

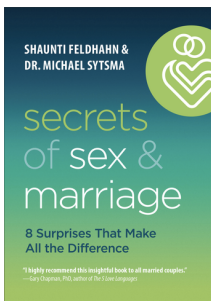
SHAUNTI FELDHAHN &
DR. MICHAEL SYTSMA



secrets
of sex &
marriage

**8 Surprises That Make
All the Difference**

"I highly recommend this insightful book to all married couples."
—Gary Chapman, PhD, author of *The 5 Love Languages*



Best-Selling Author and Relationship Researcher Shaunti Feldhahn and Renowned Sex Therapist Dr. Michael Sytsma Release 'Secrets of Sex & Marriage'

Groundbreaking intimacy research reveals what the average married couple most needs (and wants!) to know

BLOOMINGTON, Minn., Nov. 30, 2022 – To help couples intimately understand their spouse and create the marriage they have always wanted, social researcher and relationship expert Shaunti Feldhahn and licensed sex therapist and pastor Dr. Michael Sytsma have co-authored an insightful, fascinating, and practical guide based on vast clinical experience and breakthrough research. "Secrets of Sex & Marriage" releases February 7, 2023, from Bethany House Publishers.

"Secrets of Sex & Marriage" offers revealing findings from The Marriage Intimacy Project; a study of 5,300 individuals about the most intimate aspects of their relationships. This research includes the largest nationally-representative survey ever conducted with married couples about sex. Feldhahn and Dr. Sytsma provide actionable knowledge and takeaways, including tips from Dr. Sytsma's more than 35 years of clinical experience. This is information readers can trust, from both a scientific and faith perspective. As one reader put it, "This book was so helpful and down to earth. It was like a conversation with a friend - if your friend happened to be a pastor and a sex therapist."

That approachability was what Feldhahn and Dr. Sytsma were going for. "Sexual intimacy is one of the most common issues in marriage, with almost 80% of couples mismatched in how often they want it," said Feldhahn. "It does not have to be that way. We focused on digging out the practical guidance that will help readers find mutually beneficial, equally satisfying sex for both partners."

"Secrets of Sex & Marriage" provides insight into what helps couples maintain a healthy relationship in both physical intimacy and the larger context of general marital intimacy overall. Feldhahn and Dr. Sytsma share specific types of intentional connections and communication that create a loving and affirming marriage.

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Highlighting key misconceptions, myths and assumptions about sexual fulfillment, Feldhahn and Dr. Sytsma have made it easy for couples to talk openly and honestly about their intimacy hopes, expectations, and desires. "Secrets of Sex & Marriage" addresses many of the questions husbands and wives often ponder, such as:

- "Are we normal?"
- "Why isn't my spouse interested in sex like I am?"
- "I don't want to feel pressured, but don't want to disappoint my spouse either. What do I do?"
- "How do we handle the impact of medication, menopause, porn, ED, pain...?"
- **Most importantly: "How can we get on the same page and create a thriving intimate life that is equally satisfying for both partners?"**

"Sexual intimacy is about so much more than pleasure," said Dr. Sytsma. "The physical expression of love between a husband and wife should not be hindered because of wrong assumptions. I believe the insights in this book have the potential to transform many marriages."

For more information about "Secrets of Sex & Marriage," visit bakerpublishinggroup.com/books/secrets-of-sex-and-marriage/410150.

About the Authors

Shaunti Feldhahn is a bestselling author, social researcher, speaker, and podcaster. With a graduate degree from Harvard, Shaunti uses her analytical background to help relationships thrive. She and her husband, Jeff, have coauthored groundbreaking relationship books with nearly 3 million copies sold. For more information, visit shaunti.com.

Dr. Michael Sytsma is an ordained minister, licensed professional counselor, certified sex therapist, professor, and national speaker. With over 30 years of clinical experience in sex therapy, he founded Building Intimate Marriages, Inc. and co-founded Sexual Wholeness, Inc. For more information, visit intimatemarriage.org.

About Bethany House Publishers

Bethany House has been publishing high-quality books for more than 60 years. From humble beginnings as the publishing arm of a missions organization, it is now a division of Baker Publishing Group, the industry's largest independent Christian book publisher. Bethany House seeks to uplift readers' families, faith, and free time with our library of industry-leading fiction and bestselling, Christ-centered nonfiction. For more information, visit bakerpublishinggroup.com/bethanyhouse.



