

Ladies Who Lunch

Marichu Daisy Jimenea: Don't get intimidated nor do I say to myself, I shouldn't get intimidated. I was told this will be a chummy chummy lunch with everybody, sharing their experiences. You know, the topic is very challenging. "Single but loving."

Sometimes you think it's the end of the world. Yung beauty ko, hindi nabenta, 'di ba? But I know it's a different story this time. It's the time to change. Even the married ones envy us. Why are you still single? And they thought that we are not enjoying our lives. But since I grew up in the banking environment, the moms would say, "Ah good for you, you're not married." Sabi ko, "Why?" "See, I have to go to National Bookstore because I have to buy things for my kids. There's a project." or "I have to go home early because my husband has his night-out." Sometimes they would say, "Ma'm, your daughter's calling you because it's like this and like that." And they would say, "See, I can't be you Ichu because you're on your own. You have your own money. You're free to travel." Then I said, "Ganun ba yun? Wala akong katabi sa gabi. Wala akong mayakap sa gabi." Or I'd say, "I cannot share my... yung mga problems. I just wanna talk and there's nobody to listen to me even though it's a good talk or a bad... just to keep it out, 'di ba? Unlike the husband daw, wala na siyang choice but listen. But actually the husband thinks it's a nag. 'Di ba nagna-nag? So do we envy those who are married or are we lucky that we are single? How can we say I chose this topic "Single but loving"? Maybe we should start what is being single, 'di ba? Is being single by choice or because we just forgot the time to think about getting married? Maybe I should stick for myself first because they invited me to be the guest speaker. And you know, I don't know if I would be the model but maybe I should be the one to share. Why did I remain single? I'm 56. Mukha ba akong 56? I didn't go to Vicki Belo. My beauty secret is very cheap. I just go to Luz facial center. I don't use the expensive facial and all that. So you know, I didn't realize I'm 56. Pero time feels so fast. She said I worked in several banks. Actually, graduate ako ng Citibank for 23 years of my life. Could you imagine working in Citibank? I don't sleep. Then after I retired, I moved to Solid Bank because a Citibanker also head the bank. Then when the bank was sold, I moved to PS Bank until my bank president of China Trust, pinirate ako. I just realized how I enjoyed my life. How I enjoyed my work. My staff were like my children. I used to handle 80 people. I'm so makulit boss that I really trust their performance. Kasi our increases are after meeting that goals, right? We get appraised for meeting goals. So that is one of the stress. But on the side, you are also like a mom. Besides single, since you're the boss, you're always like a mom or a buffer to their problems. I don't know if we are qualified to be the guide but being the top-level boss, they open up to you to share their problems. "Ma'm, I can't go to the office tomorrow. It's the opening of the school. I have to bring my kids to the school." Will you understand that na meron kang presentation or you need them? But you know, you always give way to them. And you know, the poor single boss will absorb everything, 'di ba? "Hindi ako pwede kasi may sakit ang anak ko." Sige ako na lang. I don't know if I'm saying the correct thing or the realities of life for being a single supervisor. You always cushion everything. I don't know if the married ones have more points but you know, a single woman absorbs a lot. Puntahan ka ng mga staff mo na "Ma'm, paano ba yun? Nangaliwa yung asawa ko." Iwanan mo, 'di ba? Bakit kung sa akin pa, to hell do I care. Kaya nga hindi ako nag-boyfriend. Kaya nga iniwanan

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ko yung boyfriend ko kasi I can't stand him, 'di ba? But you know, sabihin nga nating iwanan mo, are we the correct party to say like that e 'di naman natin pinagdaanan ang paga-asawa. Hindi naman natin alam kung paano yung natulog kang may katabi kang naghihikik, 'di ba? Things like that. But anyway, going back, single, ang hirap i-define nun. Whether you are single by choice, you are single because you didn't know time flew so fast, or you can be single but have a little girl, little boy and still be okay. Or is it a position that should be envied? But you know, this is what challenged me and I think everyone here, they added pa the word "loving [it]." How did they think about it? Single sana enjoying, 'di ba? Mas madali i-expand yung topic but you know, they said "Single but loving [it]." How can you be that? When sometimes you absorb everything. How can you be loving and say, "Wala na nga akong partner dito, wala na nga nagmamahal sa akin, now you want me to exude love." How can I exude love or happiness when nobody cares for me. I go to an empty house, 'di ba? I have a car. I have a condo. I have everything. Maraming credit cards. Pwede na nga akong maging lalake. Magkano ka ba? Tapos dadaan lagi sa Blessed Sacrament. "Lord, give me a lover." You pray, "Oh Lord, I think I have everything but I'm not happy." Siguro kung sagutin ka ni Lord, "Buang ka ba? Bakit hindi ka happy?" I-compare mo sa katabi mo dyan sa office, mas kawawa yun. She could not buy an expensive Mac red lipstick just like you because she has to apportion her salary to the kids.

So na-define na natin ang single, 'di ba? Single, basta mag-isa. Single, solo niya pera niya. Isn't it great? It's easy to say when you ride in an airplane, ano yung status, 'di ba? Single. Tapos female. Then you get to sit beside a guy who's very attractive. "What's your name?" "I'm Ichu." "Where do you work?" Yung mga ganyan, yung usual. And ending nyan, "Can we go for dinner?" "Ano bang room number mo?" I was telling Issa a while ago, I was looking at your faces. Nakakahiya, 56 ako. Ang babata ng mga itsura nila. Ano kayang mga karanasan nila? I'm not saying I'm a conservative single. My being single is by choice. Not that I forgot every year, every new year, the new year turns a different number. Alam ko yun but my ambition to be successful in my job is so great. Not that ang beauty ko ba hindi pwedeng makabingwit ng lalake? Meron din. I mean to say, but you know, it's actually your goal, I don't know if you're the same with me that it was your goal to be successful in your career. Why career? I wanna show my mom. I wanna show my family. I wanna show my classmates. Gusto ko mag-MBA. Why? Because I want to see that I have arrived and when you reach in your 30s, you say I might buy my own condo. And with the benefits of your office, you have your own car. Paano na lang si Tony, si Mario, si Juan? Ang daming ma-insecure. Uy, mag-date tayo ako rin magbayad. Uy, Valentine's ngayon, tayo na lang para sabihin sa office may date ako or order na lang ako bulaklak. Lagay ko pangalan ko. You know we did that. Kami lang pala magsasama mag-Valentine's kasi wala kaming kalalakihan. Kami rin nago-order ng mga flowers just to show that we are part of the breed. Beauty natin may naloloko pa. Yung tipong ganung. Dapat bang kaawaan yung being single. Do you agree with me? Kawawa ba tayo? No. Don't you know our bosses love us? Kasi ang relo natin hanggang alas-diez ng gabi. Ang mga married hanggang 5:30 lang kasi tutulong pang mag-assignment sa mga anak, 'di ba? At saka si yaya na lang ang bahalang

