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Spousonomics: How Economics Can Help Figure Out Your Marriage

by Paula Szuchman

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The more it costs to have sex, the less sex you have, say Paula Szuchman and Jenny Anderson. From their new book, *Spousonomics*, three lessons in how to make every year the Year of the Rabbit.

Here's some standard advice about improving your sex life:

- Have more foreplay.
- Talk about it.
- Keep a journal of your feelings re: sex.
- Introduce role play/massage/scented candles.
- Go on a romantic vacation.
- Rekindle the mystery.

Here's our advice:

- Make it affordable.

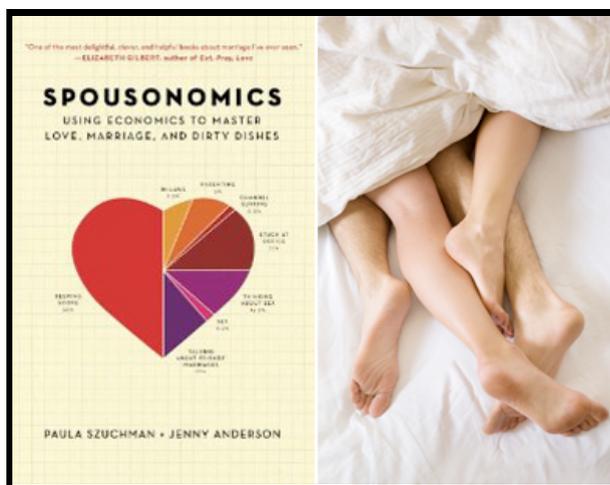
Wha?

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Jenny Anderson

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Getty Images

Let's explain. All that stuff about foreplay and romance? That stuff takes time and energy. And if it's one thing today's couples don't have in excess it's time and energy. We just wrote a book about this very topic. It's called *Spousonomics*, and it looks at ways economics can help people improve their relationships. Economics is all about the allocation of scarce resources, and the key to a happy marriage is, in

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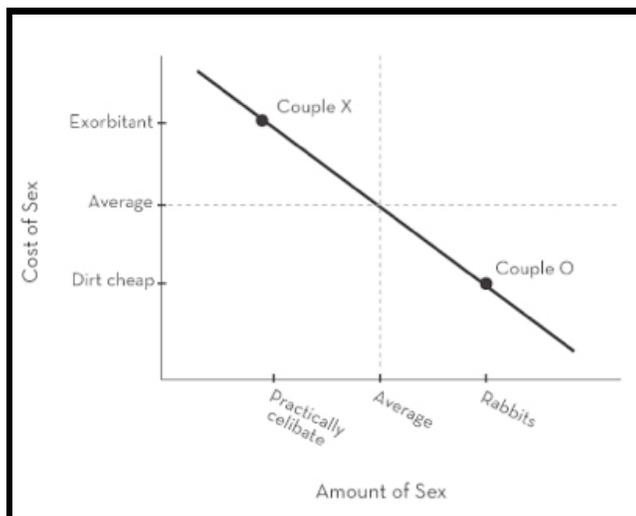
many ways, finding smart ways to allocate your own scarce resources—the hours in your day, money in your bank, your sex drive, your patience, or the sheer willpower it takes for you to stay awake a minute past 10 p.m. No surprise that the No.1 reason married couples say they don't have sex, according to our research: They're too tired.

So we ask you: How is ADDING foreplay to the situation going to incentivize already-exhausted couples to get busy? Just imagine the inner monologue: "Drink another glass of wine, watch the end of *CSI*, and curl up in bed...or down a Red Bull, light 18 orange-blossom candles, and break out the head tickler?" Not really a tough decision.

This is where affordability comes into play. As any economist will tell you, demand tends to go up when costs go down—not up. That's why stores put things on sale, gyms offer a free month at sign-up, and Ford pushes zero-interest car loans.

So that's it—the secret to good sex after marriage: low costs, high transparency. Who said economics was dismal?

Take a look at this:



This is a negative sloping demand curve. It shows that when the cost of something rises, we want less of it. When sex becomes exorbitantly expensive, we're practically celibate. That's the unfortunate situation Couple X finds themselves in. They're the kind of people who keep feelings journals and think sex needs to be as hot as it was when they first met and involve at least one foot massage. And because of this, they can't ever seem to find the time to do it.

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VinceSamios

I've calculated that for me, sex with a partner is more expensive than sex with a prostitute. Probably because I've always bought partners far too many presents.

8:49 am, Feb 1, 2011

(1) | | |

Jim McDermott

'Daddy, how much does it cost to get married?'

'I don't know, son; I'm still paying'

6:07 am, Feb 2, 2011

| |

beastyjay

Simple supply and demand. But don;t liberals hate Adam Smith and prefer Lenin and Marxs' theories of economics?

Maybe through this lesson, liberals can begin to understand what Obama is doing (what he said he would do) with energy. Make it more expensive to extract and reduce supply so that the cost goes up - and folks will use less.

The problem is that Obama and his Marxist buddies could care less about the

working families who will have to pay more for even a modicum of what they had. I'm sure Obama will continue to con his base that he views as "f**king retarded" into thinking it is all the evil corporations screwing them.

12:39 pm, Feb 1, 2011

(3) | | |

Cyricism

Anyone who reads an article about sex and comments making a loosely related barb against liberal economic policy either has a shitty sex life or doesn't understand economics.

1:18 pm, Feb 1, 2011

| | |

BillCooper

Jesus H. Christ, you're a whiney little bitch; no wonder you can't get laid. You're obviously one of those people who use thier personalities for birth control. If you had a life, you could find better things to do than try to turn every article into a bitch about politics. Here's an idea straight from this article-
-Get F*cked!

7:57 pm, Feb 1, 2011

(1) | | |

Jim McDermott

Leave the troll alone, guys; this is how the creatures get release, so to speak.

6:09 am, Feb 2, 2011

|

foofajah

This piece was not even about politics, it is about interpersonal relationships. You get a FAIL in reading comprehension 101.

8:36 pm, Feb 1, 2011

| | |

milankundera

This might me the dumbest thing I've ever read. First, music and eating healthy are certainly not addictions. They do not light up the parts of the brain that control addiction - very different from true addictions like drugs. Second, her argument ignores hormonal fluctuation, positive life events, or age of children (sex pretty tough when there's a newborn in the house). Making sex "cheap" is pretty much common sense and I don't think people need a 9th-grade demand curve to figure such things out. That said, the importance of transparency cannot be underestimated. This reminder may be the only useful part of this article.

3:35 pm, Feb 1, 2011

| | |

beastyjay

Cheap sex? Sounds good to me...

4:58 pm, Feb 1, 2011

(1) | | |

foofajah

For a criticism of "rational addiction" theory, see:
Rogeberg, Ole (2004) "Taking Absurd Theories Seriously: Economics and the Case of Rational Addiction Theories". Philosophy of Science, 71, 263-285.
Rational addiction theories "illustrate how absurd choice theories in economics get taken seriously as possibly true explanations and tools for welfare analysis despite being poorly interpreted, empirically unfalsifiable, and based on wildly inaccurate assumptions selectively justified by ad-hoc stories."

8:58 pm, Feb 1, 2011

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