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TOGETHERNESS OVER ROMANCE

YOUR GUIDE TO A FAMILY-FRIENDLY VALENTINE'S DAY

Valentine's Day can be a difficult holiday for many parents. While they'd love to go out for a romantic dinner and enjoy a date night with their spouse, they have to think about the kids, too! Finding a babysitter for Valentine's Day can be incredibly challenging, so shift gears and spend the day as a family instead of a couple.

You can find plenty to do to ensure your Valentine's Day is fun and exciting for every family member. Here are three activities to try that will help make Valentine's Day memorable.

WRITE LOVE LETTERS.

Valentine's Day is a holiday all about love and romance, making it the perfect time for your family to share what they love about each other. Give your kids and yourself time to write love letters to each family member, writing down what they love about that person and some of their favorite memories. It's a great way to spread joy and show everyone how loved they are.



MAKE SOME SWEET TREATS.

Valentine's Day often includes desserts and candies; your event should be no different. Instead of taking the kids to the store to pick out their favorite chocolate bars or Valentine's treats, consider baking something special. Make heart-shaped pancakes for breakfast, or bake sugar cookies and allow everyone to decorate their treats with sprinkles and frosting. You can even bake a red velvet cake or another Valentine's favorite if you feel adventurous.

GIVE GIFTS TO EACH OTHER.

While Christmas and birthdays are often associated with gift-giving, you can also give your kids and spouse special gifts on Valentine's Day to brighten their mood and ensure they feel loved. Flowers, stuffed animals, and chocolates are the go-to Valentine's gifts, but you don't necessarily have to stick to the script. Your family will be thrilled by any gifts they receive!



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Not Just Roses and Chocolates

SPREADING LOVE THIS VALENTINE'S DAY

When most people think about Valentine's Day, they think of roses, chocolates, and romantic dinners. For me, the day has always been about celebrating the love in my life — and not just the romantic kind. From my family and team to the amazing patients who walk through our doors, Valentine's Day is a perfect time to slow down and reflect on the people who mean the most to me.

My first Valentine? That's absolutely my mom. You can call me a momma's boy if you want — I'll gladly own it. My mom has been my rock since day one. She's the one who encouraged me to pursue medicine when

she shared stories from her days as a nurse. This sparked my curiosity and inspired my career. She was also my go-to for scraped knees, girl problems, and even the moments when life felt overwhelming.

Even now, I know I can pick up the phone, call her, and she'll listen, give advice, or just tell me she's proud of me. Honestly, there's no bond quite like the one between a mom and son, and I'm grateful for all she's ever done for me.

My forever Valentine is my wife. This April, we'll celebrate 24 years of marriage, and let me tell you — it's been an incredible journey. She's not just an amazing partner but a brilliant physician, a phenomenal mom, and my No. 1 cheerleader.

When I came to her with crazy dreams about opening a practice or building a surgery center, she didn't hesitate to support me. She's the epitome of grace under pressure, effortlessly balancing her demanding career and family life. Watching her juggle it all is inspiring, and I honestly don't know how I got so lucky.

A large part of my daily life is spent with my work family — the best team we've had in the office to date! Michelle, our director of operations, is an absolute powerhouse. She challenges me to think bigger, dream bigger, and get out of my comfort zone.

Then there's Abby, Gabriella, MK, and Loreen. These women are the heart and soul of our practice and work hard to make sure our patients feel cared for and valued from the moment they walk through the door. Whether it's helping with scheduling, aftercare, or injectables, they pour their hearts into what they do. Our mission is relationship-driven plastic surgery, and my team embodies that every single day.

And, of course, there's our patients. I once heard someone say, "If you don't love the clients you attract, look in the mirror." Honestly, I feel so fortunate to work with people who make our jobs fulfilling. Our patients trust us with their care, and we take that trust seriously. Every time we make a positive impact in someone's life, it feels like we're living out our purpose.

So, this Valentine's Day, I'm celebrating the incredible people in my life: my mom, who's been my biggest supporter since day one; my wife, who's my partner in life and love; my team, who make every workday brighter; and our patients, who make everything we do worthwhile.

Here's to all the love in our lives — no matter what form it takes. Happy Valentine's Day!

—Dr. Mike



WHAT ARE ADAPTOGENS?

Nature's Answer to Anxiety, Stress, and More

We're always looking for new ways to offset our stress. Some people change their diets, hoping that eating healthier will improve their mental health, while others include exercise in their daily routines. No tried-and-true method works for everyone, but a recent trend taking our country by storm might be the secret to healthily reducing stress. All we need to do is take an herb, root, or other plant substance called an adaptogen to melt away any long-looming stress.

While adaptogens have existed for centuries, they are only now becoming more mainstream in American culture. Studies regarding adaptogens are still underway,



but experts theorize that these unique plant substances directly interact with the body's hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, which controls and manages individual stress responses. In order for an herb or plant substance to be considered an adaptogen, it must be nontoxic at regular doses, support the body's ability to cope with stress, and help the body return to a stable state.

Adaptogens are available at almost any pharmacy, each with a unique use. Ashwagandha is one of the most common adaptogens and helps reduce anxiety and depression. Ginseng helps combat fatigue and has other health benefits. Reishi is a

type of mushroom adaptogen that can boost our immune system and even fight cancer. Schisandra, a fruit extract from the magnolia vine, helps with concentration, coordination, and endurance and may protect the liver and nervous system.