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magluto. Pero can you stay longer? Why? You have to finish a project or presentation. Iba siguro kay doktora kasi kasi hanggang alas-diez ka ba? Iba sa'yo kasi on call ka. Pero kami, 5:30... Alam mo yung mga Gucci naming sunglasses hindi nagagamit. Kasi lumalabas kami ng office 8:30. You might say are you missing enough being single or do you have pluses being single? As far as the office is concerned, if you're single, they will love you. Ewan ko ba 'to kay Issa kung hindi nagagalit yung mga boss niya na maga-asawa na siya, 'di ba? Those who are working that have an 8-5:30 job, who are single, doesn't really stay until 5:30. They stay until 8, 'di ba? Pero may mga Friday club din, mga dinner. Pero yung iba dyan, doesn't like to go home early because they don't want to go home to an empty house if they are independent. And if they are with their parents, baka sabihin naman ng parents wala na bang nagimbata sa'yo. Kaya sabihin nila, "Buti na lang binigyan nila ako ng project hanggang 8:30. Hindi na mahalata wala akong date." Let's talk about the benefits of being single. You're an asset to your boss and to your company because nobody is after you to stay longer in the office. Sweldo, siyempre the single women are very masipag. I'm pretty sure, unless you disagree with me that they can rise up the ladder faster especially yung may potential. Okay yung school records niya. Academic records. At the same time, she's so good. The way she works is grabe. And she handles people well. Sabi ko, "Come increase of salary, yun, meron kang extra money. If you're money, money, money, it's all yours. Unless sabihin ng mga kapatid natin na may asawa "Ichu, pwede ba i-sponsor yung anak ko?" Enrollment time, "Ate, pwede bang umutang sa'yo?" At saka si single kasi ala namang focus na talagang merong anak. "O sige, sunduin ko yung mga bata. Ipasyal ko sa Rustan's." Alam mo naman mga taste ng mga single, medyo class. Hindi nagtitipid. Hindi yan pang-Baclaran o Divisoria or 168 kasi solo niya pera niya. If you say it's your own money... I failed to ask each one of you, do you take time to go abroad every year and give yourself a break from the panget officemates? Or from the panget dyan? I don't know if Philippines is panget. Basta tanungin ka kung san galing, "Sa Amerika." or "Nag-Europe ako." or "Nag-Vietnam ako... Hong Kong and all that." That is the luxury of being single. Kasi kung may asawa ka, "Honey, pwede ba tayong mag-Hong Kong sa anniversary?" "Magkano ba gagastusin natin?" "Eto mga 80,000." "Huwag na. 'Di ba we plan to buy a new stereo set or something new in the house." So yun yung mga offset... Siyempre if you are married, you have to ask permission from the other half. And mga single, may mga secrets yan. May mga significant others. Yung mga ibang significant others pwedeng ipagyabang, pwede ilakad sa Ayala. Ang iba, hindi pwede. Kasi depende sa klase ng significant others. 'Di ba, may puso rin tayo. We have to love. But not all the time the single woman can love the right way. When you're single, you're interested to the married men especially in the office. Tuwing board meeting, magsasabi yan sila, "Oy Ichu, nag-asawa ka na ba?" Ay sus me, kung pwede lang tayo magtago sa ilalim ng mesa. "'Di ba pinadala ka namin sa States. Wala ka ba talagang naloko dun?" Talagang hindi ko masabi wala. "Hindi ka naman panget." Nagpe-perfume naman ako. You tend to be the attraction in the board room to the married boss. "Oh kulang 'to sa sex." Tapos ito walang boyfriend. Siyempre magre-research muna sila. "Ichu, you have to work late. I'll bring you home. Can we go for dinner?" yan ang mga boss na may crush sa atin. Hindi nila alam, meron din tayong crush sa kanila na pinipigilan lang kasi bawal sa religion, 'di ba? But there are some guys who are very

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aggressive. Nagre-researchan sila. They try to date you. Actually I say this because this is the reality. You get to get proposals from the married men in the office. Idadaan lang siguro sa sandwich muna or ililibre ka ng snack. Libre ka sa lunch. Hanggang ilibre ka sa dinner. At saka ilibre ka na sa trip sa Hong Kong or Macau. "I'm a sad married man", he would say. "My wife is always playing mahjong or going to the casino or I have problems with my wife." Crush na kita noon. "I like your smile, I like the way you dress. I like your cleavage." Oh no, I don't wear plunging. Things like that. I hope the single women listening to me now are not that naive, 'di ba? Kasi those are normal talkies of the married guys. I'm not saying you all be saints. What I'm saying is enjoy life being single in the right way. So you should know how to defend yourselves from mga ganun because you'll be a homewrecker or whatever. But you know, it also happens in Makati that some women really are lured on the offers of a trip abroad, of a Bvlgari necklace or some jewelry or even eating out in very expensive restaurants like Cav, 'di ba? Kasi pwedeng dalhin dito. Kasi hindi pa 'to masyadong kilala. Who can afford expensive dinners? Not the single guys, 'di ba? Only the rich DOM. That's the fact of life.

What else I should cover... Talking about myself, how did I enjoy being single and I just realized I'm 56 now, You know, goal ko talaga mag-start ako ng career na simple staff assistant muna. Dream ko maging vice-president. I didn't expect I'd reach first vice-president. I worked so hard na I don't use na my sunglasses na nga kasi I go home late na. Maaga ako pumapasok 7:30. I go home at 8:30 or 10 when I was in Citibank. Citibank grabe ang pressure dun. In exchange of that, I was sent abroad a lot of times. I was sent to New York. I was sent to Asia palagi. Parang Cubao ko na lang yung Singapore. I went to Borubudur. I had lots of trips. Then I tend to enjoy because you meet different people. Yung mga bumbay, yung mga Indonesian, yung mga classmate ko sa seminars. I get to be sent to several seminars abroad. It broadens your horizon, your knowledge. At the same time, while I was libre 'pag Citibank, yung mga biyahe ko, I realized pala na mas cheap para 'pag Singapore to Jakarta. I would save money that I spen my weekends in Jakarta. Kasi sometimes I'm sent to Singapore for one month. Grabe yun. That's why I don't like Singapore anymore. I went to Borobudur... Jakarta because on my own. Because I said, I was able to save my money, because libre naman yung Singapore ko. So I paid with my own money. I have Filipino friends in Jakarta who invited me to go to Bali. See, yan ang mga ano sa mga single. Sino ba may bank accounts dito? Baka iniipon niyo lang ang pera niyo sa bangko and you're not enjoying. Walang mangyari. You better travel. It's so nice. And maybe, hindi ko sinasabi you want to stay single like all your life baka dun mo ma-meet yung swerte mo sa biyahe. Ano pang benefits ang hindi ko na-cover.

Issa Litton: Actually we can open the floor. Define your being single first. Anybody? What is being single for you? I already read off what you think about it. Being single, what is it for you, really?

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Regina Gallura: I think like most of us who are here today, I think the best part... I don't know because I don't know how old you are. The moment I hit the age, I was comparing my age today than when I was in the mid-20s. I think I'm happier when I'm in my 40s. I think it's the best. I'm looking forward to being in my 50s and I'm single. And you're right, I agree, being single gives you a lot of options. But I guess it also... I don't know if you experience the same thing that you can go and watch a movie by yourself and it's okay. I think it's just being content with what you have. When I think of marriage, I only ask myself, "Will this man make me happier than where I am now?" If the answer is "no," it's certainly not an option. So when I look at a guy and say, "Ang saya ko naman ngayon." So kung sasama ako sa lalakeng ito at malulungkot lang ako at parang lumiliit ang mundo ko, I will not na lang be with this person. So I think that is exciting part about being single. And also, I don't know if it's the same for you... I also think I'm a guy. Para akong lalake mag-isip. So hindi madaling mahulog loob ko. I guess I'm rockahard about certain things. I like being with boys. I enjoy the men. I love them. To me, I think it's easier to just hang-out.

Issa Litton: Wonderful. Thank you so much Ms. Regina. What about other age groups? I actually want to challenge you with a certain... Okay, I'm going to balance myself in Filipino society. In Filipino community, of course. this is something to even things up. Because they ambush interviewed Ms. Ichu kanina. It's a very nice plane to jump off from. We're raised na by the time you get to your 20s, pwede ka na magpakasal na. Late 20s, 30s, yun na. "Bakit wala pang nakakuha sa'yo?" "Is there something wrong with you?" Here's my personal ugh. Sasabihin nila, "Magthi-thirty ka na wala ka pang anak." I mean again we are all raised by those. So in your opinion now, especially we are the more open-minded women, what is being single for you then? Challenge with all that. We already heard two wonderful answers from Ms. Regina and of course, Ms. Ichu.

