

Lifestyle

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SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

The other scary D

It's the Big D that most single, older people fear.

Not disease, decay, deterioration, divorce or even death.

Dating.

Many of them would rather have repeat root canal work than go through the rigours and hazards of dating today. Yet statistics show that the fastest growing demographic is that of singles in their mid- and late life.

In fact, Statistics Canada figures for 2001 show that in Canada there are over three million single people age 45-74. With the population aging and more people becoming single later in life for a variety of reasons, the number is increasing.

It's also an age group that is often healthy, fit, active and, far from giving up thoughts of another relationship, is actively looking for love and companionship again.

Yet how do they do that? "Where do I meet someone else in my age group?" This is a question I'm asked over and over by older singles.

Too old for night clubs and bars full of young people but too young for "retirement" clubs and activities, they're also often too busy in careers or jobs for extensive hobbies or volunteer work, so meeting each other is difficult.

Older single women also add that, for them, the field of choice can be a narrow and sometimes humiliating one.

"Single older men are either too old, have sexual problems or want a much younger woman," says Dawn, a pretty 57-year-old blonde who's been single for three years.

She says she'd like a relationship, but she's almost given up hope of finding someone compatible. She says friends have suggested she try an Internet dating service, but she distrusts the process and wants to meet someone face to face.

Older singles

Despite Dawn's reticence though, the fastest growing group using Internet dating services is older singles.

Isabelle Hemond, head of marketing for Yahoo! Personals agrees, stating that new statistics show there are over one million people 50-plus in Canada on Internet dating services.

"Yahoo! Personals, for instance, has seen an increase of 36% over the past six months of online daters over 50," she says.

She explains that Internet dating suits them because it's easy

to do from home, it's safe and private and they have control over the process.

"They find this a far better way than, say, bars to meet their own age group," she says.

Other dating services such as speed-dating companies are answering the demand and are now offering events for the 45-plus. But they say that although they get plenty of women signing up, the older men are far slower to join in.

Those that run dating agencies often have the same problem and, although they prefer not to confirm it, usually have more older female clients than men of the same age.

Not Gloria Macdonald. She's the founder of Perfect Partners, an upscale Toronto matchmaking agency that specializes in 40-plus

clients.

"Most of my clients are 50s to mid-60s," she says and explains that each client is dealt with one-on-one in the style of an individual executive search, so there isn't that imbalance.

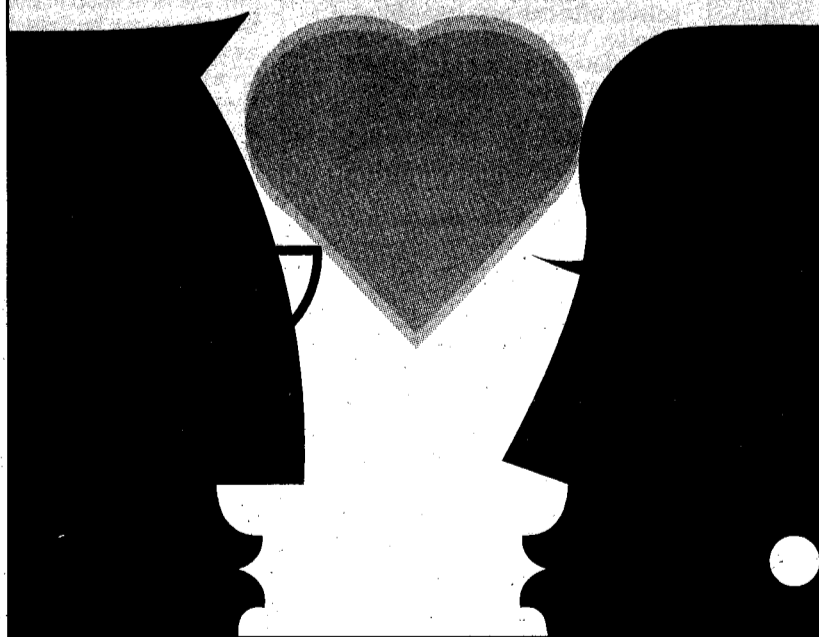
When asked if the older men are looking for a younger woman, she says that's not what she finds.