Shaunti Feldhahn is a ground-breaking social researcher, best-selling author, public speaker, wife and mother. After receiving her master's degree from Harvard, she worked on Wall Street. Shaunti now uses her analytical skills in conducting research studies to uncover and share the little things that make a big difference for thriving lives and relationships.

Shaunti's research-based books are based on multi-year, nationally-representative research studies and have proved to be transformative for personal and professional relationships globally. With translations in 26 languages and more than three million copies sold, her books are widely used by therapists, corporate coaches, HR departments and Christian organizations, serving families and organizations around the world.

Shaunti's bestselling *For Women Only* and *For Men Only* (which she co-authored with her husband, Jeff), have transformed countless lives. These landmark books offer research-based, simple "aha moments" that allow the reader to suddenly see and remove the obstacles to a great relationship. That goal has continued in her ongoing research, as she has tackled additional projects to meet common needs. Shaunti's conversational, innovative way of sharing these findings has been featured in other books such as *Thriving in Love & Money*, *The Kindness Challenge*, *The Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages*, *The Good News about Marriage*, *For Parents Only*, *The Male Factor*, and now, *Secrets of Sex & Marriage* (February 2023).

Shaunti speaks regularly at events, both in-person and virtual, for various organizations, universities, women's conferences, youth retreats, leadership conferences, military workshops, stadium simulcasts and (alongside her husband, Jeff) marriage conferences. Check out her speaking topics and clips [here](#).

As a popular media commentator, Shaunti's findings are regularly featured in both secular and faith-based media, including *The TODAY Show*, *FamilyLife Radio*, *Focus on the Family*, *The New York Times* and *Cosmopolitan*.

To learn more about Shaunti and her notable research, visit her website: shaunti.com.

Dr. Michael Sytsma has been working with couples in a variety of capacities since 1987. He is a licensed professional counselor in the state of Georgia, a Certified Sex Therapist and a Certified Professional Counseling Supervisor. He is also an ordained minister with The Wesleyan Church and has served as a staff pastor for churches with attendance from 30 to over 1000. He is currently appointed to Building Intimate Marriages, Inc. by The Wesleyan Church where he provides marriage and sex therapy and training to other professionals. Michael also cofounded Sexual Wholeness, Inc., a Christian non-profit dedicated to training, equipping, and certifying professionals in human sexuality.



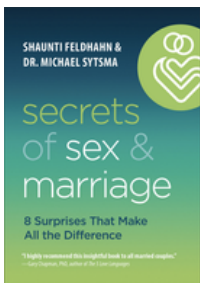
After earning a Bachelor of Science in Christian Ministry from Indiana Wesleyan University, Michael went on to receive a master's degree in community counseling from Georgia State University, and a diploma in Christian counseling from Psychological Studies Institute. He subsequently earned a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in Child and Family Development/Marriage and Family Therapy, where he specialized in marital sexual therapy. His dissertation topic was "Sexual Desire Discrepancy in Married Couples."

With a pastoral heart, a gift in teaching and a passion for helping couples grow in marriage, Michael uses his skills to teach couples important truths about marriage in a fun and interesting way, helping them to grow into healthier, transformative relationships with their spouses.

As a therapist, Michael is a compassionate pastor who is not afraid to encourage others, calling them into further holiness to ultimately become the men and women God has created them to be. He hopes to grow marriages into intimate, God-designed unions—reflective of the Gospel. His workshops and seminars have helped countless couples across America.

As a professor, Dr. Sytsma teaches 6-8 graduate courses a year in sex therapy and human sexuality. He is a professor at Asbury Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Dallas Theologica Seminary, Denver Seminary, and Richmond Graduate.

Michael has been married to his wife Karen since 1985. They have two sons and a daughter-in-law, Josiah, Caleb and Dinah. To learn more about Dr. Michael Sytsma, visit his website: <https://intimatemarriage.org/bim-team/mike-sytsma/>.



BOOK FACT SHEET

Title: "Secrets of Sex & Marriage: 8 Surprises That Make All the Difference"

Authors: Shaunti Feldhahn, Dr. Michael Sytsma

Publisher: Bethany House Publishers

Publication date: February 7, 2023

ISBN-10: 0764239554

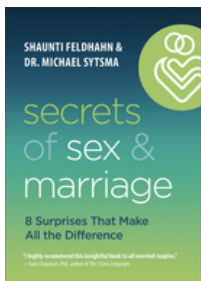
ISBN-13: 978-0764239557

Synopsis: Most people are curious about sex and would love a few answers as they ponder common questions:

- "Are we normal?"
- "Why isn't my spouse as interested in sex as I am?"
- "I don't want to feel pressured, but don't want to disappoint my spouse either—what do I do?"
- "How do we handle the impact of medication, menopause, porn, ED, pain...?"
- Most importantly: "How can we get on the same page and create a thriving intimate life?"

