

## Love or Money?

The findings of a recent Harris Interactive poll show that, due to the recession, 42 percent of Americans are holding off on major life decisions, including marriage and children.

This has begun to create a whole slew of additional problems for couples.

Women who felt like the man in their life was getting ready to propose may now be wondering what happened to his devotion. He's suddenly more distant or stressed or reluctant to talk about the future. Does that mean he's no longer interested? Is he rethinking your relationship?

Men who thought their relationship was moving to the next level may feel trapped in an economic dilemma. They want to provide the woman they love with the ring and wedding she wants... but at the moment there just isn't room to make it happen.

Paranoia and mistrust in relationships can fester in times like these, and communication can quickly go downhill.

→ *Do you feel like your relationship has changed for untouchable reasons over the last several months? How much do you think it could be related to economic stress?*

## How Do You Escape?

An article in today's *New York Times* states that, because of this economic nightmare, "In a recession, what people want is a happy ending." Makes sense.

So how are people trying to get this relief?

Apparently, through Fabio and the like. Harlequin book sales are way up and romance novels in general are flying off the shelves. During the Depression, *Gone with the Wind* was everyone's book of choice for escapism. Now? It's all about the *Twilight* saga and its unreal and ultimate leading man, Edward.

Is there anything wrong with sinking into the pages of a book to try and block out reality for a while? Absolutely nothing suspect about that at all. It's what you take with you when you leave those pages that can get you in a heap of trouble... especially in your relationship.

Just because the economy is in dire straits, that doesn't mean your relationship has to end up there as well. But if you're escaping to books (and movies), imagining the kind of happy endings/romance that you're not experiencing, what room are you leaving in life for real love? Whether they're sitting in the other room, or are still out there waiting to be discovered?

→ *Romance books - have you allowed them to take you away? Or can you keep your head about you when it comes to the rogues and gents that kiss your bookmark?*



## When You're in "Wuv"

Couples who communicate in positive ways with each other are more likely to stay happy in their relationship. This information, gathered by recent studies, isn't so much of a shocker, right? But you may be surprised to learn what is included in the "positive communication" category.

Turns out, that utterly adorable Schmoopie, Honeybunny, or Schnookums that your partner calls you is the glue that holds the two of you together. Nicknames, made-up language, even ooey-goey baby talk are all methods of positive communication for couples - and they're all methods of creating intimacy in a relationship.

It may be sickening for you to observe couples acting unabashedly lovey-dovey in public, but there's no need for you to be an exhibitionist couple if it doesn't suit you. Just don't be afraid to get mushy at home with your sweetie pie - even being funny can do the trick. It's the inside jokes and the intimate details that only the two of you share that strengthens your relationship.

It's when these endearments begin to dwindle that you need to look further to see what's happening in your relationship, especially if the number of "I love yous" have also gone out the window. The intimacy of your language and communication make up the heart of your relationship.

→ *Are you willing to reveal the nickname or habits that you and your pookie share?*

## Where Are All the Cougars?

The word "cougar" has become synonymous with older women who are linked romantically with younger men. Spoofed on *Saturday Night Live*, cougars are shown as kind of desperate and a little bit icky. But in movies like *The Graduate* (Anne Bancroft as Mrs. Robinson) and even *Wedding Crashers* (Jane Seymour aka Kitty Cat), the cougars are intriguing... perhaps a little off, but nevertheless fascinating and, dare we say it, sometimes even sexy.

But how do people really feel about cougars? Are they desperate women who are trying to hang onto their younger days by "hunting" younger men?

We tend to think that this so-called cougar trend has been blown a bit out of proportion. Speed dating services have tried recently to capitalize on this cougarism, but it hasn't really been working out for them. The younger men just aren't signing up to meet the older ladies. And the event organizers are a bit baffled. Our guess is that it's a well-publicized relationship or two (e.g. Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher) that's making everyone think cougar-led romances are a common trend... or, at least, a trend that younger men would be willing to admit their interest in.

It's not that easy to bring to mind oodles of real-life older-woman/younger-man couples - famous, infamous, or otherwise. One relationship, albeit highly publicized, does not necessarily make a trend.

→ *How do you see cougars - overblown trend or raging epidemic?*

## Is Cheating Contagious?

When you've been involved in a relationship that ended because of cheating, it's hard not to spend a lot of time thinking about it. Asking yourself questions like "What did I do wrong?" or "Why did I think they were so honest?" According to a recent [Newsweek article](#), scientists have begun to question the idea that cheating is a cold, calculated, rational choice that is reinforced by how much a person thinks they can get away with before they risk being caught. But it might not be that simple.