Belle Beldoza: I've been single for probably half a year already and literally now I'm in my mid-20s. As I said, It's another opportunity. You should look at it as... you know, you're always constantly pressured to have a date or to be seen with someone. But you shouldn't be pressured to do so kasi I found out na you'd rather be alone than be with somebody. That you can't just settle for anybody who's going to compete with you or in terms of you're going to mind their insecurities. Of course, when you're part of a couple, you're always thinking about the other half, what he's thinking, what's he's going to react. But if you're single, you don't really need to think. You're just gonna be yourself. You're gonna be rediscovering yourself. So I think it's really beneficial in that manner if you're chasing after a career. You're building your career especially in our age that we're in mid-20s, I don't feel that there's any rush. That we should rush things. Just have fun, just enjoy what life has to offer. Go on a lot of trips. Probably if somebody right comes along, it will come along and don't force the issue. Don't settle. That's the most important thing to remember when you're single. Don't

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settle for anybody. You know, less than par from what you expect. So I am single. Single and loving it.

Issa Litton: How About from this table?

Adie Villongco: Just like Ms. Regina, I was agreeing with a lot of things that you were saying na it's comfortable being single for me. Because I think I'm more like a guy in that way, I just like hanging-out with them. And just like what Ms. Belle said, I don't want to settle just for anyone. I mean, if I look at a guy and I see, I'm happy with my life and this guy, if he doesn't make me happier, you know, never mind. I really don't need him. I'm not afraid of being alone because I'm not lonely. I have my friends, I have people who love me and who accept me for who I am. Sometimes when you're in a relationship there are certain expectations and sometimes you hold yourself back because you try to mold yourself into those expectations. That's not me because I feel there's a compromise. I wanna live my dreams first because I wanna be happy in that way of fulfilled and content. And then that's time if ever I do get married, that's the time I'll share my life with someone because I'm done with mine.

Marichu Jimenea: Can I say something? Getting your reactions, I'd like to go back to the children of today. The kids of today who are very much advanced. Kasi I noticed I have 7-year-old, I have 10-year-old pamangkins. I was so shocked when my pamangkin in the girls' school sent a letter to the guy, telling the guy that she liked him. Sabi ko sa time ko it's not like that. So if you're in your mid-20s now, having mga crushes, boyfriends, and all that, pinagdaanan ko na yan, maaga pa. I think the new breed now, they're so young, yung like like na, it's so early. The telebabad is there and all that. So when you wish you're 20s, and you graduate from college, mukhang okay na. Loving, having crushes, having steady boyfriends... Yun mga ganun na parang nakadikit talaga sa bawat isa na hindi naghihiwalay, nangyari yan in their 17 until they graduated from college. But when you start a career, you think twice. Marami ng pumapasok na nagbo-bothor sa'yo na "Ano ba? Dikit-dikit ba ako sa boyfriend or I have to do this because I want a career for myself. I just wanna share that I noticed things have changed comparing to my time. It's a different time, it's a different breed nowadays. That when you say you're single, That's not a turn-off. Not that you're liberated. You're just being independent. You have a mind of your own. Of course, you always crush with the oldies. Sayang pinaaral ka sa Amerika or sayang pinaaral ka sa mahal na school tapos wala kang napili dyan. Ang dami dyan. Anak ni ganun, anak ni ganyan. Usually, if you come from a conservative family and medyo from high society, They normally pair you off na anak ni ganito. During my time, my prom dates were selected by my parents. Naswertehan nga lang na yung napili nila ay crush ko rin. Hindi ko rin masabi kung paano kasi wala rin akong anak, 'di ba? Iba na sila ngayon. Ako I was so shocked with my niece na umiyak siya. Bakit? Sinabi raw ng guy, "You're so aggressive." Grade 4 in my school in Cebu kasi Grade 4 may boys pa. "What? She wrote him a letter?" I was shocked

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that even the mom said “Di ko alam ang landi ng anak mo,” sabi ko sa sister-in-law ko. Now if you say, I’m in my 20s or something, I don’t aspire na talagang may steady date ako, yung holding hands palagi. Time ni Rizal pa yun. ‘Di ba, yung mag-holding hands palagi. Pero siyempre we made a pact of I want to be a vice-president in the office, and be the envy of everybody. Pero maglalakad ka sa Bonifacio High Street sa gabi dito, may mga dikit-sikit din dyan. Maiinggit ka rin. Kasi ‘di ba, tao rin tayo. We wanted to have holding hands with somebody, things like that. How independent are the single right now? You said you go to the movies alone. That’s not a rebuff, ‘di ba? People respect that. If you want to go to the dance floor and the guy will not pick you up, I’ll take my girls, sasayaw kami. So what? Is it bad? See, it’s not really a no-no na sa the things we do these days. But I would like to ask from the rest, let’s explore the word “loving.” Single but loving. Is it loving the parents. I’m single, I love my parents very much. I visit them every Sunday. Loving ba yun? Or I love my nieces. I take care of them. I bring them out from tiem to time. What is really loving and being single? I want to understand that.

Issa Litton: That’s a nice question to throw out. Anybody who would like to address that?

Christine Javier: Just to address her point of view of being single and loving. I think in terms of having your own money and having your own time. You can actually be seen as more generous. Like you mentioned earlier, pahiram naman ng pera o paki sponsor naman yung anak. So when you’re single and you have extra money, you can really afford to be more generous to friends and to family. And even to visit people from other countries, you have friends from Jakarta, you can meet with them. You’re the type who can sleep over or go to another country and visit them, miski ang dala mo lang ang Lina (?), Eskinol, whatever. For that, you bring them home. You bring them to Philippines. So I think in that way, you’ll appear very generous and loving.

Marichu Jimenea: I don’t know if the event, if we chose this title, “Single but loving.” Maybe I tend to compare, yung nagsisimba araw-araw, yung mga matatanda, ‘di ba? Yung gigising maaga to go to the first mass to church. Tapos nagdadala ng libretta at saka rosaryo, nakasimangot pa, ‘di ba? I don’t know, maybe, single ka, loving, and enjoying it.

Christine Javier: I think the more difficult thing loving the fact that you’re single. Because like you’ve mentioned, we live in a society that can be very conservative, very religious. And the double standard for men and women. If you’re 40, and a male and single, you’re like the most-sought after bachelor. If you’re 40 and woman, you’re an old maid. So there’s a double standard also there. So how can you actually love being single in a society that way, which brings me to just one TV series that really helped me express my sexuality and my singleness. In the Philippines, I just tell everybody, you know, you watch Sex and the City. Ganun na lang. Because it was the first time, I think, in the world where women were able to express their choice. I wonder if you made this “Men Who

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Lunch” and you made it “Single and loving it.” You probably have twice the size of the room and they’ll really love it with their big cars and their big bikes and their big whatever and small whatevers. We toil with are we really loving being single? And we should, really.

Issa Litton: Anybody else?

Dra. Sharon Rebong: I just like to point that being single is both not a choice and a choice. Not a choice in the sense that most women would like to settle down. And during their time being single, they meet different people and nililigawan din naman sila. That’s the point where I say it’s also a choice because if you don’t find anybody who you think is the right guy for you, then it’s a choice for you to remain single. Now, making it as a choice, how young topic natin na “Single and loving it,” it’s also our choice. To use being single as an avenue to enjoy yourself and to enjoy other people. We don’t have to wait for a partner to express how we love a person. I read a book where it said, “You start loving people who are near you.” So anybody, your officemate, your subordinates, your boss, you give small or big expressions of your love like giving gifts, giving notes or remembering them during birthdays or giving a listening ear to them. So for me that’s being part of being single and loving it.

Adie Villongco: This is just for me, being a happy single. Like we tend to fulfill yourself or you try to make yourself better. It makes you a happy person. And if you exude that happiness, you infect people with it. You try to be more helpful. In my personal experience, I have a nephew. I sponsor sometimes his books for school. Wala lang. I mean it’s nothing that puts me in a pedestal. It’s something you can give because you already have a lot for yourself, maybe, at that point in time. Not just in money but in terms of time and effort. You’re more willing to give it away because you’re happy already. And I think some people reach that point in their lives where they’re so fulfilled they don’t really need a lot already to keep them going because they’ve been through... They’ve seen the world, they achieved these things already and all that’s left for them to do is give. I think that’s the beautiful in being single and that’s how love is translated into action already. So you love yourself, and then you bring that out and you love the people around you.

Issa Litton: Ms. Ichu, any comments?

