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## Shake up date night with HowAboutWe for couples experiences

By Natasha Wasinski For Sun-Times Media October 10, 2013 4:42PM

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Brian Schechter wants to save Chicago couples from “the rut of Netflix and Chinese food.”

Last month, the 34-year-old New York City-based entrepreneur and co-founder of the online dating site HowAboutWe.com launched a new service to help Chicagoans already in love stay in love.

How About We for Couples (available via HowAboutWe.com) takes its cue from deal-of-the-day sites by curating affordable experiences built for two. For \$18 a month, members can purchase one-of-a-kind dates, collect freebies, and access custom event-planning services in the city. The website also offers packaged outings in New York City and San Francisco.

“We want to make it easier for people to do what they already want to do, with the person they already want to be with,” Schechter said. “We want to make date night awesome.”

That said, lovers shouldn't limit their excursions to cocktails in the Signature Room or strolls around Navy Pier.

“A steady dose of novel experiences maintains the connection,” Schechter explained. “But it takes a takes a fair amount of creative energy to plan dates.”

HowAboutWe.com takes care of the planning, and offers a “datebook” with something-for-everyone experiences, from Big City Swing dancing lessons to a private coffee tasting at Bow Truss in Lakeview.

Schechter noticed Chicago dwellers, in particular, prefer dates that involve doing and creating things together. Brett Marlow, 25, and his partner of four months, found fragrance-making at Lincoln Park's Aroma Workshop to be a perfect date, spending an hour testing pure oils with a trained scentologist to concoct their own perfumes and colognes. Marlow now scans HowAboutWe.com daily to find other unique deals catered to couples.

“I love the couch and watching TV and drinking wine,” he said. “But whenever we have days off, it's important we're out there doing new things and learning more about each other.”

“Usually people who know one another say, ‘that smells like you,’” Aroma Workshop store owner Tedd Neenan said. “It's a fun experience giving someone a scent and a time to be together.” Those who schedule appointments through How About We walk away with two bottles for the price of one.

Currently, steady stream of romantic nerds are signing up via the website to build robots and watch '80s sci-fi flicks after hours at Robot City Workshop, 3226 N. Sheffield.

In addition to sharing in new activities, the shake-up of a stale dating routine might help fend off the inevitable waning of emotions.

Steve Du Bois, a clinical research fellow studying couples at the Family Institute at Northwestern University, explained passion usually experienced at the beginning of a relationship is hard to maintain neurologically in the long run.

“Over time, our brain acclimates to the feeling of being in love and the person around us,” he said.

Replicating newness requires both the body and mind be swayed. The first piece of advice given to couples in therapy is to start dating one another again, Du Bois said.

“The date night suggestion encourages people to try to fight that behavioral adaptation they've engaged in,” he said. “It's a very simple intervention that's not too scary to clients.”

If love is an ongoing process, Schechter said dating remains a couple's best bet for success.

"It's not the only ingredient but it's an essential ingredient," he said.

Natasha Wasinski is a local freelance writer.

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