

Finding love closer to home



Where to start when you are looking for that special someone? Try looking to yourself first, says Let's Talk columnist **Amanda Jayne**, the King's Lynn-based psychotherapist and counsellor.

So what is it like trying to find love later in life? How do you go about meeting someone, given that, these days, strutting your stuff at the local disco is probably not what you are obliged to do every Friday night?

What are the major worries when you contemplate starting a new relationship in your 50s, 60s, 70s and beyond? Why do people your age look so old when you still feel 30?

Also, there is more likely to be a plethora of substantial baggage: Children, grandchildren, ex-spouse(s), bad habits - ways that you are particularly set in and enjoy without having to compromise. Plus you are not the lithe, baby-faced, toned and trim, fit 20-to-30 year old that maybe you once were.

You also have a little life experience which may have tainted your view of love and relationships, after all, they are not easy. I mean, life is not easy as it is and do you really want to complicate matters with a rollercoaster teenage replica ride of uncertainty:

Will he/she call me?

Does he/she compare me to previous partners?

Will the kids like me and accept me?

Does my bum look big and saggy, even in dim light?

Is my snoring unacceptable...?

Has he/she got a skeleton in the cupboard?

Is he/she going to become incapacitated and need a carer rather than a partner?

Is he/she a psychopath?

It's a minefield really, so you need

to be ready for this!

Of course any big step in your life requires a lot of planning, thought and preparation. Like the old sales saying goes: 'Failing to prepare is preparing to fail'.

There is no exception to preparing yourself for a new relationship. If you go hurtling face first into the first person that looks in your direction, with an overwhelming sense of surprise and gratitude for the attention, you may come a cropper! Perhaps you are tempted to follow the well-trodden pattern of the same type of partner which has never worked before out for you before, (and probably won't again).

I believe that the key to giving yourself every chance possible to choose an entirely appropriate partner to spend some fun times with or to spend the rest of your life with (depending on what you want), lies in the proper foundations being laid within yourself first and foremost.

It's sometimes enlightening to listen to the narrative you give people, and the one inside your head.

Are you always tempted to play down things when you are given a compliment? "What, this old thing? It looks terrible on me!"

Or do you give people a list of your shortcomings when you meet them? "Oh, I'm no good at that, I've never been any good at that . . ." or "I've put on weight I'm not looking my best/my hair is awful".

Or do you reject or reflect compliments: "No, really, yours is much nicer," or "Yes, but you are much better at that than me".

Is your inner narrative a destructive one?

"I should be more . . ."

"I should be less . . ."

"If only I wasn't . . ."

"I'm so stupid/silly/ridiculous/fat/horrible/selfish . . ."

It's quite true that it's much easier to see the inner glow from someone who is confident in themselves and happy with who they are. These are the people who you feel comfortable around. They are the ones who do not have a predominant inner critic and who graciously accept compliments with a simple "Thank you, it's so kind of you to notice".

Even if you feel silly or don't really believe it, try replacing those critical thoughts with positive ones and praise for yourself. Try accepting those compliments and believing that they are true.

If you really work on it, you could find a life-long love in yourself and then, who knows who may come along . . .

Ask Amanda Jayne for advice

Amanda Jayne would love to hear from you and will reply to letters which, if we print them, will remain anonymous. Your details will be treated confidentially.

Write to Amanda Jayne MA MBSCP at Feelgood Therapy, Room 11b, St Ann's House, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1LT; email amandajgoss@gmail.com; professional counsellors at www.kingslynnwestnorfolkcounting.co.uk, on 01553 827689 or 07760 669246.