

Shalom Bayis Newsletter Issue 22

Costly Investment

By Rabbi Yehoshua Berman

Frum divorced singles. It's one of the populations that I've studied



over the years; and some of the resultant data points should make us sit up and take notice.

When it comes to keeping up attraction, a very solid majority of 61.2% of the 204

divorced singles that answered this question reported that, even after becoming used to being married, they put in either “a lot” or “a significant amount” of effort into things like dressing well, exercising good manners, and so on. An additional 32.4% reported that they put in “some” effort in this regard.

To be clear: the question asked was if they put in these efforts for the express purpose of remaining attractive to their spouse.

Only 6.4% reported that they put in either “very little” or “none at all” effort in this regard.

Now, compare that with the responses to the question: “How often did you and your ex-spouse spend quality time together **alone**?” The question included a list of examples (playing games, schmoozing, going out for a walk, taking a vacation, going out to eat, etc.).

The results?

Only 34.3% reported that this was something they did “very often” or “often”. An additional 37.3% reported that this was something they did “occasionally”. And 28.4% reported that this was something that they did either “very infrequently” or “never”.

I am going to line up those numbers now so we can really appreciate the depth of the contrast.

Effort for keeping up attraction	Spending quality time alone
61.2% - “a lot” or “a significant amount”	34.3% - “very often” or “often”
32.4% - “some”	37.3% - “occasionally”
6.4% - “very little” or “none at all”	28.4% - “very infrequently” or “never”

Respondents to this survey seem to have prioritized attractiveness maintenance far more than regular quality time together. This impression is echoed in other research that demonstrates that focus on appearance investment can sometimes be at the expense of intimacy¹.

Although maintaining attractiveness certainly demands a not insignificant amount of time and effort, that degree of effort may be perceived as far less demanding than that required for consistently spending quality time together. In fact, those very words – **spending** time – imply a sense of expenditure, don’t they?

In addition to the practical and logistical difficulty entailed in prioritizing consistent quality time together (especially when there are lots of children and endless bills to pay!), there may be an additional, more daunting difficulty: when together, conflicts are bound to arise.

Many people, perhaps the overwhelming majority, are conflict adverse.

¹ <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s44202-024-00205-7>

After all, it's uncomfortable to negotiate a conflict. Avoidance can feel a lot easier.

Keeping one's spouse at arm's length might even be a kind of unconscious survival tactic. Most people would probably consider their marriage to be the most crucial relationship in their lives – the failure of which would be likely to wreak havoc more than the dissolution of any other relationship – and consistently inserting oneself into a situation where conflict is likely to arise can feel like a self-defeating activity.

Better to just play it safe and engage in the bare minimum of quality time together necessary to keep the relationship afloat.

I doubt that there are many people who consciously think such a thing, but perhaps it is playing a role in this phenomenon nonetheless.

But here's the thing about auto-pilot survival mechanisms: they tend to work great in the short run but generate very poor results for the long haul.

Although I don't think that most couples need to be worried that their marriage will fail if they don't get the quality time together formula right, I do think that these survey results should get us to sit up and take notice. After all, we don't want to just survive until the finish line, right? We want marriages that are sources of blessing and beauty, right?

Expending effort to consistently spend quality time together may indeed be a costly investment, but, if done right, it can be an expenditure of resources very well worth it.

By "done right" I am alluding to another point highlighted by the extensive research on this topic: just logging weekly hours is not going to cut it.

It's about the quality at least as it is about the quantity.

Of course, every couple is different. While some couples may find that they really enjoy playing board games together, other couples

may find that their sweet spot is going rock climbing together. And some couples might have to experiment with a bunch of different activities until they find what works for both of them.

And will there be conflicts? You bet there will be!

But that's just the point. If navigated and negotiated properly – with mutual respect, love, kindness, and positive communication skills – conflicts can not only leave the liability zone of “fighting” but can be transformed into a tremendous asset of fostering genuine intimacy.

Yes, prioritizing consistently spending quality time together can be a costly investment. But it's an investment that can bring very great dividends!



*If you enjoyed this newsletter, **please share it** with two other people who would likewise benefit from it. Thank you!*



*To receive the Shalom Bayis Newsletter **directly to your inbox**, click on the link below or email rbsa613@gmail.com.
<https://stats.sender.net/forms/egO2ke/view>*



*Groundbreaking series! ICSE – Intimacy Challenges Solutions & Enhancements. Condensed courses on a broad range of topics including FOD, ED, PD, and much more.
For inquiries, email me at rbsa613@gmail.com*