Sex is one of the most common marriage issues (for example, almost 80% of couples are mismatched in how often they want it), but it does not have to be that way.

Relationship researcher Shaunti Feldhahn and renowned sex therapist Dr. Michael Sytsma have identified eight simple, transformational factors to help you move from disconnection to delight. This book reveals the most important sex-related issues for the average couple—giving you workable solutions and lasting hope. This is knowledge you can trust, based on vast clinical experience and breakthrough research, including the largest nationally-representative study on sex ever conducted with married couples. This book is not a "sex manual"; it is a fascinating, practical field guide that will help you intimately understand your spouse and create the marriage you have always wanted.



THE MARRIAGE INTIMACY PROJECT FACT SHEET

Secrets of Sex & Marriage highlights research from the largest nationally-representative survey ever conducted with married couples about sex. The Marriage Intimacy Project (MIP) was conducted over the span of three years, involving a large research team, professional survey companies and several partner organizations to gather, analyze and organize input from more than 5,300 individuals using anonymous surveys and interviews.

Four main surveys were conducted, two primary and two specialized. Part of what makes this study unique is that most marriage and sex studies use a convenience sample, meaning whoever can be found to complete the survey. The two primary MIP surveys revealed information from respondents specifically recruited by survey companies to be generally representative of the demographics in the United States, including age, gender, racial background, religious affiliation, geographic area, orientation and education level.

The Matched Pair Survey (MPS) included 501 married couples and is the largest nationally representative matched-pair survey of married couples ever conducted about sex. For one specialized survey, the MIP team repeated most of the MPS survey with a typical convince sample of 250 mostly church-going couples.

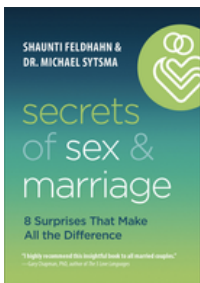
The Married Individual's Survey (MIS) is a nationally representative sample of 1,097 married individuals (meaning the data was only obtained from one spouse).

For the other specialized survey, the researchers polled more than 800 mental health professionals recruited through the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) to explore their expertise and experience in working with sexual issues in the helping relationship.

Some of the key findings answer very common questions, including:

- How often are couples having sex?
- What type of sex is "normal?"
- What if a couple cannot physically have sex in the same way they did before?
- How satisfied is the average married couple?
- Is it true that men want more sex than women?
- In how many couples does one person wants more sexual connection than the other - and what do they do about it?
- What difference does it make to a marriage if the couple is or isn't having much sex?

More from this study is available in SecretsofSexandMarriage.com.



SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Set-up and “safe” questions for G-rated answers:

- What makes *Secrets of Sex & Marriage* so different from other intimacy and marriage books?
- What inspired you to do this project and conduct the research to begin with?
- Tell us about The Marriage Intimacy Project and how you actually did this research study. How did you get people to give you honest answers about this part of their lives?
- What was your favorite part of this project?
- Why was it important to approach the topic of intimacy and marriage with both a clinical and biblical perspective?
- You note that *Secrets of Sex & Marriage* is more practical than theological. Can you talk about this for a moment?
- You say one thing you found was the importance of communication about intimacy in marriage. I've got to tell you, a lot of people don't want to talk about this topic in their marriage! Is it really that important?
- Why do you think we don't communicate – or so easily miscommunicate – about this area of married life?
- How can couples improve communication in this area?
- Why would you recommend married couples read this book together?
- What if only one spouse wants to read this book? Can that still benefit their marriage?
- You discovered something about the importance of curiosity in your marriage. What did you learn?
- You learned that creating a great marriage in this area actually starts with what happens in the mind, not with what happens physically. What do you mean by that?
- When there are problems and heartaches in this area of marriage, you say to check whether the issue is a bad heart or bad skill. What do you mean by that?

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- What is the most encouraging thing you learned in the research?
- I know our listeners are really curious to hear what else you found out! But since we need to keep this safe for the whole family / since we are out of time, we will have to leave it there. Where can people get the book, and learn more?