What some recent studies have found is that cheating can be contagious. That's right. Seeing someone else getting away with something can prompt others to take that same risk, ideally, they hope, with similar positive results. The thing to keep in mind though is what the study also deduced - our "inner moralist," they conclude, "doesn't really want to cheat."

When someone gets caught cheating though, they're perceived as bad eggs. And no one likes that feeling. No one wants to be stigmatized as such. Cheating, this study found, can decline in "catchiness" when someone else gets caught doing the same thing.

*→ If you've been in a relationship where cheating occurred, do you feel like it happened because someone was empowered by another to take that risk?*

## Are You Pink or Blue?

Pink is for women, right? Not so fast. Recent research has shown that pink isn't the default favorite color for the ladies. Both men and women apparently have a hankering for blue, while purple is also at the top for women. In fact, many females associate pink or "for-her" products with second-rate goods.

So that got us wondering if gender-specific sales are patronizing and/or insulting. This color choice seems to work in favor of Victoria's Secret which has created an entire line of clothing under the brand Pink.

But not every woman loves pink. Sure, growing up with Barbie Dolls and ballerinas, pink is just kind of a "given" for girls... but why is pink still synonymous with adult females? From cell phones to laptops, pink has become an option for many goods. Some women choose it just because it's the only alternative to basic black and they want some color in their lives. If they have to be on that Blackberry all day, might as well be something nice to look at, right?

*→ So we're asking you to consider how you may be influenced by or "discriminated" against with pink brand marketing. What would you do if you came across a guy with a pink cell phone? What kind of relationship do you have with the color pink?*

## Top 5 Tips for Lasting Sexual Bliss

Communicate. Be self confident. Know you're desirable. Live in the moment. You know all of these tips lend themselves to creating the mind-blowing bedroom experiences you've always craved.

But it doesn't hurt to be reminded of typically unspoken tips so you can keep your sexual bliss up and running, no matter how long you've been together. *Psychology Today* got us thinking about how good sex can be *great* sex and how we can dig down deep to figure out what might be getting in the way of sexual satisfaction.

1. **Reprogram your mind.** Being unable to let go completely during sex – whether emotionally or physically – might be a method of self-preservation. Are you freaked out about vulnerability? Fearful of losing your partner or getting hurt?
2. **Compromise – is it as much fun as it sounds?** Bedroom negotiations (done at the right time of course) make people comfortable. But limiting your sexual buffet can leave you hungry, resentful, and bored.
3. **Orgasm isn't the goal.** Plain and simple. Enjoy the sex. Enjoy your partner. Think about your partner. Stop focusing on the climax.
4. **Sex isn't a football game.** There is no playbook that maps out the best routes to go about making a touchdown. Technique can become mechanical – being proficient can become predictable. Are you thinking about how you're playing the game... or are you thinking about how to gel with your teammate?
5. **Women don't have to play the innocent.** Hot sex is good. Women like it. Men like it. But many women hold back in bed because they're ashamed of their own desire. They may think that "making love" is the only appropriate kind of sex for a long-term relationship. The result of lusty sex shouldn't be guilt.

→ *What's your tip for sexual bliss?*

## Flirt Until It Hurts?

How far would you go to impress someone? Apparently, men are much more willing to take a flying leap – literally – than women.

Many men flirt with risk thinking it will help them land a woman. Men account for four-fifths of the world's skydivers and two-thirds of all rock climbers. And now, according to a Florida State University study, it's suggested that men are inspired to go to such heights for more than just the thrill.

There could be very good reasons behind these strenuous efforts...

The dynamics of today's society are, for women, no longer about finding a husband and having kids. Women are more financially capable of taking care of themselves than ever before... so having a big, strong provider in their life isn't exactly a necessity. Women are looking for companionship more than anything. But it's always a nice perk to meet a man who also has super-sexy ambition and confidence.

So it's easy to speculate that the most daring of men believe they must go to extremes to capture the attention of the woman they want. But the study suggests that they only go to such efforts if they

believe they are likely to benefit from their risk-taking... otherwise, why take a chance on your parachute not opening or your climbing harness breaking if you're not guaranteed to "get the girl"?

→ *Ladies, are you enticed by risk-taking men or someone who practices the art of subtlety?*

### **Splitsville? Not So Fast...**

The financial trauma the nation is experiencing right now doesn't only put a strain on wallets. Many couples are mired in relationship problems they never imagined they'd have to face - and they're having to make decisions they never thought they'd be forced to make. So is that a bad or good thing?

