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Why Is Sex Fun?



Synopsis

A fascinating, bite-sized insight into how human sexuality came to be the way it is now - Jared Diamond explains why we are different from the animal kingdom. Why are humans one of the few species to have sex in private? Why do humans have sex any day of the month or year, including when the female is pregnant, beyond her reproductive years, or between her fertile cycles? Why are human females one of the few mammals to go through menopause? Human sexuality seems normal to us, but it is bizarre by the standards of other animals. Jared Diamond argues that our strange sex lives were as crucial to our rise to human status as were our large brains. He also describes the battle of the sexes in the human and animal worlds over parental care and why sex differences in the genetic value of parental care provide a biological basis for the all-too-familiar different attitudes of men and women towards extramarital sex.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There is a minor truth-in-advertising issue regarding *Why Is Sex Fun?: The Evolution of Human Sexuality*, by physiologist Jared Diamond: The title question is never really addressed. The true theme seems to be *How Sex Came to be Sex as We Know It*. Not that this isn't interesting in its own right, of course. It's just that the original question is worthy of discussion too. *Why is Sex Fun?* reads like a lecture series rather than a book. Apparently intended to provide the reader with an overview of the latest thinking on the evolutionary aspects of the subject, this short work includes sections on different sexual (and mate) selection strategies employed by males and females (presumably based on unequal "investments" in the methods of getting one's genes into the next generation); lactation

(why milk is produced by females, but not, as a rule, males); how and why humans, almost uniquely, came to engage in recreational sex; the unequal domestic roles played by males and females, particularly in child rearing; female menopause (which is, again, nearly unique to humans); and sexual signaling (Diamond considers penis length in human males to be a prime example, but not necessarily a signal directed at females). As fascinating as these subjects are, there is much more that is left out. Any full discussion of human sexuality, especially with the high-order concept of "fun" in its presumed abstract, needs to deal with that odd species' whole gamut of non-procreational expression: homosexuality, old-age love, and sex-as-power, for non-inclusive example. But *Why is Sex Fun?* treats the very large subject of recreational sex only from the "selfish gene" point of view.

Giving stars to rate this book is misleading. The book deserves five for style, but no more than three for content. Diamond is a convincing writer with an excellent prose style. He delves fully into his topics, presenting them lucidly, demonstrating an ability to think deeply before presenting his ideas to the reader. His *GUNS, GERMS AND STEEL* deserved every accolade it received. *THE THIRD CHIMPANZEE* was a fine example of innovative thinking, presented with clarity. He deserves full marks for challenging readers to consider their opinions and reflect on options previously unconsidered. You don't need to be a scientist to read him, you only need an open mind. Diamond's theme is that human sexuality is not just different from that of the other animals, but almost drastically so. Reproductive strategies range from 'r' [sow 'em and forget 'em] through 'K' [no sacrifice is too great] with humans almost the ultimate K practitioners. Evolutionary pressures on a creature that wasn't a good predator but fine prey led us down a path resulting in a massive investment in raising offspring. What are the implications of our version of sexual techniques? Human beings have evolved in a way that natural sexual signals have been buried out of sight. It's called concealed ovulation and methods of pinpointing when a woman was likely to conceive weren't developed until this century. Fish, birds, and other mammals [particularly baboons] exhibit colours, engage in ceremonial displays or have other visible indications that the time is right! But humans keep it a big secret. Is there a valid reason? And when a sexual coupling has generated a foetus, we put more time, energy and resources to its birthing and upbringing than nearly any other animal.

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