

Breaking up is difficult at any age

VALENTINE'S day — most romantic time of the year or a minefield of romantic blunders?

For many young people, Valentine's Day does not end up the way they wish.

Research has found that your child is five-and-a-half times more likely to break up with their boy or girlfriend around Valentine's Day than at other times of the year.

What does this mean for you as a parent?

If you think your child's relationship is essentially positive you may like to prepare them to get the most out of Valentine's Day.

Disasters can occur when each person has different expectations. If your child feels it should be romantic, with cards, surprise gifts and an exciting date all arranged, while their partner believes it should be ignored, then there are likely to be tears before bedtime.

Encourage communication between the two of them so neither is surprised or disappointed.

Your child shouldn't lay out a plan for their partner, but they could explain how they feel about the day and the sorts of things which would make it something



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special for them. If they are going to send cards or gifts, your support to help them choose something appropriate might save embarrassment.

There are some rather x-rated cards and gifts around which, while bought as a joke, may lead their partners to believe your child is more sexually aware than they really are.

So, if your child is willing — and it's a big 'if' — it may be worth a shopping trip together to ensure they send the right message with their card.

Have them consider whether they'd like the card or gift shown to friends around the school, if they wouldn't then it's advisable not to send it.

What if your child does break up with their partner around now?

If the break up is before the 14th, then some distraction on Valentine's Day may ease the pain a little.

Plan a treat together, whether it's a trip to the movies, watching sports, visiting friends or having a pizza and DVD night in.

Avoid sayings like "There are plenty more fish in the sea" or "You're better off without him (or her)".

Your child is probably not ready to hear this yet.

Take your youngster's distress seriously.

For a small minority of young people, breaking up can leave them feeling very low and worth-

less and they'll need all your support and acceptance to get through this period.

And whatever happens remember you might like to make some plans for yourself to celebrate Valentine's Day, too.

Parent's Tip

Phil, stepfather of Briony, aged 11, and Liam, aged 13, and father of Nathaniel, aged 20 months, and Bethany, aged five, of Meir, says: "Don't take Valentine's Day too seriously, but always get a little gift or card. Do something — don't ignore it."

3 ways to...

Build a supermarket trolley

1. By leaving your trolley behind with a parent or friend — or by programming.

2. Use a trolley, however big, which you own.

3. Use your trolley to transport the items and use them in the store, making shopping easier.