Marichu Jimenea: That’s actually how I interpret single but loving. She was saying about exuding love because you love yourself, you’re contented with what you have. Kasi in the old school, ‘pag sabi nating teacher old maid, ang sungit, nakasalam pa and so narrow-minded, ‘di ba? I think it’s a new breed this time that single women are now respected. I was telling Issa a while ago that in our office, in our bank, the most successful or handling the higher rank positions are the single, it’s women. Men normally are asked to retire at age 40. And they become house husbands. And I noticed

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among my friends, yung mga babae sa office, yung husband nila, nasa bahay na or may negosyo. But yet women are more mas magaling or matiyaga or more successful. Others here might have a different experience in showing the love. I'm not saying, I don't know who among us here are into a relationship now... I'm not limiting the topic that kayo nandito walang boyfriend or walang significant other, I would call it. But yet not making a commitment lang. Mayroon din siyang significant other, boyfriend or special relation with someone. Like for me, for example, it's known in my subdivision na I'm single. Hindi naman sinasabi na talagang old maid ako. Alam nila available ako. Ang malas ko lang, this I got to share with you. You may laugh at it. May admirer din ako diyan. Most of my admirers are the married ones. Siyempre no-no yan. Anong say mo, may biyudo pala dyan sa subdivision kong tinitirhan. 72. He becomes my partner, yung kachismis ko minsan. I became the association president for two terms. Very active ako. Admire niya yung guts ko. Admire niya yung mga ideas ko. Admire niya yung discipline ko to finish a project. And you know what he does normally? He sends me suman every Saturday. Diyos ko, masuka-suka na ako sa suman ko. Minumun of five sumans. Sabi ko, "Diabetic ako. Bawal 'to. He goes to the market with his daughter, who has a family, every Saturday to send me suman, bibingka and never fail. Then one time, I asked him, "Paano kung pa-departure ka na? Ibig ko sabihin ko paano kung mamatay ka? Wala akong suman." Sabi niya, "Hindi. Pinagbilin kita sa anak ko." Is that loving? Wow, akala ko nago-old maid na ako. Dati kasi hindi ko pinapansin nung nagwo-work ako. Now, I went to retirement last June, napapansin ko yung mga neighbors ko, now, I appreciated the suman also. Then what if you're gone. I'm just being practical. He said, "I told my daughter na when I'm gone, the suman should still go on. It doesn't hurt her budget." Isn't that nice? Ang beauty ko may oldie rin na nagka-crush sa akin. Dapat kayo rin.

Issa Litton: So what is it these times that makes it so easy? You have to admit, it's easier nowadays, especially because of Sex and the City. What's it about today that you love more that's why being single is easier?

Isabel Gatuslao: I'm actually a very very... Like I'm the most modern person you'll ever meet because I'm into the future. I'm into future things. I'm into modern designs. I'm fascinated with technology. I used to be a web designer so I'm really a forward-thinker when it comes to, I think, singlehood, it's a mentality. Like single is the opposite of married. So that's basically it. Where did marriage come from, really? It's because people before who are guys would like to... Their fathers would give their daughters to other rich guys Marichu Daisy Jimenea: Don't get intimidated nor do I say to myself, I shouldn't get intimidated. I was told this will be a chummy chummy lunch with everybody, sharing their experiences. You know, the topic is very challenging. "Single but loving."

Sometimes you think it's the end of the world. Yung beauty ko, hindi nabenta, 'di ba? But I know it's a different story this time. It's the time to change. Even the married ones envy us. Why are you still single? And they thought that we are not enjoying our lives. But since I grew up in the banking

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environment, the moms would say, “Ah good for you, you’re not married.” Sabi ko, “Why?” “See, I have to go to National Bookstore because I have to buy things for my kids. There’s a project.” or “I have to go home early because my husband has his night-out.” Sometimes they would say, “Ma’m, your daughter’s calling you because it’s like this and like that.” And they would say, “See, I can’t be you Ichu because you’re on your own. You have your own money. You’re free to travel.” Then I said, “Ganun ba yun? Wala akong katabi sa gabi. Wala akong mayakap sa gabi.” Or I’d say, “I cannot share my... yung mga problems. I just wanna talk and there’s nobody to listen to me even though it’s a good talk or a bad... just to keep it out, ‘di ba? Unlike the husband daw, wala na siyang choice but listen. But actually the husband thinks it’s a nag. ‘Di ba nagna-nag? So do we envy those who are married or are we lucky that we are single? How can we say I chose this topic “Single but loving”? Maybe we should start what is being single, ‘di ba? Is being single by choice or because we just forgot the time to think about getting married? Maybe I should stick for myself first because they invited me to be the guest speaker. And you know, I don’t know if I would be the model but maybe I should be the one to share. Why did I remain single? I’m 56. Mukha ba akong 56? I didn’t got to Vicki Belo. My beauty secret is very cheap. I just go to Luz facial center. I don’t use the expensive facial and all that. So you know, I didn’t realize I’m 56. Pero time feels so fast. She said I worked in several banks. Actually, graduate ako ng Citibank for 23 years of my life. Could you imagine working in Citibank? I don’t sleep. Then after I retired, I moved to Solid Bank because a Citibanker also head the bank. Then when the bank was sold, I moved to PS Bank until my bank president of China Trust, pinirate ako. I just realized how I enjoyed my life. How I enjoyed my work. My staff were like my children. I used to handle 80 people. I’m so makulit boss that I really trust their performance. Kasi our increases are after meeting that goals, right? We get appraised for meeting goals. So that is one of the stress. But on the side, you are also like a mom. Besides single, since you’re the boss, you’re always like a mom or a buffer to their problems. I don’t know if we are qualified to be the guide but being the top-level boss, they open up to you to share their problems. “Ma’m, I can’t go to the office tomorrow. It’s the opening of the school. I have to bring my kids to the school.” Will you understand that na meron kang presentation or you need them? But you know, you always give way to them. And you know, the poor single boss will absorb everything, ‘di ba? “Hindi ako pwede kasi may sakit ang anak ko.” Sige ako na lang. I don’t know if I’m saying the correct thing or the realities of life for being a single supervisor. You always cushion everything. I don’t know if the married ones have more points but you know, a single woman absorbs a lot. Puntahan ka ng mga staff mo na “Ma’m, paano ba yun? Nangaliwa yung asawa ko.” Iwanan mo, ‘di ba? Bakit kung sa akin pa, to hell do I care. Kaya nga hindi ako nag-boyfriend. Kaya nga iniwanan ko yung boyfriend ko kasi I can’t stand him, ‘di ba? But you know, sabihin nga nating iwanan mo, are we the correct party to say like that e ‘di naman natin pinagdaanan ang paga-asawa. Hindi naman natin alam kung paano yung natulog kang may katabi kang naghihulik, ‘di ba? Things like that. But anyway, going back, single, ang hirap i-define nun. Whether you are single by choice, you are single because you didn’t know time flew so fast, or you can be single but have a little girl, little boy and still be okay. Or is it a position that should be envied? But you know, this is what challenged me and

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I think everyone here, they added pa the word “loving [it].” How did they think about it? Single sana enjoying, ‘di ba? Mas madali i-expand yung topic but you know, they said “Single but loving [it].” How can you be that? When sometimes you absorb everything. How can you be loving and say, “Wala na nga akong partner dito, wala na nga nagmamahal sa akin, now you want me to exude love.” How can I exude love or happiness when nobody cares for me. I go to an empty house, ‘di ba? I have a car. I have a condo. I have everything. Maraming credit cards. Pwede na nga akong maging lalake. Magkano ka ba? Tapos dadaan lagi sa Blessed Sacrament. “Lord, give me a lover.” You pray, “Oh Lord, I think I have everything but I’m not happy.” Siguro kung sagutin ka ni Lord, “Buang ka ba? Bakit hindi ka happy?” I-compare mo sa katabi mo dyan sa office, mas kawawa yun. She could not buy an expensive Mac red lipstick just like you because she has to apportion her salary to the kids.

