

ROMANCE *in the* CITY

Atlanta

101 GREAT
DATES

Cool ideas for
hot romantic
outings

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MODERN LOVE STORIES

MY VERY FIRST DATE

BY LUKE DITTRICH

MARRIED, WITH KIDS

BY "THE REBEL HOUSEWIFE"

SEX INSPECTOR ON CALL

BY MICHAEL ALVEAR

50 YEARS OF TRUE LOVE

BY JUSTIN HECKERT

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Intimacy, Interrupted

Love in the time of cereal and cartoons.

BY SHERRI CALDWELL

“Good morning,” he growls in that sexy, hungry-for-you voice he has used to our mutual advantage for more than 16 years of happily-ever-after. I roll over groggily and bury my head in the pillow. Bedhead, morning breath . . . I don’t think I’m quite ready for this yet. *Kisses on my neck* . . . but I could be.

We listen for the sounds of the house: three kids, ages 9, 7 and 4. They’re all out there somewhere, but it is Sunday morning, early. They have learned, for the most part, to accept the 8 a.m. Weekend Rule: No one downstairs before 8 a.m., and then it’s cereal and cartoons—without bothering Mommy and Daddy—until 9 a.m.

I get up, quietly, let the dog out, brush my teeth, attempt minimal reparations in the bathroom, slink back to bed, stopping to close the door and push the button lock—*Ready!*

Of course, almost immediately, we hear the recognizable pitter-patter of little feet. Who is it? Where are they headed?

Growly voice pulls me back, “The door’s locked, it’s okay—”

Still, we both track the footsteps. They start directly above us (the bedroom of the oldest), cross the upstairs hall, proceed down the back stairs to the kitchen/family room, back through the first floor towards our bedroom, stop right outside our door. We are frozen in place, trying to be very, very quiet . . . *listening*. (I’m trying not to laugh at the irony of this exact same situation in reverse 20 years ago, when the trick was to make out—kissing only—on my mother’s couch quietly enough not to get caught.)

The doorknob turns slightly this way and that, but the lock holds. There is a momentary silence, and then the footsteps move away, back toward the kitchen.

It took us nine years to get to this point, but the kid is actually following the weekend procedure—cereal and cartoons. We’re in the clear!

We have less than an hour, so we focus our attention back on each other. We don’t hear the footsteps coming back.

FOOTNOTE

Sherry Caldwell is a humor columnist and reviewer at rebelhousewife.com, and the co-author of *The Rebel Housewife Rules: To Heck With Domestic Bliss!* She lives in Atlanta with her husband and three children.



li·bi·do (li bē' dō)
 1. The emotional and physical energy associated with sexual desire. *syn.* lust. *ant.* parenthood.

FIGURE 1:
DESPERATE HOUSEWIFE

Who needs loving?
All I want is a good
night's sleep.



In an instant, the mood is gone—completely obliterated—when we hear the unmistakable sound of the lock popping out, the door opening. Mommy and Daddy scramble for cover, while a 9-year-old stands there with the “special key” (a long, thin screwdriver) we keep handy for locked-door emergencies upstairs, when someone locks themselves in and/or locks somebody out. It happens all the time. Apparently, the 9-year-old has been paying attention.

And there you have it—love and romance, s-e-x, after kids. When Valentine’s Day is all about frosted sugar cookies and cartoon character cards for classroom parties.

You knew it wasn’t going to be easy when your children were first born. Earth-shifting lifestyle changes and all new priorities—none of that is exaggerated or imagined. But long after you’re past midnight feedings and diaper changes, still it ain’t easy, despite the best of

intentions or the hottest, sexiest and most enduring marital relationship.

You finally get through those early sleep-deprived, exhausted years. You finally get the children in their own beds, sleeping through the night, and the 7-year-old frights set in: nightmares, monsters under the bed, menacing trees outside the window. Once again, they’re running back to Mommy and Daddy’s room in the middle of the night. And of course, they’re always welcome, as long as they start out in their own beds. We still have nights when we have two children sleeping on the floor (we banned the older ones from the bed but we have fold-out futon cushions, always at the ready), with the youngest in the bed between us (he’s decided the futons are for older brother and sister or Shaney the dog, who also has her own bed cushion in our room). We don’t have the Family Bed, we have the Family Bedroom!

So we take advantage of every morning when none of the kids are in the room. Love and romance has become more a matter of strategy and scheduling than the spontaneity and simplicity we didn’t know to appreciate in the early years.

Scheduling sex? Never say never! Married parents with school-age children know the challenge. At night, at the end of a very long day, when you are finally alone and you have to get everybody up early and start it all over again, when you’ve been overtouched and overdemanded all day long, it’s not necessarily the best time for lovin’!

We’ve had to discover other, better times during the day (lunch dates!) and make strategic arrangements for time alone—taking the kids to the babysitter’s house and, instead of going out, returning home. PTA nights are an excellent opportunity, since you have to line up a babysitter anyway. Go for an early dinner before and/or drinks after. It will change your entire outlook on PTA. We’ve even given each other season tickets to



FIGURE 2: Low-tech way to prevent break-ins



DINS (denz). Acronym for dual income, no sex. According to *Newsweek*, some psychologists estimate that 15 to 20 percent of American couples have sex no more than 10 times a year. Apparently, partners are too exhausted, too stressed or too depressed to get in the mood.

the Thrashers, a theater or Chastain—just to force ourselves to go out as Sherri and Russ, not Mommy and Daddy.

Nonetheless, recently, we woke up early to one of those beautiful weekend mornings: There were no kids in the bed or on the floor, everything was quiet. I rushed to the bathroom, brushed my teeth, tried to settle my hair a bit, forced the dog out of her bed and outside, closed and locked the door. I experienced a momentary flashback, and came up with a solution for my too-smart, reading-age kids and the easy-to-unlock door. I taped up a note: “Good Morning! Do Not Disturb! Go have cereal—see you at 9 a.m.!”

And then I woke up my husband.

It was fun for about five minutes. Then we heard the footsteps . . . across the upstairs hall, down the stairs, back through the first floor, right up to the outside of our bedroom door. The doorknob jiggled, held firm, there was silence.

The footsteps went away again. We giggled and relaxed, resumed activities. A few minutes later, the footsteps returned. We scrambled for cover and waited for the lock to pop, all eyes glued to the door. A single piece of paper was pushed underneath with their message back to us:

“We want pancakes!” 🍩

Who Knew?



Among Amazon's top 10 best-selling animated family DVDs in mid-December, the longest was *Schoolhouse Rock!* (Special 30th Anniversary Edition) at **221 minutes.**

The Rise and Fall of Romance*

Married Atlantans' responses when asked how romance in their relationships compared now to when they were first married:

	MORE ROMANCE NOW	ABOUT THE SAME	LESS ROMANCE NOW
Married Men	19%	45%	35%
Married Women	24%	42%	33%
Household income under \$50,000	20%	38%	38%
Household income \$50,000-\$100,000	22%	39%	37%
Household income over \$100,000	23%	46%	31%
Married less than 5 years	18%	56%	26%
Married 5-10 years	26%	44%	28%
Married more than 10 years	20%	40%	38%

SOURCE: ATLANTA MAGAZINE'S ROMANCE SURVEY, SEE PAGE 77.

FOOTNOTE

* Are people in the 30-40 age bracket the most happy? Or too busy with kids to think about romance? Only 30 percent of that group reported less romance now, compared to 38 percent of those under 30 or 40-54.