"Most older professional men are actually looking for a solid, loving relationship with someone compatible, someone closer to their



Valerie Gibson

Friends have suggested she try an Internet dating service, but she distrusts the process and wants to meet someone face to face.



own age they can relate to."

But if, by luck or effort, they've found their date, many mid- and late-life singles can find themselves floundering in the minefield of changed dating attitudes. They find it changed, particularly as regards sexual diseases.

Dr. Wilf Steinberg, gynecologist at St. Michael's Hospital, points out the older age group grew up in a different world.

'Major source of STDs'

"They're used to spontaneity in sexual matters and don't deal well with the practical use of protection. He adds "the over-40 group is a major source of STDs. The problem often is that many men in their late 50s and 60s cannot function sexually when using a condom. It's also a difficult group to educate."

Dr. Jean Marmoreo, a Toronto family doctor who specializes in mid-life patients, agrees. "It becomes a dilemma for older women dating their own age group. They know if they insist on protection, the man is going to lose his erection."

So what do they do? She says it's important women learn not to "mother" such men and that both sexes learn how to have deal with it and still have fun with sex. For some women, she says, they decide dating younger suits them better as such men are more active and haven't a problem with protection.

But another dating difficulty the older group struggle with is the lack of commitment from partners. Many are single after being in long-term relationships and are used to taking it all seriously and monogamously. They're uncomfortable with casual dating and can find it emotionally damaging. "Many older women have romantic ideals based on Hollywood romance which don't fit into today's world of dating," says Marmoreo.

But all the experts agree it's physically and emotionally beneficial for single people, no matter how old they are, to start dating again and enjoy a sexual relationship. Social and sexual interaction with the opposite sex, while fraught with problems for those unskilled in such an unfamiliar arena, can be the pathway to another fulfilling chapter of life.

In other words, it's never too late.

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Visit Val's new Web site:
www.valeriegibson.com

HOT BRIEFS

Love those calendar guys

See Canada's finest Caribbean men compete for the title of Mr. Caribbean Canada. The 7th Annual Mr. Caribbean Canada competition will be at the Jamaican Canadian Community Centre, 995 Arrow Rd., Toronto, at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 17.

Those attending can get a copy of the Mr. Caribbean International 16-month (2003/04) colour calendar. Proceeds from the calendar will be donated to the Randal Doolley Memorial Scholarship Fund.

The winner will go to Runaway Bay, Jamaica, in October to represent Canada in the Mr. Caribbean International contest, and he'll be featured in the 2005 calendar.

Get tickets (\$25), info and/or calendar at infor@mircaribbeaninternational.com or call 416-277-8958. Tickets are also available from Nicey's stores.

Mingle with cougars

Tickets are going fast for Toronto's first Cougar Cruise, Friday, Aug. 8.

Singles of all ages are invited to join cougars and their prey on The Riverboat Gambler at 7:30 p.m. for a four-hour fun cruise on the lake. Music, dancing, munchies, a free drink (cash bar), great door prizes, goodie bag that includes a copy of *Cougar: A Guide for Older Women Dating Younger Men* plus free transportation and entrance to a nightclub/bar afterwards. I'm on board to join in and sign books.

Tickets are \$50, plus GST and handling; call 416-406-2006 or e-mail tickets@streetcarparty.com. For more info, visit www.valeriegibson.com or www.streetcarparty.com.

Dreams come true

Wondering what's the meaning behind those erotic dreams? Maybe it's not just that you're sexually frustrated!

Dream analyst and author, Layne Dalfen, can tell you what the real meaning is as she looks at dreams from a psychological perspective. She runs The Dream Interpretation Center in Montreal and is author of *Dreams Do Come True: Decoding Your Dream To Discover Your Full Potential* (AdamsMedia Corp., Boston). Dalfen is giving a workshop at The Learning Annex on Saturday, Aug. 9, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., \$59. Call the Annex at 416-964-0011.

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Got a question about relationships?
Contact Val at The Sun by mail or e-mail.