While adaptogens sound like an ideal solution for stress management, consider a few things before you start taking them. Adaptogens can negatively interact with certain medications, so you should check with your primary care physician before starting them. Additionally, the Food and Drug Administration does not regulate many adaptogen supplements, so do your research to ensure you choose a reputable brand.

After talking with your health care provider and finding the right adaptogen for your situation, you may discover the key to managing or reducing your stress.



CASSIQUE'S LEGACY

A Lab With a Heart as Big as His Head

There's a reason dogs are called "man's best friend." On Feb. 20, we celebrate Love Your Pet Day, a day to honor the furry, feathery, or scaly friends who bring joy to our lives. While my household is currently pet-free (four kids keep us plenty busy!), we've had our share of pet love in the past — especially with our handsome yellow Lab, Cassique.

Cassique was a part of our family. We got him right after my wife and I got married, so we liked to joke that he was our firstborn. His name, derived from the chief of the Kiawah Indians, reflected his strong but gentle spirit. He was an English Lab with a big blocky head and a stocky build. He had a heart of gold. From the moment we brought him home, we were in love.

Getting Cassique wasn't part of the plan — at least, not at first. As two busy doctors in residency, my wife and I agreed we'd wait until we had a house and maybe consider an older, housebroken dog. But during a visit to South Carolina, fate intervened. We stopped by a breeder "just to look," but when my wife picked up a squirmy little puppy, and he laid his head on her shoulder, it was done. Cassique was coming home with us.

Cassique was everything you could want in a dog: playful, loyal, and incredibly gentle. He'd roughhouse with me but knew to be calm and patient when the kids came along. They'd climb all over him, tug on his ears, and pull his tail, and he'd take it all in stride. He was the best boy. He was a protector, a companion, and a source of comfort. I'll never forget how his big head fit perfectly in my hand as he sat by my chair.

As life got busier and our family grew, Cassique's place on the totem pole shifted. When our second son was diagnosed with a severe allergy to dog dander, we faced a tough decision. With heavy hearts, we found a new home for Cassique with my dad and his wife. It thankfully turned out to be the perfect match, and Cassique quickly became the center of their world.

We still visited often, and seeing him happy in his "retirement home" made it easier to say goodbye. Cassique passed away after a long, love-filled life and left us with so many amazing memories. This Love Your Pet Day, I'll be thinking of Cassique and the joy he brought to our family. Pets may only be with us for a part of our lives, but they leave a lasting impact on our hearts forever.

—Dr. Mike

Inject Beauty

ENHANCE YOUR NATURAL POUT WITH LIP FILLER

When it comes to facial fillers, lips are the most popular starting point — and for good reason! Our eyes naturally gravitate to lips during conversations, Loreen, our expert injector and board certified family nurse practitioner explains. So, it's no wonder they're often the first feature people choose to enhance. But if the thought of lip filler conjures images of overly plump, unnatural "duck lips," don't worry! With the right technique, lip filler can look beautifully natural and subtle.



WHAT IS LIP FILLER?
Lip filler typically contains hyaluronic acid, a substance naturally found in the body that helps to retain moisture and create volume. A single syringe of filler is about the size of a blueberry — yes, just a blueberry! It's amazing how such a small amount can make a big difference. For first-timers, this can help ease nerves about the process.

WHAT TO EXPECT
Many first-time patients may approach filler with hesitation. Their No. 1 concern is looking too overdone. But don't worry — any skilled injector prioritizes a natural look and will guide you to what works best for your unique features. In fact, many people start with just half a syringe to try it out.

It's not uncommon for patients to fall in love with their results during the initial appointment and decide to come back for

the rest of the syringe a few weeks later. (Pro tip: Swelling often makes lips appear fuller immediately after the procedure, so if you like the swelling, you'll likely want to come back for more!)

Another fun fact: Filler isn't just injected directly into the lips. Loreen uses a portion to support the area around the lips to create a balanced and natural look. The recovery process is quick and easy. Some patients experience mild bruising, while others don't bruise at all. However, there's one drawback: no kissing for just a few days! So, if you're planning lip filler as part of your Valentine's Day prep, be sure to book your appointment early in the month to ensure plenty of healing time!

So, why not treat yourself this February? Your lips — and your confidence — deserve a little extra love!

CLAIM YOUR FEBRUARY SAVINGS

Complimentary Lip Flip or Big Savings on Lip Filler

Exclusive Offer!

This February, we're excited to offer some special promotions to enhance your beauty journey! For the entire month, any patient who comes in for a Botox appointment can choose between a **complimentary lip flip** or **\$100 off** a syringe of lip filler. It's the perfect opportunity to try out these popular treatments and see what suits you best.

Also, we are celebrating Full Facial Balancing February! If you want a harmonized and natural look, you don't want to miss this offer. When you **purchase three or more syringes for your facial balancing treatment, you'll receive a free lip filler!** It's an amazing chance to achieve a balanced and youthful appearance while adding a touch of volume to your lips at no extra cost.

Call today to schedule your appointment and claim your savings!

INSPIRATION