So na-define na natin ang single, ‘di ba? Single, basta mag-isa. Single, solo niya pera niya. Isn’t it great? It’s easy to say when you ride in an airplane, ano yung status, ‘di ba? Single. Tapos female. Then you get to sit beside a guy who’s very attractive. “What’s your name?” “I’m Ichu.” “Where do you work?” Yung mga ganyan, yung usual. And ending nyan, “Can we go for dinner?” “Ano bang room number mo?” I was telling Issa a while ago, I was looking at your faces. Nakakahiya, 56 ako. Ang babata ng mga itsura nila. Ano kayang mga karanasan nila? I’m not saying I’m a conservative single. My being single is by choice. Not that I forgot every year, every new year, the new year turns a different number. Alam ko yun but my ambition to be successful in my job is so great. Not that ang beauty ko ba hindi pwedeng makabingwit ng lalake? Meron din. I mean to say, but you know, it’s actually your goal, I don’t know if you’re the same with me that it was your goal to be successful in your career. Why career? I wanna show my mom. I wanna show my family. I wanna show my classmates. Gusto ko mag-MBA. Why? Because I want to see that I have arrived and when you reach in your 30s, you say I might buy my own condo. And with the benefits of your office, you have your own car. Paano na lang si Tony, si Mario, si Juan? Ang daming ma-insecure. Uy, mag-date tayo ako rin magbayad. Uy, Valentine’s ngayon, tayo na lang para sabihin sa office may date ako or order na lang ako bulaklak. Lagay ko pangalan ko. You know we did that. Kami lang pala magsasama mag-Valentine’s kasi wala kaming kalalakihan. Kami rin nago-order ng mga flowers just to show that we are part of the breed. Beauty natin may naloloko pa. Yung tipong ganung. Dapat bang kaawaan yung being single. Do you agree with me? Kawawa ba tayo? No. Don’t you know our bosses love us? Kasi ang relo natin hanggang alas-diez ng gabi. Ang mga married hanggang 5:30 lang kasi tutulong pang mag-assignment sa mga anak, ‘di ba? At saka si yaya na lang ang bahalang magluto. Pero can you stay longer? Why? You have to finish a project or presentation. Iba siguro kay doktora kasi kasi hanggang alas-diez ka ba? Iba sa’yo kasi on call ka. Pero kami, 5:30... Alam mo yung mga Gucci naming sunglasses hindi nagagamit. Kasi lumalabas kami ng office 8:30. You might say are you missing enough being single or do you have pluses being single? As far as the office is concerned, if you’re single, they will love you. Ewan ko ba ‘to kay Issa kung hindi nagagalit yung mga boss niya na maga-asawa na siya, ‘di ba? Those who are working that have an 8-5:30 job, who

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are single, doesn't really stay until 5:30. They stay until 8, 'di ba? Pero may mga Friday club din, mga dinner. Pero yung iba dyan, doesn't like to go home early because they don't want to go home to an empty house if they are independent. And if they are with their parents, baka sabihin naman ng parents wala na bang nag-iimbata sa'yo. Kaya sabihin nila, "Buti na lang binigyan nila ako ng project hanggang 8:30. Hindi na mahalata wala akong date." Let's talk about the benefits of being single. You're an asset to your boss and to your company because nobody is after you to stay longer in the office. Sweldo, siyempre the single women are very masipag. I'm pretty sure, unless you disagree with me that they can rise up the ladder faster especially yung may potential. Okay yung school records niya. Academic records. At the same time, she's so good. The way she works is grabe. And she handles people well. Sabi ko, "Come increase of salary, yun, meron kang extra money. If you're money, money, money, it's all yours. Unless sabihin ng mga kapatid natin na may asawa "Ichu, pwede ba i-sponsor yung anak ko?" Enrollment time, "Ate, pwede bang umutang sa'yo?" At saka si single kasi ala namang focus na talagang merong anak. "O sige, sunduin ko yung mga bata. Ipasyal ko sa Rustan's." Alam mo naman mga taste ng mga single, medyo class. Hindi nagtitipid. Hindi yan pang-Baclaran o Divisoria or 168 kasi solo niya pera niya. If you say it's your own money... I failed to ask each one of you, do you take time to go abroad every year and give yourself a break from the panget officemates? Or from the panget dyan? I don't know if Philippines is panget. Basta tanungin ka kung san galing, "Sa Amerika." or "Nag-Europe ako." or "Nag-Vietnam ako... Hong Kong and all that." That is the luxury of being single. Kasi kung may asawa ka, "Honey, pwede ba tayong mag-Hong Kong sa anniversary?" "Magkano ba gagastusin natin?" "Eto mga 80,000." "Huwag na. 'Di ba we plan to buy a new stereo set or something new in the house." So yun yung mga offset... Siyempre if you are married, you have to ask permission from the other half. And mga single, may mga secrets yan. May mga significant others. Yung mga ibang significant others pwedeng ipagyabang, pwede ilakad sa Ayala. Ang iba, hindi pwede. Kasi depende sa klase ng significant others. 'Di ba, may puso rin tayo. We have to love. But not all the time the single woman can love the right way. When you're single, you're interested to the married men especially in the office. Tuwing board meeting, magsasabi yan sila, "Oy Ichu, nag-asawa ka na ba?" Ay sus me, kung pwede lang tayo magtago sa ilalim ng mesa. "'Di ba pinadala ka namin sa States. Wala ka ba talagang naloko dun?" Talagang hindi ko masabi wala. "Hindi ka naman panget." Nagpe-perfume naman ako. You tend to be the attraction in the board room to the married boss. "Oh kulang 'to sa sex." Tapos ito walang boyfriend. Siyempre magre-research muna sila. "Ichu, you have to work late. I'll bring you home. Can we go for dinner?" yan ang mga boss na may crush sa atin. Hindi nila alam, meron din tayong crush sa kanila na pinipigilan lang kasi bawal sa religion, 'di ba? But there are some guys who are very aggressive. Nagre-researchan sila. They try to date you. Actually I say this because this is the reality. You get to get proposals from the married men in the office. Idadaan lang siguro sa sandwich muna or ililibre ka ng snack. Libre ka sa lunch. Hanggang ilibre ka sa dinner. At saka ilibre ka na sa trip sa Hong Kong or Macau. "I'm a sad married man," he would say. "My wife is always playing

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mahjong or going to the casino or I have problems with my wife.”Crush na kita noon. “I like your smile, I like the way you dress. I like your cleavage.” Oh no, I don’t wear plunging. Things like that. I hope the single women listening to me now are not that naive, ‘di ba? Kasi those are normal talkies of the married guys. I’m not saying you all be saints. What I’m saying is enjoy life being single in the right way. So you should know how to defend yourselves from mga ganun because you’ll be a homewrecker or whatever. But you know, it also happens in Makati that some women really are lured on the offers of a trip abroad, of a Bvlgari necklace or some jewelry or even eating out in very expensive restaurants like Cav, ‘di ba? Kasi pwedeng dalhin dito. Kasi hindi pa ‘to masyadong kilala. Who can afford expensive dinners? Not the single guys, ‘di ba? Only the rich DOM. That’s the fact of life.

What else I should cover... Talking about myself, how did I enjoy being single and I just realized I’m 56 now, You know, goal ko talaga mag-start ako ng career na simple staff assistant muna. Dream ko maging vice-president. I didn’t expect I’d reach first vice-president. I worked so hard na I don’t use na my sunglasses na nga kasi I go home late na. Maaga ako pumapasok 7:30. I go home at 8:30 or 10 when I was in Citibank. Citibank grabe ang pressure dun. In exchange of that, I was sent abroad a lot of times. I was sent to New York. I was sent to Asia palagi. Parang Cubao ko na lang yung Singapore. I went to Borobudur. I had lots of trips. Then I tend to enjoy because you meet different people. Yung mga bumbay, yung mga Indonesian, yung mga classmate ko sa seminars. I get to be sent to several seminars abroad. It broadens your horizon, your knowledge. At the same time, while I was libre ‘pag Citibank, yung mga biyahe ko, I realized pala na mas cheap para ‘pag Singapore to Jakarta. I would save money that I spen my weekends in Jakarta. Kasi sometimes I’m sent to Singapore for one month. Grabe yun. That’s why I don’t like Singapore anymore. I went to Borobudur... Jakarta because on my own. Because I said, I was able to save my money, because libre naman yung Singapore ko. So I paid with my own money. I have Filipino friends in Jakarta who invited me to go to Bali. See, yan ang mga ano sa mga single. Sino ba may bank accounts dito? Baka iniipon niyo lang ang pera niyo sa bangko and you’re not enjoying. Walang mangyari. You better travel. It’s so nice. And maybe, hindi ko sinasabi you want to stay single like all your life baka dun mo ma-meet yung swerte mo sa biyahe. Ano pang benefits ang hindi ko na-cover.