Questions for PG-rated answers (If desired. If the interview needs to be purely G-rated, but you want to address some of the topics below, let us know. We can make it work. If the interview does not need to be purely G-rated, let us know what you're comfortable with. PG? PG-13? Don't worry - we will never do R!):

- What is the most surprising/important thing the Marriage Intimacy Study revealed?
- You say that one of the most common disconnects is the simple pain of one spouse wanting to connect more frequently than the other spouse. Is that common? What percentage of couples does that apply to?
- In those cases, it is easy to assume the disconnect is because one person simply has a higher drive than the other - and that is something that doesn't seem like it can change much. But you say something else is often the issue! Tell us more.
- Should sex be mutually satisfying for both men and women?
- Tell us about some of the myths you discuss in your book.
- Can you give us a preview of some of the other surprises you highlight in the book?
- What are you hoping readers will take away from *Secrets of Sex & Marriage*?
- For dating or engaged couples who are looking ahead to marriage, how can this research help them?
- How can couples best practically apply this knowledge in their marriages?
- Once a couple's eyes are opened to these things they didn't "get" before, and they apply what they have learned, what sort of transformation could potentially come from that?

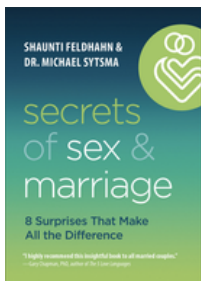
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Questions specific to Shaunti Feldhahn:

- You've done multiple research studies. Beyond just this intimacy topic, have you found anything in particular to be the key to a healthy marriage?
- Over the years, you've seen some meaningful life transformation that comes from people's eyes being opened to things they didn't "get" before. Would you mind sharing examples?
- What if a couple is dealing with real heartache in this area? There are probably people listening who may think this book is just for people who are already connecting fairly well and just need some questions answered. They may not think this book is for them. What would you say to them?

Questions specific to Dr. Michael Sytsma:

- For how many years have you researched the topic of sex and intimacy in marriage? What led you to this calling/passion?
- How has your experience in working with couples both in therapy and as a pastor helped you with this specific book?
- What is the most common issue you have found that keeps couples from communicating effectively about their intimate lives?
- What is the most common issue you have seen that impacts intimacy in marriage?
- What is the one piece of advice that you would give a newlywed couple as they embark on their journey together so that they can maintain and grow their relationship (both in and out of the bedroom?)
- What if a couple is dealing with a true area of concern in this area? Maybe it is medical, maybe one of them is dealing with a compulsive issue, maybe they just aren't connecting in this area well and there has been a lot of heartache. What advice would you have for them?



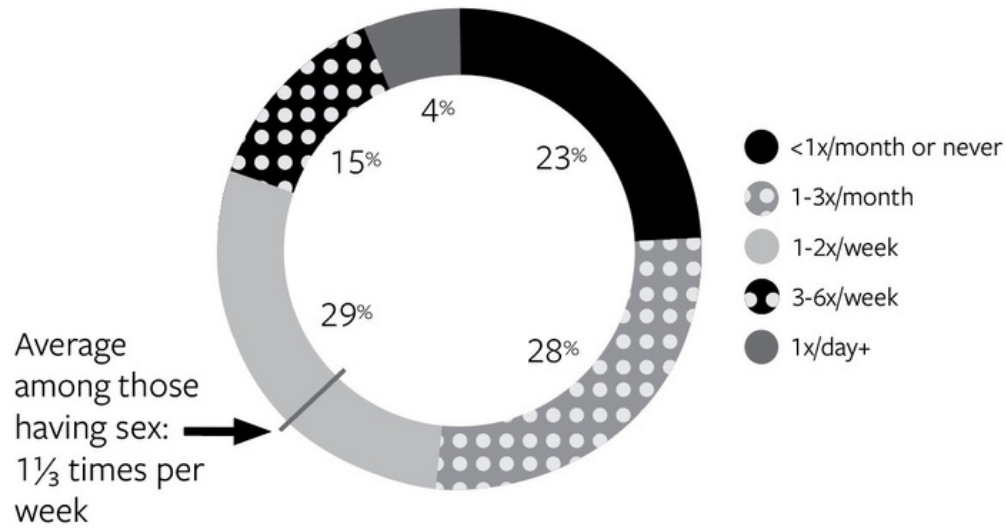
SURPRISING STATISTICS EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW

