

BLISSTREE

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Bad Relationship? Don't Use the Holidays as an Excuse to Stay

The holidays are one time of year when many people *think* they want to/ought to be in a relationship. (And Valentine's Day will be here before you know it!) But for those people who aren't in functional relationships during this holiday season, I can't stress enough: Don't stay with your partner just because you want to be with someone for Christmas and New Year's.

We asked relationship expert Noelle Nelson, PhD, author of *Your Man is Wonderful: How to Appreciate Your Partner, Romance Your Differences, and Love the One You've Got* and eight other books, to give our currently (and unhappily) single readers — and those who really should *become* single ASAP — some encouragement and support. Here are her five pieces of advice:

* **Attend that party – alone.** “If your idea of being joyous around the holidays is being coupled, you're likely to stay home because you don't want to be alone. I find that to be disrespectful toward yourself. Don't stay home and bemoan the fact that you don't have an arm piece. Go to the holiday festivities at your church or synagogue or work.”

* **Work on yourself during this time.** You aren't going to stay with the wrong person if you respect yourself. “Say to yourself, ‘I deserve to be treated properly. I deserve commitments to be honored. I deserve not to be yelled at.’ Then your tolerance of being around toxic people diminishes. Most women stay because they feel they don't deserve anything better.” You do.

* **Volunteer.** “Go feed the homeless, and meet other volunteers.”

* **Realize that it's okay to be alone.** “A lot of people buy into the idea that it's a big ‘no-no’ to be by yourself during the big calendar holidays. But there's nothing holy or sacred about being part of a couple. Only be part of a relationship if it's really good.”

* **Throw an “orphan” party.** Invite anyone who doesn't have a partner, or family nearby.

Dr. Nelson adds: “If you have a friend who's with the wrong partner (and she knows it), there's nothing wrong with saying, “You deserve better than this.” Ultimately, hopefully her holidays will be happier.