Issa Litton: Actually we can open the floor. Define your being single first. Anybody? What is being single for you? I already read off what you think about it. Being single, what is it for you, really?

Regina Gallura: I think like most of us who are here today, I think the best part... I don’t know because I don’t know how old you are. The moment I hit the age, I was comparing my age today than when I was in the mid-20s. I think I’m happier when I’m in my 40s. I think it’s the best. I’m looking forward to being in my 50s and I’m single. And you’re right, I agree, being single gives you a lot of options. But I guess it also... I don’t know if you experience the same thing that you can go and watch a movie by yourself and it’s okay. I think it’s just being content with what you have. When I think of marriage, I only ask myself, “Will this man make me happier than where I am now?” If the

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answer is “no,” it’s certainly not an option. So when I look at a guy and say, “Ang saya ko naman ngayon.” So kung sasama ako sa lalakeng ito at malulungkot lang ako at parang lumiliit ang mundo ko, I will not na lang be with this person. So I think that is exciting part about being single. And also, I don’t know if it’s the same for you... I also think I’m a guy. Para akong lalake mag-isip. So hindi madaling mahulog loob ko. I guess I’m rockahard about certain things. I like being with boys. I enjoy the men. I love them. To me, I think it’s easier to just hang-out.

Issa Litton: Wonderful. Thank you so much Ms. Regina. What about other age groups? I actually want to challenge you with a certain... Okay, I’m going to balance myself in Filipino society. In Filipino community, of course. this is something to even things up. Because they ambush interviewed Ms. Ichu kanina. It’s a very nice plane to jump off from. We’re raised na by the time you get to your 20s, pwede ka na magpakasal na. Late 20s, 30s, yun na. “Bakit wala pang nakakuha sa’yo?” “Is there something wrong with you?” Here’s my personal ugh. Sasabihin nila, “Magthi-thirty ka na wala ka pang anak.” I mean again we are all raised by those. So in your opinion now, especially we are the more open-minded women, what is being single for you then? Challenge with all that. We already heard two wonderful answers from Ms. Regina and of course, Ms. Ichu.

Belle Beldoza: I’ve been single for probably half a year already and literally now I’m in my mid-20s. As I said, It’s another opportunity. You should look at it as... you know, you’re always constantly pressured to have a date or to be seen with someone. But you shouldn’t be pressured to do so kasi I found out na you’d rather be alone than be with somebody. That you can’t just settle for anybody who’s going to compete with you or in terms of you’re going to mind their insecurities. Of course, when you’re part of a couple, you’re always thinking about the other half, what he’s thinking, what’s he’s going to react. But if you’re single, you don’t really need to think. You’re just gonna be yourself. You’re gonna be rediscovering yourself. So I think it’s really beneficial in that manner if you’re chasing after a career. You’re building your career especially in our age that we’re in mid-20s, I don’t feel that there’s any rush. That we should rush things. Just have fun, just enjoy what life has to offer. Go on a lot of trips. Probably if somebody right comes along, it will come along and don’t force the issue. Don’t settle. That’s the most important thing to remember when you’re single. Don’t settle for anybody. You know, less than par from what you expect. So I am single. Single and loving it.

Issa Litton: How About from this table?

Adie Villongco: Just like Ms. Regina, I was agreeing with a lot of things that you were saying na it’s comfortable being single for me. Because I think I’m more like a guy in that way, I just like hanging-out with them. And just like what Ms. Belle said, I don’t want to settle just for anyone. I mean, if I look at a guy and I see, I’m happy with my life and this guy, if he doesn’t make me happier, you know, never mind. I really don’t need him. I’m not afraid of being alone because I’m not lonely. I

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have my friends, I have people who love me and who accept me for who I am. Sometimes when you're in a relationship there are certain expectations and sometimes you hold yourself back because you try to mold yourself into those expectations. That's not me because I feel there's a compromise. I wanna live my dreams first because I wanna be happy in that way of fulfilled and content. And then that's time if ever I do get married, that's the time I'll share my life with someone because I'm done with mine.

Marichu Jimenea: Can I say something? Getting your reactions, I'd like to go back to the children of today. The kids of today who are very much advanced. Kasi I noticed I have 7-year-old, I have 10-year-old pamangkins. I was so shocked when my pamangkin in the girls' school sent a letter to the guy, telling the guy that she liked him. Sabi ko sa time ko it's not like that. So if you're in your mid-20s now, having mga crushes, boyfriends, and all that, pinagdaanan ko na yan, maaga pa. I think the new breed now, they're so young, yung like like na, it's so early. The telebabad is there and all that. So when you wish you're 20s, and you graduate from college, mukhang okay na. Loving, having crushes, having steady boyfriends... Yun mga ganun na parang nakadikit talaga sa bawat isa na hindi naghihiwalay, nangyari yan in their 17 until they graduated from college. But when you start a career, you think twice. Marami ng pumapasok na nagbo-bother sa'yo na "Ano ba? Dikit-dikit ba ako sa boyfriend or I have to do this because I want a career for myself. I just wanna share that I noticed things have changed comparing to my time. It's a different time, it's a different breed nowadays. That when you say you're single, That's not a turn-off. Not that you're liberated. You're just being independent. You have a mind of your own. Of course, you always crush with the oldies. Sayang pinaaral ka sa Amerika or sayang pinaaral ka sa mahal na school tapos wala kang napili dyan. Ang dami dyan. Anak ni ganun, anak ni ganyan. Usually, if you come from a conservative family and medyo from high society, They normally pair you off na anak ni ganito. During my time, my prom dates were selected by my parents. Naswertehan nga lang na yung napili nila ay crush ko rin. Hindi ko rin masabi kung paano kasi wala rin akong anak, 'di ba? Iba na sila ngayon. Ako I was so shocked with my niece na umiyak siya. Bakit? Sinabi raw ng guy, "You're so aggressive." Grade 4 in my school in Cebu kasi Grade 4 may boys pa. "What? She wrote him a letter?" I was shocked that even the mom said "Di ko alam ang landi ng anak mo," sabi ko sa sister-in-law ko. Now if you say, I'm in my 20s or something, I don't aspire na talagang may steady date ako, yung holding hands palagi. Time ni Rizal pa yun. 'Di ba, yung mag-holding hands palagi. Pero siyempre we made a pact of I want to be a vice-president in the office, and be the envy of everybody. Pero maglalalakad ka sa Bonifacio High Street sa gabi dito, may mga dikit-sikit din dyan. Maiinggit ka rin. Kasi 'di ba, tao rin tayo. We wanted to have holding hands with somebody, things like that. How independent are the single right now? You said you go to the movies alone. That's not a rebuff, 'di ba? People respect that. If you want to go to the dance floor and the guy will not pick you up, I'll take my girls, sasayaw kami. So what? Is it bad? See, it's not really a no-no na sa the things we do these days. But I would like to ask from the rest, let's explore the word "loving." Single but loving. Is it loving the parents. I'm single, I love my parents very much. I visit them every Sunday. Loving ba yun? Or I love my nieces. I take care of them. I bring them out from tiem to time. What is really loving and being

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single? I want to understand that.

Issa Litton: That's a nice question to throw out. Anybody who would like to address that?

