



FEATURE ARTICLE FROM ALWAYS BEST CARE

Wanted: Older Adult Looking for Love

John Deurwaarder, 97, is proof that it's never too late to fall in love again. After his wife died four years ago, his life seemed to fall apart, and he struggled with loneliness, depression and poor eating habits. But when he met Alta Lunsford, 78, at a choir practice at his retirement home, his life started to change, and the two were married. "She built me up and gave me a purpose in life," Deurwaarder said. "She's changed my life.

"Lunsford agrees: "The most amazing thing about all this is here I am an old lady, and I am head-over-heels in love. I didn't know old people fell in love" ("More people over 65 find marriage, love," July 29, 2012, *Columbian*).

That fact can be a revelation to older people who unexpectedly find themselves in a new romance.

"In the past, it would have been seen as silly or ridiculous to be in a passionate romantic situation at 65," Pepper Schwartz, a University of Washington sociologist and AARP's love and relationships expert, told the *Columbian*. "If your marriage ended, you were done. There would have been less people getting together at all.

"Today's longer life expectancy has changed that perception. "We are looking at very long periods of time," Schwartz said. "If you get married at 65, you could be together for 30 years. That may seem like a long enough time to get married.

"Many who have lost their spouses choose to stay single, seeking close relationships with children and friends. However, for those who feel too young to give up on an intimate relationship, there are new options for finding an eligible partner. Those who have been away from "playing the field" for a while will find that dating is a whole new ballgame. For one thing, online dating is one of the main ways that singles find each other now. By answering questions that categorize your preferences, finding a date online is a more scientific process, where less is left to chance. Yet that first date can still elicit the same nervousness and anticipation as when you were a teenager.

Dating Tips for Older Adults

While some of the social norms have changed since the first time you dated (a more lenient attitude toward sex, for example), others remain the same: Trust your instincts about someone. One change is that it's no longer a hard and fast rule that men initiate the first date or always pick up the check. Women can make that first phone call or send the initial email, and offer to pay half the price of the date.

For women who are meeting a man for the first time, it's a good idea to tell a friend where you are going and to meet in a public place. And just like you did in high school, a group date is a good way to get to know someone without pressure.

Besides searching for a date online (see section below on “Navigating Online Dating”), there are good places to find others who share your interests (and age):

- Senior centers, which offer a range of activities
- **The gym, where you’ll meet other active seniors**
- Events for your grandchildren, whether baseball games, music recitals or school plays, which other proud grandparents are attending
- Classes, such as dance, cooking or continuing education
- Your church or temple, where many seniors have active roles
- Volunteer projects that especially appeal to older folks, such as helping other seniors

Complications of Intimacy

One aspect of dating that can be more challenging for seniors is sex. A woman wrote to the [Senior Dating website](#) **that she met a “gentleman” on eHarmony and had a lovely time during their three dates. “He also asked to kiss me** at the end of our dinner date. On the cheek was acceptable to me. Am I too slow? Or is this the norm? I need to be enlightened.

”Beyond negotiating the emotional issues of sex are the physical. Many older people who are either divorced or have lost a spouse have often not been sexually active for years. Over the years, your body has changed and may not be as flexible as it once was (“Tips On Getting Back In The Saddle,” July 31, 2012, [Helpful Relationship Advice for Seniors](#)).

Many women who have gone through menopause find it difficult or painful to have sexual intercourse. This can usually be remedied by using a simple lubricant. Men may be concerned about erectile dysfunction, which affects about 1 in every 10 men over the age of 50. To help, many effective medications are on the market.

One issue seniors might not consider is safe sex. Even though older adults may not need to worry about pregnancy, seniors can easily contract incurable sexually transmitted diseases. To be on the safe side, get tested or use safe-sex practices if you have more than one partner.

Navigating Online Dating

Seniors are jumping on the Internet dating bandwagon. According to one study from Bowling Green State University, people over 60 represent the most rapidly growing demographic in online dating (**“Top 5 Dating Sites for Seniors,” Feb. 8, 2013 [Senior Planet](#)**).

Despite the Internet’s popularity, it can be a whole different world for an older generation not familiar with modern attitudes.

Seniors often value their privacy more than the younger generation. On the [Senior Dating website](#), a 58-year-old man wrote **that he lived in a small town and was “embarrassed to post my picture on an online dating site. I . . . feel that if someone in town sees my pic I would ruin my chances to meet someone offline. How do I protect myself from the local town rumor mill? I have a high profile in town and many people ‘know me.’**

“Joining an online dating service means losing some of your privacy. After you sign up (see suggestions in sidebar for a list of online sites), you post a profile, with pictures, about yourself and your **interests, so potential dates know what kind of person you are and what kind of person you’re** looking for. For someone like the 58-year-old who worries about being exposed, you can go more slowly by entering chat rooms on the site and starting a conversation with the whole group or an individual.

Online dating has its own rules:

- **If someone doesn’t respond to your email, don’t take it personally.**
- **If someone contacts you and you’re not interested, politely respond with a “thanks, but no thanks.”**
- If you decide at the end of a date that you never want to see this person again, wait until you get home and notify them by email.
- **If you’ve had a wonderful time, express this and tell them you’ll call or email them.**
- Create a new email account specifically for online dating. This prevents people from searching on your normal email address to find out more information about you. Similarly, use a cell phone or anonymous phone service to chat.
- Beware of married people who can hide behind online dating services.
- Watch out for warning signs in your communication. As you chat via email and on the phone, you may notice controlling behavior or anger issues, for example.
- Stick with paid online dating services, where members must provide a credit card or other information that identifies them.
- Be cautious. Some online dating services claim to offer background checks, but there are no **rules about what that constitutes. It’s better not to let your guard down.**

Sources

“Senior Dating Rules,” [Love to Know Senior Citizens](#)

“Getting Started With Senior Dating,” [Spark.com](#)

[Senior-Dating](#)

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“Online Dating Safety Tips” [Online Dating Magazine](#)

“Love in Your Later Years: 100 Sex and Dating Tips for Seniors,” [Senior Communities Blog](#)

“More people over 65 find marriage, love,” July 29, 2012, [Columbian](#)

“How to Date If You’re Over 65 Years Old,” [Wikihow](#)

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