


Valentine's Day Special: Speed Shrinking for Love Event



 By Lavanya Sunkara

The best way to attain what you seek is to make the effort and take that first step. At last night's Speed Shrinking for Love party at Housing Works Bookstore Cafe, organized by bestselling author and journalism professor Susan Shapiro, New Yorkers of all ages and walks of life flocked to find what they were in search of, whether it was love, a book deal, or psychoanalysis.

Enthusiastic participants lined up for their speed meeting – think speed dating, but with literary agents and relationship experts. The jam packed space buzzed with curious newcomers, mingling friends, therapists doling out advice three minutes at a time, and literary gurus advising writers on pitches. Free wine and [Valentine's Day](#) chocolate cupcakes were plentiful.

But Speed Shrinking isn't just a witty name for a networking event. It is also the title of Shapiro's debut novel about a self-help author who sees eight therapists in eight days to deal with her cupcake addiction after her best friend, as well as her shrink, suddenly move away. What started out as a one-time party idea to promote her book, Speed Shrinking has become a social phenomenon, entertaining a series of television appearances and parties on both coasts. Last night's event was Shapiro's 10th party, and she said a producer is interested in turning it into a reality show.

When asked how therapy changed her life, Shapiro said, “It’s my secret weapon. I have everything I want in life because of it – a husband I’ve been happily married to for 15 years and two careers I love. Therapy really pays for itself. I tripled my income, thanks to my last shrink.” The participating psychoanalysts agreed, and said they want to expose people to therapy and show that it is indeed a smart life choice.



Susan Shapiro (center) with psychiatrist Sheri Spirt and Jungian astrologist Bob Cook. Photo courtesy of Susan Shapiro.

Among the participants are devoted Shapiro-ites – students, literati friends and work contacts. Kiri Blakeley, author of *Can't Think Straight: A Memoir of Mixed-Up Love*, said it was her first time at a Speed Shrinking event. “I’m thrilled people recognize me from my online interviews,” said Blakeley, who added that she came to spend time with friends and talk to editors about possible projects. Her experience is the norm for a Shapiro networking event. Everyone is connected to one another, either through an acquaintance, an agent, or Facebook. But the mutual link between all is Shapiro.

One participant, Daniel Berman said, “Shapiro is like a full-time operator – always available and willing to connect you to

an editor, agent or romantic match. She is very supportive and I got published because of her.”

Former student Alyssa Pinsker shared her thoughts. “Like most of New York, I consider Sue Shapiro my mentor. I believe in her message and good karma. What better way to spend Valentine’s Day than to help others and find help?” Like many others, Pinsker wooed the editors to whom she pitched her ideas. “I always find what I need here.”

Shapiro’s next book, this time in collaboration with her former addiction therapist Frederick Woolverton, is titled *Unhooked* and is about how to get off addictions. For upcoming free events, please visit www.susanshapiro.net.

Lavanya Sunkara is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in Time Out, NY Resident and online magazines. For more information, visit www.lavanyasunkara.com.