Christine Javier: Just to address her point of view of being single and loving. I think in terms of having your own money and having your own time. You can actually be seen as more generous. Like you mentioned earlier, pahiram naman ng pera o paki sponsor naman yung anak. So when you're single and you have extra money, you can really afford to be more generous to friends and to family. And even to visit people from other countries, you have friends from Jakarta, you can meet with them. You're the type who can sleep over or go to another country and visit them, miski ang dala mo lang ang Lina (?), Eskinol, whatever. For that, you bring them home. You bring them to Philippines. So I think in that way, you'll appear very generous and loving.

Marichu Jimenea: I don't know if the event, if we chose this title, "Single but loving." Maybe I tend to compare, yung nagsisimba araw-araw, yung mga matatanda, 'di ba? Yung gigising maaga to go to the first mass to church. Tapos nagdadala ng libretta at saka rosaryo, nakasimangot pa, 'di ba? I don't know, maybe, single ka, loving, and enjoying it.

Christine Javier:

I think the more difficult thing loving the fact that you're single. Because like you've mentioned, we live in a society that can be very conservative, very religious. And the double standard for men and women. If you're 40, and a male and single, you're like the most-sought after bachelor. If you're 40 and woman, you're an old maid. So there's a double standard also there. So how can you actually love being single in a society that way, which brings me to just one TV series that really helped me express my sexuality and my singleness. In the Philippines, I just tell everybody, you know, you watch Sex and the City. Ganun na lang. Because it was the first time, I think, in the world where women were able to express their choice. I wonder if you made this "Men Who Lunch" and you made it "Single and loving it." You probably have twice the size of the room and they'll really love it with their big cars and their big bikes and their big whatever and small whatever. We toil with are we really loving being single? And we should, really.

Issa Litton: Anybody else?

Dra. Sharon Rebong: I just like to point that being single is both not a choice and a choice. Not a choice in the sense that most women would like to settle down. And during their time being single, they meet different people and nililigawan din naman sila. That's the point where I say it's also a choice because if you don't find anybody who you think is the right guy for you, then it's a choice

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for you to remain single. Now, making it as a choice, how yung topic natin na “Single and loving it,” it’s also our choice. To use being single as an avenue to enjoy yourself and to enjoy other people. We don’t have to wait for a partner to express how we love a person. I read a book where it said, “You start loving people who are near you.” So anybody, your officemate, your subordinates, your boss, you give small or big expressions of your love like giving gifts, giving notes or remembering them during birthdays or giving a listening ear to them. So for me that’s being part of being single and loving it.

Adie Villongco: This is just for me, being a happy single. Like we tend to fulfill yourself or you try to make yourself better. It makes you a happy person. And if you exude that happiness, you infect people with it. You try to be more helpful. In my personal experience, I have a nephew. I sponsor sometimes his books for school. Wala lang. I mean it’s nothing that puts me in a pedestal. It’s something you can give because you already have a lot for yourself, maybe, at that point in time. Not just in money but in terms of time and effort. You’re more willing to give it away because you’re happy already. And I think some people reach that point in their lives where they’re so fulfilled they don’t really need a lot already to keep them going because they’ve been through... They’ve seen the world, they achieved these things already and all that’s left for them to do is give. I think that’s the beautiful in being single and that’s how love is translated into action already. So you love yourself, and then you bring that out and you love the people around you.

Issa Litton: Ms. Ichu, any comments?

Marichu Jimenea: That’s actually how I interpret single but loving. She was saying about exuding love because you love yourself, you’re contented with what you have. Kasi in the old school, ‘pag sabi nating teacher old maid, ang sungit, nakasalamin pa and so narrow-minded, ‘di ba? I think it’s a new breed this time that single women are now respected. I was telling Issa a while ago that in our office, in our bank, the most successful or handling the higher rank positions are the single, it’s women. Men normally are asked to retire at age 40. And they become house husbands. And I noticed among my friends, yung mga babae sa office, yung husband nila, nasa bahay na or may negosyo. But yet women are more mas magaling or matiyaga or more successful. Others here might have a different experience in showing the love. I’m not saying, I don’t know who among us here are into a relationship now... I’m not limiting the topic that kayo nandito walang boyfriend or walang significant other, I would call it. But yet not making a commitment lang. Mayroon din siyang significant other, boyfriend or special relation with someone. Like for me, for example, it’s known in my subdivision na I’m single. Hindi naman sinasabi na talagang old maid ako. Alam nila available ako. Ang malas ko lang, this I got to share with you. You may laugh at it. May admirer din ako diyan. Most of my admirers are the married ones. Siyempre no-no yan. Anong say mo, may biyudo pala dyan sa subdivision kong tinitirhan. 72. He becomes my partner, yung kachismis ko minsan. I became the association president for two terms. Very active ako. Admire niya yung guts ko. Admire niya yung

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mga ideas ko. Admire niya yung discipline ko to finish a project. And you know what he does normally? He sends me suman every Saturday. Diyos ko, masuka-suka na ako sa suman ko. Minumun of five sumans. Sabi ko, “Diabetic ako. Bawal ‘to. He goes to the market with his daughter, who has a family, every Saturday to send me suman, bibingka and never fail. Then one time, I asked him, “Paano kung pa-departure ka na? Ibig ko sabihin ko paano kung mamatay ka? Wala akong suman.” Sabi niya, “Hindi. Pinagbilin kita sa anak ko.” Is that loving? Wow, akala ko nago-old maid na ako. Dati kasi hindi ko pinapansin nung nagwo-work ako. Now, I went to retirement last June, napapansin ko yung mga neighbors ko, now, I appreciated the suman also. Then what if you’re gone. I’m just being practical. He said, “I told my daughter na when I’m gone, the suman should still go on. It doesn’t hurt her budget.” Isn’t that nice? Ang beauty ko may oldie rin na nagka-crush sa akin. Dapat kayo rin.

Issa Litton: So what is it these times that makes it so easy? You have to admit, it’s easier nowadays, especially because of Sex and the City. What’s it about today that you love more that’s why being single is easier?

Isabel Gatuslao: I’m actually a very very... Like I’m the most modern person you’ll ever meet because I’m into the future. I’m into future things. I’m into modern designs. I’m fascinated with technology. I used to be a web designer so I’m really a forward-thinker when it comes to, I think, singlehood, it’s a mentality. Like single is the opposite of married. So that’s basically it. Where did marriage come from, really? It’s because people before who are guys would like to... Their fathers would give their daughters to other rich guys to... Back in England, they would marry all others property and dowry. And that is marriage. The reason why... I mean in a relationship but it doesn’t mean I want to get married because for me, marriage is the thing of the past. They’ve been doing it for how many thousands of years and do we really want to do it again? Virgin Airlines now has this commercial flight that you pay \$200,000 and can go up the space and fly around for 15 minutes. So getting married looks like peanuts compared to that. I don’t disrespect people who are getting married because there are always people who have different tastes in things. Like there’s some people who like vintage furniture. I like super modern furniture. When you sit down, it’s cold. We’re all diverse people and I think I respect everyone who wants to get married. I feel I can be in a relationship. I can have kids without having to go through the tradition. Nowadays, really getting married is all about showing off what designer dress you have or inviting a thousand people so your parents can have business with the other family. For me, that’s so like oh my God... that’s Marie Antoinette. That’s what they did. I don’t want to do what she did already. That’s already been done so many times. In other words, lipas na yan sa uso, ‘di ba? For me, it’s like going forward. To the future and thinking, you know what, I also want to have kids. Maybe in the future I’ll have kids but now, at this exact moment, I’m not thinking of having kids because that’s adding more carbon footprints to the world. Really, that’s how I see it. It’s pollution. Diapers are pollution. I already 40 nephews and nieces. They have two parents but I am the coolest tita to them. I go home to Bacolod and my God, for them, talagang “thanks for buying me this toy.” You don’t have to be married to experience all these

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things. People tell me, “Why aren’t you married? You’re already this old. You’re already 27. Do you have plans to get married?” I’m not one type of person who does things just to appease people. Just to make them feel comfortable. “Ah okay, she’s married. She’s okay na. Her life will unfold.” She’ll buy a car, a house, and then she’ll have kids and then she’s fine. She’s done. I don’t want to do that for other people to feel that you can be comfortable with your perception with me. I’m living life because I just like the stuffs that I do. I do whatever I want to do. We all have to have contentedness within ourselves. You can be a traditionalist. You can have a wedding with an elephant. I don’t care. Sorry, I really want to go to outer space in the future.

