and if this embrace helps people cope, then go for it."

Morse encourages people to do something different.

"Plan something social that they enjoy — go out with friends, re-create the day," she said.

Andrew Shipley is a freelance writer for the Emerald.

Business

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According to a report by the International Mass Retail Association, consumers in 2001 exchanged 163 million cards — the second largest greeting card total after Christmas — and spent \$1.05 billion on candy for Valentine's Day.

Laura Betty, retail manager for the Euphoria Chocolate Company, said she expects her store at the Valley River Center, one of three outlets in Eugene, to be packed come Feb. 14.

"On an average day, we have about 150 customers come in, and

last year, it went up to 700 on Valentine's Day," Betty said.

Merchants specializing in traditional Valentine's gifts are not the only ones anticipating a shopping rush.

Store manager John Heckler of Green Acres Road's Wal-Mart said most department stores experience increased foot-traffic during Valentine's Day from people scrambling to buy that last-minute card or box of candy. With more customers cruising the aisles, the likelihood of non-traditional Valentine's Day purchases increases.

"They might come in looking specifically for Valentine's items, but anything can become a potential

gift," Heckler said. "Maybe it's a red sweater they see on their way toward the cards or a shirt with a heart on it, but things we aren't even advertising for the holiday become Valentine's gifts." Local Fred Meyer, ShopKo and Target stores are also all geared up for the holiday, with special merchandise packing the aisles.

Despite the rush and extensive preparation, shoppers are a welcome sight.

"It's a crucial sales day," Lyons said. "With all the time and effort we've invested, we're happy to see customers coming in."

Craig Coleman is a freelance writer for the Emerald.