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# When Harry and Sally Met Dick and Jane: Going Out With Other Couples May Be Good For Relationships

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# When Harry and Sally met Dick and Jane

Going out with other couples may be good for relationships

Romantic relationships often start out as enjoyable or even exciting, but sometimes may become routine and boring. A Wayne State University study reveals that dating couples that integrate other couples into their social lives are more likely to have happy and satisfying romantic relationships.

Richard B. Slatcher, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology in WSU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, specializes in social and health psychology. His recent research suggests that spending quality time with other couples may be an important way to improve long-term dating relationships.

His study, "When Harry and Sally met Dick and Jane: Experimentally creating closeness between couples," which appeared in *Personal Relationships*, investigated 60 dating couples in a controlled laboratory setting. The object was to better understand how friendships between couples are formed, and to learn how these friendships affected each couple's romantic relationship.

Each couple was paired with another couple and given a set of questions to discuss as a group. Half of the groups were given high-disclosure questions intended to spark intense discussion, while the other half were given small-talk questions that focused on everyday, unemotional activities.

"In this study, we discovered that those couples who were placed in the "fast friends" group felt closer to the couples they interacted with, and were more likely actually to meet up with them again during the following month," said Slatcher. "We also learned that these same couples felt that this

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friendship put a spark in their own relationships, and they felt much closer to their romantic partners."

The couples in the high-disclosure group reported greater increases in positive feelings after the intense interaction. They also felt the interaction was more novel and that they learned new things about their romantic partner compared to couples in the small-talk group. In addition, one-third of the couples in the high-disclosure group contacted the other couple they met in the study, while none of the couples in the small-talk group initiated contact with the couple they had met.

"This study suggests that if your romantic relationship has a case of the doldrums, having fun with another couple may help make your own relationship more satisfying," said Slatcher.

To review the full study, visit:

[http://www.richslatcher.com/papers/Slatcher\\_PR\\_2010.pdf](http://www.richslatcher.com/papers/Slatcher_PR_2010.pdf)



#### About Dr. Richard Slatcher:

Dr. Slatcher received a B.S. in business administration from University of Richmond, a Ph.D. in social and personality psychology from University of Texas at Austin and did a postdoctoral fellowship in health psychology at UCLA. He joined Wayne State University in 2009.

To learn more, visit:

<http://richslatcher.com>





Illustration by Tim Porter