Christine Javier: Before this becomes a male-bashing... I also love men and all that but not very far into the future but just my experience in the last year. I teach English to Europeans. I speak to about 40 people every week. Not the same person all the time. 90% of the people I meet online are not married but have partners. Then I would talk to them about the institution of marriage. For a lot of them, it just doesn’t work. So in other words, then I realized, in other countries, the institution of marriage has actually changed and it doesn’t have to be like the way we do it. You have to wear a white veil and you have to go to church and all that. It’s really more what you say. You can actually live with a man, have children but it’s not the same. It’s like you still have some kind of independence. That was strange for me because here it’s still like that. Every Sunday, from 8 o’clock in the morning until nighttime you have marriage after marriage. Don’t they’ll be happy for one marriage to happen in the whole month. That’s Europe.

Issa Litton: What is it about this world that again helps everybody? The modern time for the single woman.

Dra. Sharon Rebong: I’d just want to give my piece with regard to what Isabel said. She’s very modern and that’s very good. But I think there are also things in the modern times that should be anchored on what we value. It doesn’t really matter whether you’re single or married. It should really be a choice because getting married has a lot of responsibilities. While I have friends and people who have really enjoyed their married life and say it’s the best thing that happened to them, there are also a lot of married people who say that it’s really very difficult. Even if you feel, we single women think that it’s a lonely life being single, there are a lot of times that you experience loneliness. There are also a lot of times in married where the person feels so lonely even if there is the spouse. So it’s the same.

Issa Litton: Look at what happened to Christie Brinkley. She said she’s married to a stranger. Isn’t that the saddest thing? Single, with boyfriend, separated, and all that. It’s really just a state of mind. I think it means freedom. Freedom that you can take to any level that you want because you’re in-charge of your life. Am I wrapping that nicely? That’s one thing, no matter what age, because unfortunately nga, we’re supposed to be tayo yung pang barter. Until this day and age, pag manganak, ‘pag girl, there’s still that, “Ay girl,” right? Who knows, maybe in the next generation, “Yeah, fi-

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nally! Another girl!” It’s just a matter of change and it’s nice to know women of today’s society are changing all these old views. Like what Dra. said, it’s not about changing values. Because at the end of it all, we’re all unique. What do you value? Ms. Isable is one of the most forward-thinking women I’ve ever met. Talagang kudos to you. At the same time, you’re going to be a peg. Hopefully blazing some sort of trail for a lot of women just to be very comfortable in their own skin. And we need that. From that to someone who does wanna get married, which again, there’s nothing wrong with that. Still love yourself because you have to know yourself first. First and foremost, be comfortable with what you are no matter what status box you have to check. It’s just a box. It’s not you. Ms. Ichu, I’ll throw you back the floor.

Marichu Jimenea: I haven’t asked this question actually. Actually when you’re at my age level na, what are your insecurities? Meron pa ba? Because like if you reach my level, at my age, like me, I would say, I have arrived, travel-wise, career, recognition and all that. In the end, I want the simple life na. especially when I retired, I’ve been out of job for 2 to 3 months, just enjoying it because I lived a crazy world working so hard to make a career and name for myself. When I retired this June, I tend to slow down and appreciated life. Sabi ko, there was a lot of things I wasn’t able to do because I was trying to strike a name for myself. I was trying to save a lot of money. I was trying to be known as “Ichu” in the bank. But in the end, I’m being sentimental and emotional, I just realized my real friends, single or married. I became the sounding board of my friends who are having problems with their married life. Siguro ako nagbayad ng kainan namin pero pero ako rin naga-absorb rin ng kanyang heartaches niya. Umuuwi ako, masama loob ko. Umiiyak ako nung ako na lang mag-isa. #&%(&(&^& Dati nung officemate ko siya, niligawan pa siya. Sinabi ko talaga sa lalaking yan, “Alagaan mo yung barkada ko.” Ngayon pinaiyak lang pala. I cried when my friend told me, “Ichu, I thought I had a perfect marriage.” Sabi ko, “But na lang pala hindi ako nag-asawa.” I meant to say I thought it was a plus factor. I said, “You have intelligent kids. Hayaan mo na yang @*^&%^\$@ na yan.” Look at the other side. Ang kyu-cute ng mga anak mo. Dean’s lister pa. Ano bang insecurities of being single? Did we miss a lot? For all these years, did I miss anything. Parang I was able to take care of my mom because wala akong asawa na aawayin ako. “Ang tagal mo na sa Cebu, uwi ka na dito.” I was able to take care of my sick mom. I have favorite nephews and nieces and they would call me Tita Chu. Sometimes, my sister-in-law would get insecure because my nephews and nieces would say, “Ah, she’s my love.” I will ask them, “Number 1, number 2, number 3?” “You’re number 2 from my mom.” Then lately, nalito na siguro yung batana 6 years old. “Tita, pwede bang wala na lang number?” Kasi I’m always asking, “Sinong love mo? Number 1? Number 2? Number 3?” “Tita, no more.” Sabi sa akin, “Ichu, parang imo anak mo na ito.” Na-slighten ako. I just wanted to share. I have so much love or whatever. I want to share to them. Kasi nakikit ko yung mga anak ng mga barkada ko. Now I can see the insecurity. That sometimes you love the kids of your siblings and they’re not your own and sometimes you get into clash with them when they’re trying to protect. They let you step out of the picture. Because sometimes in my travel, I try to borrow one and bring

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with me. The parents would say, “You’re spoiling them. I can’t afford what you give them.” Parenting is one of my insecurities. ‘Pag may nagho-holding hands diyan, I wish it were me. Natural lang yun. We’re all single here in this room but don’t we aspire to get married eventually? I pray to God that I might find a man not really perfect because I was asked in the ambush interview if there is a Mister Right. There is no Mr. Right. It’s just that they might have two or three qualities of Mr. Right but the rest you adjust just to move on in your relationship. And there you mature in trying to understand each other. I am okay with Isabel’s point of view. You are free to think about it but sometimes, you feel at the end of the day, sometimes when you’re on your bed alone, “Bakit kami naghiwalay ni Johnny?” Siyempre we love ourselves. We think that we’re the perfect. We say, “Sa’n ba ako nagkulang?” But we should put our feet on the ground, and really love ourselves. Kasi if we love ourselves, the insecurities will go as long as you believe you went through the right breeding and all that, you’re in good company. That what you’re doing is right. If you feel that what you are doing is not right, just be ready to accept the consequences. Na sabihin mo, “Ay, hindi ko alam. Nabuntis pala ako. Hindi ko pala kaya ‘to.” Pinasukan mo yan, ‘di ba? So single but loving ba yan?

Issa Litton: Either way. At the end of the day, in one point of your life, if you find yourself single, take pride because it’ll be your choice how to live that. How about Ms. NJ?

NJ Torres: I like being single. I love also having a guy with me. What I like being single is that is the freedom as you said earlier. Independence of making your own decisions, not relying on everything. I love traveling. One thing that I experienced in dating guys is that you have to be sensitive with them. If they’re coming with you, if they have money to spend to go traveling with you or if they can spend the kind of shoes you want. You have to consider the small stuffs. Maybe that’s the reason why, right now, I’m good single for now. But maybe by the age of 30, I can meet him. By the way, I’m a new tita so I love being a tita. I don’t want to spoil him but soon I will. I’ll buy her pink suits, pink stuffs. Anyway, bottomline, the only thing that’s making everything good right now is because I’m working. I wonder about people who doesn’t really work or doesn’t have anyone. I also have to consider that being has its downfalls also. I’m not saying being single is perfect but right now it’s my thing.

Issa Litton: Okay, so with that, how about giving everybody a round of applause. It’s a great thing that everybody just opened up. I’m sure everybody’s going to leave now enriched.

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