- Spouses who can learn to talk about sex have a lot more sex; 74% of couples with great communication had sex once a week or more, compared to just 22% of those with poor communication.
- 79% of couples reported not being on the same page about how often they want sex.
- If a spouse is unhappy about how often they have sex, they are 10 times more likely to be also unhappy in their marriage.
- The average male orgasms 5.4 minutes into intercourse; the average female orgasms in 14 minutes.
- Men vs women on giving/receiving oral sex:
 - 79% of men said they enjoyed receiving it, while only 36% of women enjoyed giving it;
 - 57% of women said they enjoyed receiving oral sex, while 65% of men enjoyed giving it.
- In a study of 1261 married individuals, when asked about caring for their spouses in the middle of a troubled marriage:
 - .7% stopped caring;
 - 99.3% loved their spouses and wanted the best for them.
 - (Even in the most struggling relationships, 97% reported they “still deeply cared”.)
- In a related study, 73% of women said receiving attention from their spouses outside of the bedroom (throughout the day) sets the stage for their attention inside the bedroom.

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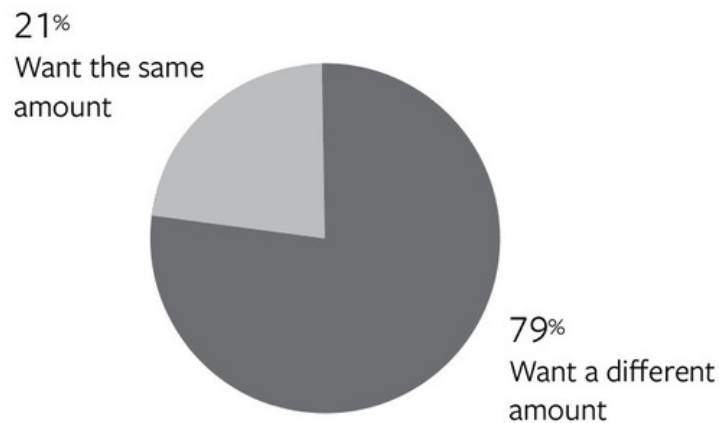
SURPRISING STATISTICS EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW

How often are couples having sex?



Source: MPS, n=501 couples

Do couples want the same frequency of sex?



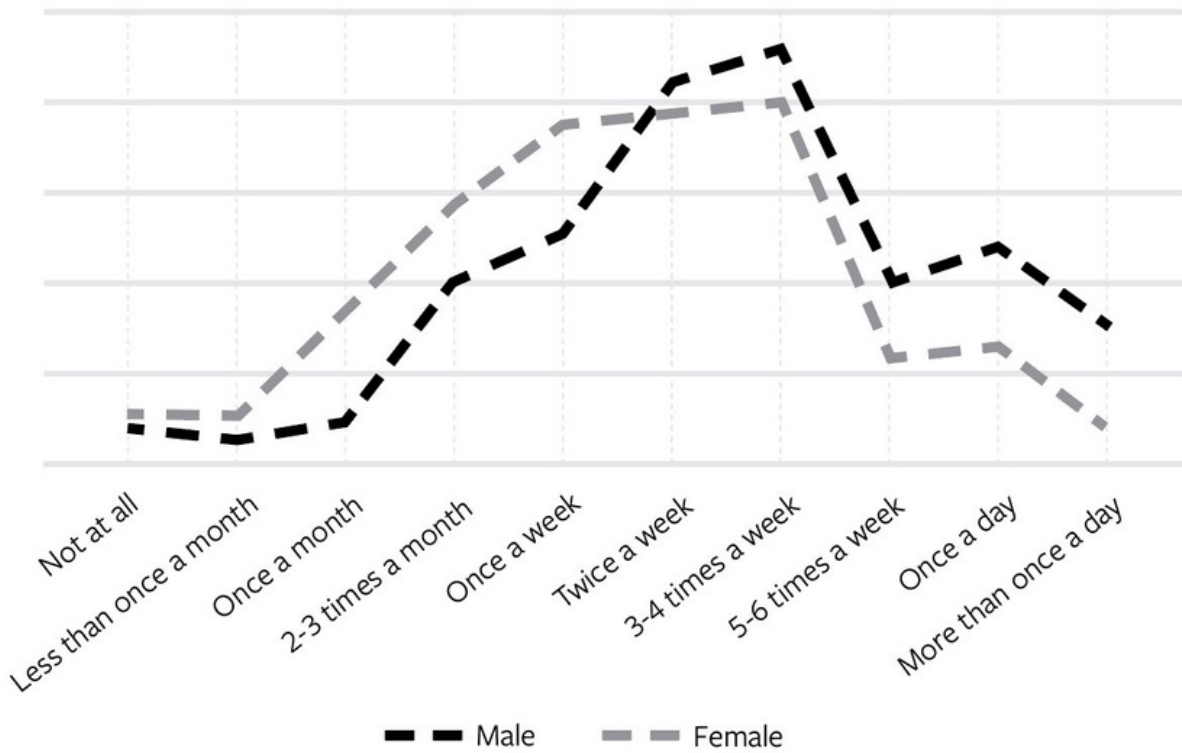
Source: MPS, n=458 couples. Heterosexual couples only.

