

Valentine's Day Special: Speed Shrinking for Love Event



By Lavanya

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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.

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Susan Shapiro Is 'Overexposed'



By [Krissy Dolor](#)

Rachel Solomon is a young Manhattan photographer who wanted out from her Jewish Midwestern roots. Enter Elizabeth Mann: WASP friend, career mentor, and future sister-in-law, who's about to marry Rachel's brother, and fully integrate herself into the Solomon family – complete with four babies all named after Rachel's dead Yiddish-speaking relatives.

What's a girl to do when she realizes that the domesticated life she has shunned is suddenly the one she wants to live?

Cupid's Advice:

In [Susan Shapiro's](#) latest foray into fiction, you'll see how

Rachel deals with Elizabeth being the daughter her mother always wanted, and now, envying the life she has tried to escape from. Based on a true story, the *Speed Shrinker* author and *Five Guys Who Broke My Heart* memoirist, Shapiro's dramedy, [*Overexposed*](#), shows the bonds of female friendship, and confirms the idea of finding love when you least expect it.

Cupid spoke with Shapiro via email last week. Take a look at what the author had to say:

You're known for your memoirs, but this book is listed under fiction. What was hard (or easy) about this transition?

When I first tried to sell OVEREXPOSED in the 90's, a critic told me, "You have an imagination, stop trying fiction." So I switched to memoirs, had a breakthrough with FIVE MEN WHO BROKE MY HEART, and sold four more books in a row. When SPEED SHRINKING, the last book I tried as nonfiction didn't sell, I turned it into fiction, got a two-book deal, and 15 years later I'm an overnight success.

You've done a lot about love and relationships. What about this topic draws you to continue writing about it?

Sex sells! And that same critic told me, "You write best about people you love." And I always tell my students to write about their obsessions, so I'm taking my own advice. Though my husband hates being written about.

OVEREXPOSED is based on a true story. How much of the book mimics real life?

I still don't have a great imagination. It's based on a true story about me and my sister-in-law switching lives. It's about 80 percent true now; instead of two writers, the main heroines are now two photographers, instead of Michigan (where I grew up) it's Chicago, and I switched the time frame. I joke that it took me until age 48 to write a happy successful 26-year-old character that my 26-year-old editor liked.

Also, it took a long time for *OVEREXPOSED* to come to fruition. What about the story kept you pushing for it?

My sister-in-law has been such a headache for so long – I thought I deserved to make some money, and get a book deal out of it.

What's the one thing you'd like readers to take away after reading your book?

The heroine Rachel is single and finally stops chasing men. She obsesses over her photography career instead. Of course, the minute she gives up chasing guys, they all come back. That happened to me in real life. Here's great advice from my shrink that I quoted in my first relationship memoir, *FIVE MEN WHO BROKE MY HEART*: "Love doesn't make you happy, make yourself happy." (Then you get love).

Cupid thanks Shapiro for her time! In addition to promoting [Overexposed](#), which hits the shelves on August 3, she is busy working on the screenplay for [Five Men Who Broke My Heart](#), her memoir on sex and relationships. For more information about the author, visit her [website](#). Can't wait to read the book? Pre-order it from [Amazon](#)!