

# No bundles of joy

Study: Married couples with kids less happy

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Marital bliss isn't child's play.

Couples are less likely to find happiness ever after if they have children, especially right after tying the knot, according to a study.

The eight-year survey of 218 couples found that children brought on a sudden case of the relationship blues, with about 90 percent of mothers and fathers feeling dissatisfied with their partner after the birth of a child, according to research published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

"The first three or four months are like baby boot camp," said Anna Grossman, a married mother with two young children living in lower Manhattan. "There's no doubt it does change the dynamic of a marriage."

The combination of sleeplessness and new parental responsibilities tend to suck the energy out of maintaining a healthy relationship, psychologists said. Couples often stop communicating or regularly acting affectionate.

"Sex almost ceases to exist," said Diana Kirschner, a therapist from Manhattan. "All their attention goes to the child."



Married couples with children are more likely to have communication problems, according to a study.

(RJMICKELSON/AMNY)

## BABIES WEIGH ON MARITAL BLISS

A study of 132 couples who had children within eight years of their marriage found:

- 100 percent of couples did not communicate well with their spouse
- 91 percent of women had trouble managing conflict

with their husband

- 82 percent of men noticed they were less dedicated to their marriage
- 67 percent of women experienced less confidence in the future of their marriage

(Source: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*)

The couples who remained childless during the eight-year period experienced a gradual decline in their marital satisfaction, the study found. But couples who did have children saw a spike in problems such as poor communication and a crisis of faith in the marriage.

Many New York parents disagreed that kids had

killed their marriage.

"It puts a stress on your life and marriage, but it's a good stress," said Lisa Karic, 41, of Staten Island.

Dissatisfaction was more pronounced among spouses who had a child soon after their marriage, along with parents of girls.

Female babies tend to make fathers more distant, according to researchers.

Still, babies aren't always a downer. Spouses with higher incomes or those who had been married longer tended to find that children strengthened their relationship.

"It's a blessing," said Bettina McCall, 47, a Chelsea mother of two who was married for years before having children. "Once we had kids, it was like heaven."

Family stress tends to ease among couples who began their marriage with a solid foundation, psychologists said.

"Those who have a good relationship to begin with will find a way to negotiate [parenthood]," said Arthur Kovacs, a family psychologist from Los Angeles.

Jason Fink and Casey Feldman contributed to this story.



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## Boss 'born to run' around on wife?

BY JASON FINK  
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Rock star Bruce Springsteen indeed has a hungry heart, says a New Jersey man who is accusing the Boss of having an affair with his wife.

In court papers filed March 27 in Monmouth County, N.J., Arthur Kelly alleges that his wife of 17 years, Ann Kelly, "has committed adultery with one Bruce Springsteen ... at various times and places too numerous to mention."

The Kellys have two daughters and live in South



Bruce Springsteen with his wife, Patti Scialfa, in January (GETTY)

Jersey, near Springsteen.

In response to the allegation, a representative for the married Springsteen said Thursday that the

rocker stands by a statement he posted on his Web site in 2006, when he was accused of bedding a 9/11 widow.

In that statement, Springsteen, 59, a father of three who has been married to backup singer Patti Scialfa since 1991, called the stories about the 9/11 widow "unfounded" and "ugly."

Calls to Arthur Kelly's attorney were not returned on Thursday.

Published reports in 1988 said that Springsteen began seeing Scialfa when he was still married to actress Julianne Phillips.