According to recent news reports, here's a little of what's going on in peoples' love lives:

→ The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers says 37 percent of their members are reporting that they have seen a decrease in divorce cases nationwide.

→ Therapists are reporting an upswing in married couples trying to work out their problems as opposed to resigning themselves to that pricey quick fix - divorce.

→ And when it comes to bouncing bundles of joy, there seems to be a freeze on having babies, a surge in safer birth control methods, and even a downswing in having sex at all (which doesn't exactly help keep the life in a relationship).

While the recession may be causing the stress in relationships that ultimately makes people decide they want to divorce, the financial strain is ironically forcing people to put that decision to divorce on hold.

So then you're left trying to figure out how to "stand" living together for a little longer.

But we propose that economic strain may actually be a blessing in disguise. Is taking the time to work on your relationship such a bad thing? There are alternatives to divorce that can get you and your partner on a healthier path and introduce you to new communication methods, resulting in a renewed love... and a saved relationship.

→ *Has your relationship been affected by the economy?*

### **Are You Into It?**

Raise your hand if you've seen the commercial of Drew Barrymore saying, "He MySpaced me." We thought you might have... for weeks, televisions have been plastered with ads about the release of *He's Just Not That Into You*. A self-help book turned into a movie is definitely an interesting concept... but we're wondering if this is the kind of flick that could encourage bad behavior rather than curb it, and if the reactions people have to the story will be like those that occurred after the viewing of another film...

*The Break-Up* was a movie that had men leaving theatres saying, "He was so right! She is such a drama queen!" and women saying, "She tried so hard! He never listened to what she really needed."

These films are all, at their heart, Mars vs. Venus. But are viewers supposed to learn any lessons from entertainment like this? Maybe we're reading too much into it, maybe we know just how important it is

to respect the differences between men and women rather than perpetuate the stereotypes or make fun of the sexes. Laughing is healthy, but it's not funny when your love life isn't getting anywhere.

We know that movies get stuck in peoples' psyches and hold on tight - and not always in a good way. So we want to know if the idea of this movie is making you cringe, or if the commercials are making you feel like you can already relate to the characters.

→ *Are you going to see the movie this weekend? If so, come back and give us your review!*

## **O After O After O**

Some people think multiple orgasms – aka, the Bionic O – are a myth. But to many women, the Bionic O's existence is a moot point... they'd love to have just one orgasm during sex, period! A poll conducted by Ask Mars Venus revealed that 36 percent of women orgasm “some” of the time, rarely, or never when they're between the sheets.

It seems though that the numbers may actually be higher than that. According to a study reported by [The Kinsey Institute](#), only 29 percent of women *always* have orgasms with their partner (compared to 75 percent of men). That can seem like a disheartening number for the ladies (and yet another chink in a man's effort to produce that Holy Grail for the woman they love).

Here's the thing – most women simply don't orgasm as easily or as often as movies, television, and modern society would have us believe. In fact, 58 percent of women who responded to our poll admitted to “faking it” sometimes. Take heart guys – it's often less to soothe your ego and more to take the pressure off of herself. It's almost impossible for a woman to have an orgasm if she feels she *has to*.

Many women become so consumed with all their responsibilities of *giving* that their capacity to *receive* begins to diminish. Even the most sensitive man in the world can't bring a woman to orgasm if her mind is on the household chores, or that last 10 pounds she thinks she needs to lose.

The key is to remember that women often need to experience intimacy on several levels in order to reach climax. Physical intimacy is, of course, important, but the emotional and mental elements are equally crucial and often overlooked, especially by men.

Many women express that their most satisfying sexual experiences come from being connected to someone... satisfaction isn't all about orgasm. But being intimate with someone on physical and verbal levels (communication again – it's always important!) can get a woman that much closer to the pleasure she's long been after. Women need time to warm up – and, guys, you can learn how to help her get there.

→ *The Bionic Multiple O –is it a myth or a reality in your sex life?*

## Who's Snooping?

According to a recent study, more than 70 percent of people in the U.K. admit to spying on their partner's online activity. This usually happens at least once a month with common searches including:

- Monitoring Twitter conversations
- Looking to see if they are friends with ex-partners on Facebook
- Reviewing what, if any, comments they left on a friend's Facebook photos.

And 68 percent of Brits also admitted they would check their partner's private emails if they knew the password.

→ *Do you spy? Do you think your partner is checking up on you?*