

Archives, March – 2014

Daybreak's Valentine Mass Date

On Valentine's Day Daybreak went out for a buffet supper at Vinh's Wok in Sackville. This is an annual event for Daybreak. Sometimes it's a party at the centre, sometimes it's a house party, and this year we went to a restaurant. About 30 people came together to enjoy all kinds of Chinese style food like egg rolls, chicken balls, rice and stir fried vegetables.

Going on a mass date on Valentine's Day is great for members. Many members do not have a significant other. But many like to spend time together as a group. There are several married couples within the Daybreak group, some of whom met through Daybreak or similar peer support programs. For the couples, being able to go out with Daybreak enables them to share the kind of special Valentine evening they would not otherwise be able to afford. By having a mass date a lot of pressure to be romantic is alleviated. Also, by going with the group, Daybreak members can enjoy the kind of evening society tells them they are supposed to have on Valentine's Day in a way that is more accessible to them.

Mass dating is becoming increasingly popular around the world. By going out in groups people can relax and meet others, maybe spending more time with just one other member of the group and getting to know him or her better without a lot of expectations like there would be on a one-on-one date. Wikipedia has a whole entry about group dating, where it is defined and explained as "a modern pattern for dating where a group of single men and a group of single women organise a night out, with the hope of forming romantic partnerships. It is most popular in Japan, where it is known as gōkon. In other cultures, group dating is becoming more popular as a safe alternative to single dating (especially blind dating), also helping to ease tension, because both parties will feel more comfortable having the company of their friends." Wikipedia also notes that "Group dating is often recommended by parenting experts as more age appropriate form of dating for preteens than one-on-one dating." Families are often very protective when a family member has a disability, so a mass date on Valentine's Day means some of the younger Daybreak members can dress up, go out, have a nice evening in a restaurant with friends, get a treat, and go home with everyone feeling safe and secure.

During the Daybreak mass date everyone enjoyed good conversations. Members sharing together learn new things about themselves and their illnesses. One member said another member noticed he was becoming manic and made some suggestions how to re-centre himself. A couple of weeks later he reports that the techniques she described – for a kind of personal impromptu meditation – are still working. She told him to visualize a peaceful place and, when he started to feel his thoughts racing, to take five minutes to focus on that place and on slow deep breathing. He said she also recommended he pursue less "speed-based" entertainment like electronic sport games or other video games requiring multitasking and fast reflexes. This is the kind of peer support Daybreak is all about. This was not a formal intervention or scheduled program or activity. It was just two members who came to an activity both were interested in, where they shared a common issue and found a solution that works for both of them.

This year the Valentine Mass Date at Daybreak was extra special. Two of our members recently had a baby. They came out for the first time with the cute little guy. Another member has been very sick. She came back that night and enjoyed seeing everyone and holding the baby. At Daybreak members look out for one another and care for one another. Ultimately that is what Valentine's Day is all about at Daybreak.