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SURPRISING STATISTICS EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW

How often would you like sex?

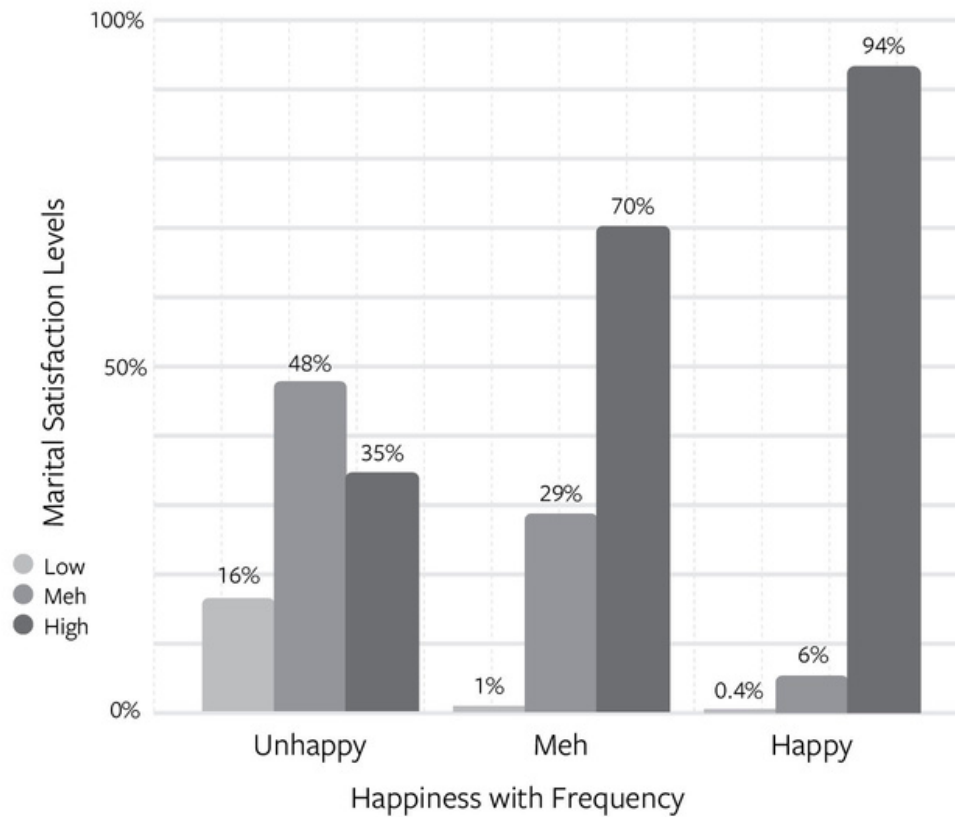


Source: MPS n=916, heterosexuals only

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SURPRISING STATISTICS EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW

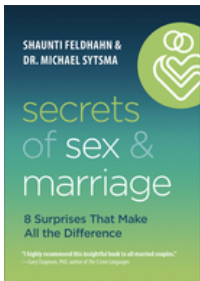
Marital satisfaction by couple frequency satisfaction



Source: MIS, n=1097

94% of couples who are happy with the frequency of sex are also happy in marriage.

Please note that all graphs from Secrets of Sex and Marriage are subject to copyright laws, copyrighted by Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group (2023). Media interested in using the following visual aids in articles, show notes, etc. should contact Bethany House representative Rebecca Schriener at rschriener@bakerpublishinggroup.com.



IMPORTANT LINKS

Amazon link: [Secrets of Sex & Marriage](#)

Social Media and Websites:

- **Book website:** <https://secretsofsexandmarriage.com>
- **Shaunti Feldhahn:**
 - **Instagram:** [@shauntifeldhahn](#)
 - **Facebook:** facebook.com/ShautiFeldhahnOfficial
 - **Website:** <https://shaunti.com/about-shaunti>
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