

## **The Truth behind Swingtown**

By Dorota Skrzypek

The airing of *Swingtown* last Thursday—a new drama on CBS about swinging in the 70's—painted a rosy picture about wife swapping. Tom and Trina Decker, in their matching jogging outfits, happy as predatory clams, salivate over the prospect of getting into their new neighbors pants. Bruce and Susan Miller, the new neighbors, pop a Quaalude, smoke some pot, and, are in like the polyester of the era. Not much of the challenge Trina Decker thought it would be at the beginning of the episode; but apparently it's one heck of a ride for the Millers (their lackluster love life is back on track the morning after). Everyone's a winner baby...right?

The North American Swing Club Association has said that 15 percent of couples in the United States have experimented with swinging at one time or another. According to Terry Gould's book *The Lifestyle: a Look at the Erotic Rites of Swingers*, swinging in the twentieth century began among United States Air Force pilots and their wives during World War II. The first swingers' organization, the Sexual Freedom League, began in the 1960's in Berkeley, California. Most swingers are white, mid-thirties to mid-forties, conservative, middle to upper-middle class professionals, and 60 percent claim their alternative lifestyle has improved their relationship. Before all you happy married couples rejoice and start giving your neighbors the suggestive eye, I would like to play devil's advocate and ask just one question: what's the point?

Perhaps at the beginning of the sexual revolution in the 1960's when our culture was still tied to the idea of a nuclear family, swinging was seen as a saving grace when faced with a future of one sexual partner, screaming kids, and a mind-numbing nine-to-five job; or worse, infidelity and lies. But it's 2008 and we've come pretty far. You no longer need to get married just because you've been with someone for a long time, or even to have kids. There is no longer a marred stigma attached to getting divorced. It's perfectly acceptable to admit that your social tuning embraces multiple partners, and that your tax benefits and financial future are better served by remaining single. Today, monogamy is a choice, not a sentence, so why approach it like a chore?

I have no issue with swinging, or any other kinky sex stuff couples do, to spark up their marriage (provided it's legal). I understand that different folks sometimes need different strokes. I also understand that monogamy in marriage can have its challenges. Bruce King writes in *Human Sexuality Today*, "...one of the things that normally occurs in a relationship leading to changes in how we interact with our partners is sexual habituation. At approximately three to seven years into a marriage, it begins to take increased levels of stimulation to produce the same level of sexual excitation previously obtained by a glance or a simple touch." I don't disagree. I just feel that you should be honest with yourself. If you decide to be in a monogamous relationship, stick to it. If you want to have sex with multiple partners, perhaps you're not ready to embrace commitment.

If you feel however, that swinging is just what the doctor ordered for your marriage, do it safely (use condoms), talk about it with your partner first to have clear consent, and do it

sober so that you can feel the truth behind the experience—otherwise you're just trying to escape your reality, and swinging will not save an already troubled relationship. Let's hope *Swingtown* starts to explore a bit more than just the fluff in the next six episodes.

Information about events and how to find other couples interested in swinging available from the North American Swing Club Association (NASCA Intl): <http://www.nasca.com>. Information about *Swingtown* at: <http://www.cbs.com/primetime/swingtown/>.

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