

OH NO! IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN.

Single women (always been single and single again by virtue of divorce or death) tell me the two days they hate the most are December 31 and February 14 -- New Year's Eve and Valentine's Day.

Why? Because in our society, these are days specifically designed for people who have a special someone in their lives. They have become noted for lovers, people with partners, who will wine and dine them, gift them, spout poetry and love songs to them.

No doubt, you have noted that New Year's Eve is coming up. Who says, though, the typical images of dancing beneath the stars, snuggling in front of a fire, kissing under the mistletoe are the only possibilities? Who says you have to see New Year's Eve as an evening for lovers?

In my clinical experience with single women, I hear how painful this night is. Janice, an Always Single woman told me, "I hide out, eating myself into oblivion while watching old love stories. Then I cry myself to sleep. I hope next December 31 will be different, which only makes me more miserable, since I recall having said that *last* December 31."

Charleen, a divorced woman with three grown children, has a slightly different take. "I cry myself to sleep New Year's Eve -- after hours of remembering how wonderful it was in the early years with Jack, and later after he left, with my kids. We had such fun. I don't miss him, but it's really painful missing the fun and the closeness we had watching the ball drop. Now, no kids *and* no man. I HATE December 31."

This year, try something different. *You* take charge of defining what New Year's Eve should be. Be gentle and loving with yourself. Make it a gentle and loving evening, whether with good friends over by yourself.

For instance, design this night for your closest women friends. Have everyone bring food and positive stories from the year that is ending. Have them bring items representing something they are looking forward to in the upcoming year. Forbid the mention of that three-letter word (men). This evening is just for women you love, and for your hopes and plans for the coming year -- ones *under your control*. (It's fine to dream about men, but you have *no control* in making an emotionally appropriate man appear in your life.)

Another example: Invite a group of friends – women and men, couples/married and singles. With the exception of romantic newly weds, many couples would be delighted to join you; they don't have the same compunction singles do to have a "romantic" evening. Enjoy playing games, singing songs, telling stories. Be silly if you want. It's your night; design it as you want.

For those who really want to be alone, make it a pleasant evening, not a hide-away or pity-party evening. Have your favorite dinner, listen to favorite music (avoid romantic songs), read a book or watch an old movie (avoid the romantic ones). Plan a winter vacation, with friends or alone, something to give you pleasure. Consider a fun and life-changing weekend, like *Unique Retreats for Single Women*, joining like-minded singles for a new perspective of being single in a world that values marriage.

However you choose to spend the evening of December 31, 2007, don't let society's prejudice about singles besmirch your night.

For almost four decades, Dr. Karen Gail Lewis has been a marriage and family therapist with a specialization in singles. She has authored numerous books including *With or Without A Man: Single Women Taking Control of Their Lives* and its accompanying *Workbook*. She runs **Unique Retreats for Women**, with specifically designed weekends for single women, women ready for change, women married to powerful men, and women with their siblings. Her next teleseminar for single women begins in January. To contact her for information about this and your FREE *16 Golden Rules for Being Single*, go to DrKarenGailLewis.com.