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By Ruth Ostrow

With the Paul McCartney-Heather Mills divorce turning ever uglier, it again brings to light that dirty P-word: prenup. We are all left wondering, how could he not have signed one? What did she do and say to seduce him into this sort of daft complacency? Was he too well loved in his former marriage to not doubt love?

Yet even as we ask these questions, we know that none of us likes the idea. A successful and independently wealthy girlfriend of mine was horrified recently when her partner asked her to sign a prenup. I was surprised at her surprise.

As a businesswoman, she knows the value of a contract. It is non-negotiable, simple, clean, and there is no room for all the emotional carry-on and the "he said/she said" that follows most break-ups in business or in private.

I think our inherent hatred of prenups is about something far more complex than greed. There's such a profound desire to fall deeply, passionately in love that even though we know that 40 per cent of marriages end, we can't get our minds around our craving for perfect union. There's a romantic idealism that bites the most hardened players on the bum.

The truth is that when love hits, there's a chemical release: cuddle chemicals, the body's amphetamines and opiates which are nature's way to get us down the aisle and reproducing. Great poets have described falling in love as a sickness, with dizziness, madness, sleeplessness - and there's now a scientific basis to this.

But as with all drugs, the fix doesn't last. The well-known anthropologist and author of *Anatomy Of Love*, Dr Helen Fisher, argues that chemical production in primitive cultures lasts long enough for pairs to rear one child through infancy. Then each parent would find a new partner and start all over again. The biological imperative for fresh genes (unconsciously) motivates this natural infidelity.

This process can be translated into today's divorce rates. In most of the 62 cultures Fisher has studied, divorce rates peak around the fourth year of marriage. Fisher says additional offspring help to keep pairs together longer, again in four-year lots. With a large percentage of families in the West having two children, this explains the "seven-year itch" phenomenon.

With odds biologically stacked against "happy ever after", you have to wonder why love continues to evade negotiation. I'm sure Sir Paul would be asking the same thing now.

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