Why is sex fun? : The evolution of human sexuality by Jared Diamond.

Reviews follow:

Diane Ackerman, author of A Natural History of the Senses, says:

"Why is Sex Fun? is the best book on the subject I've read. This lively exploration of our sexual heritage offers fascinating reading for anyone curious about why lovers do what they do."

ROGER Shohl, Professor of Physiology Monash University in Australia, says:

"I am so jealous of Jared Diamond, for he writes with such an elegant simplicity! Here, he takes a look at the endlessly fascinating topic of human sexuality His convincing arguments should persuade them that there are very special reasons why we evolved to use sex for recreation as well as for procreatim whereas most other mammals are denied that pleasure.... It is a great little book, by one of the world’s foremost biological philosophers."

Bettyaxn Kevles, author of Naked to the Bone, Medical Imaging in the Twentieth Century, says:

"Once again Jared Diamond provides us with answers to questions we may never have stopped to ask, but wish we had. In this long essay Diamond explains that recreational sex, while not unique to humans, is a rare behavior in the animal world. Above all, we learn, sexual activity divorced from procreation is not only part of what it is to be human, but the very crux of our evolutionary success."

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PREFACE.

The subject of sex preoccupies us. It's the source of our most intense pleasures. Often it's also the cause of misery, much of which arises from built-in conflicts between the evolved roles of women and men.

This book is a speculative account of how human sexuality came to be the way it now is. Most of us don't realize how unusual human sexual practices are, compared to those of all other living animals. Scientists infer that the sex life of even our recent apelike ancestors was very different from ours today. Some distinctive evolutionary forces must have operated on our ancestors to make us different. What were those forces, and what really is so bizarre about us?

Understanding how our sexuality evolved is fascinating not only in its own right but also in order to understand our other distinctively human features. Those features include our culture, speech, parent-child relations, and mastery of complex tools. While paleontologists usually attribute the evolution of these features to our attainment of large brains and upright posture, I argue that our bizarre sexuality was equally essential for their evolution.

Among the unusual aspects of human sexuality that I discuss are female menopause, the role of men in human societies, having sex in private, often having sex for fun rather than for procreation, and the expansion of women's breasts even before use in lactation. To the layperson, these features all seem almost too natural to require explanation. On reflection, though, they prove surprisingly difficult to account for. I'll also discuss the function of men's penises and the reasons women but not men nurse their babies. The answers to these two questions seem utterly obvious. Within even these questions, though, lurk baffling unsolved problems.

Reading this book will not teach you new positions for enjoying intercourse, nor will it help you reduce the discomfort of menstrual cramps or menopause. It will not abolish the pain of discovering that your spouse is having an affair, neglecting your joint child, or neglecting you in favor of your child. But this book may help you understand why your body feels the way it does, and why your beloved is behaving the way he or she is. Perhaps, too, if you understand why you feel driven to some self-destructive sexual behavior, that understanding may help you to gain distance from your instincts and to deal more intelligently with them.

Earlier versions of material in some chapters appeared as articles in Discover and Natural History magazines. It is a pleasure to acknowledge my debt to many scientist colleagues for discussions and comments, to Roger Short and Nancy Wayne for their scrutiny of the whole manuscript, to Ellen Modecki for the illustrations, and to John Brock-man for the invitation to write this book.