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When love comes of age

Meet the author

What: Sherry Halperin will sign her newly released book, "Rescue Me, He's Wearing a Moose Hat."

When: 3 p.m. Dec. 3

Where: Peppertree Bookstore, 155 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

Other appearances: 2 p.m. Dec. 4, Jewish Community Center of Palm Desert; 7 p.m. Dec. 8, Temple Sinai Sisterhood, Palm Desert.

For info: www.sherryhalperin.com

Tips for dating over age 50

1. Remember that there are many single people your age looking for someone and they feel exactly the way you do.
2. Keep in mind all the advantages of living on the planet longer.
3. The people you meet will have a past. Expect them to accept yours and be open enough to accept theirs.
4. Dress in ways that make you feel good about yourself.
5. Go to places where you feel comfortable.
6. Slow down, don't rush. That date isn't the last one available.
7. Use the Internet to find age-appropriate people.

Source: Marilyn Graman, author of "How To Be Cherished"

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Maggie Downs

The Desert Sun

November 27, 2005

After 26 years of marriage, Sherry Halperin found herself in the last place she ever expected to be.

In the back seat of a car with another man.

The La Quinta woman had sworn she would never date again after the 1994 death of her husband.

"You know, there were things on my body that had moved, and they weren't where they were supposed to be anymore," she said. "I had no desire for anyone to see me naked."

Halperin was eventually thrust back into the dating pool when a friend paired her up.

"It was such a bizarre feeling," she said. "It was very surreal and odd and actually kind of nice."

Forty dates later - courtesy of online dating sites, pricey professional matchmakers that cost up to \$5,000, blind dates, parties and more - Halperin hooked up with some truly original companions.

Like: Turkey Neck. Jumpsuit Jim. Comb-Over. Rich Old Man. Moose Hat.

These men and others are detailed in Halperin's hilarious memoir, "Rescue Me, He's Wearing a Moose Hat," which details the dating life for the more than 29 million single people over age 50.

"I'm writing for an audience that has been ignored for so long," she said. "It's important for older people to have dreams and romance too."

Suddenly single seniors should take a cue from this, said Trish McDermott, chief matchmaker for Engage.com and one of the founders of Match.com.

"I encourage older singles to give themselves permission to date numerous people, especially if they are re-entering the dating market," McDermott said. "You can be respectful and sincere without having to be overly serious."

"Dating should be fun. It's fine to go out on casual dates with numerous people, and it's a great way to practice dating skills that may be a bit rusty."

During her dating journey, Halperin found that dating can be drastically different for older folks.

The older single is usually more focused on what they want out of a partner, she said. There's less selfishness, more sharing.

"When you're older and dating, you have to have an unbelievable amount of tolerance and compromise," Halperin said. "And anyone who says they don't have baggage is lying. Some just have more than others."

Halperin herself began her journey for love systematically, by creating a list of the qualities she was looking for in a man.

The list went through several revisions, until Halperin scrapped the whole thing.

"I realized there was no perfect person who is going to fit my list," she said.

She did enter into a long romance with a man who wouldn't have fit any of her qualifications.

"We came from two different worlds. His idea of a perfect date was a HAM radio convention in Fresno. Mine was a long weekend in Carmel," she said.

"But in spite of our differences, I fell madly in love with him."

Dating expert McDermott suggested that anyone in Halperin's shoes should aim for such activity dates, whether it's a convention or a weekend at the beach.

"Since many seniors are retired and looking for not only love and romance, but someone with whom they can spend time doing what they enjoy, it makes sense to set up dates doing things you love to do and things you expect to do with a future romantic partner," she said. "Activity dates tend to be less awkward and stressful first dates than more traditional dinner dates, where we sit across from someone for an hour or two struggling to impress each other with witty repartee, demonstrate our intelligence and sense of humor, or just be sure we don't end up with broccoli between our teeth when we flash our smile."

Halperin's journey ends with some universal truths: Not all dates lead to romance. Not all romance leads to love. Not all love leads to happiness.

"It's really a coming of age story, because I learned something about myself with every person," she said.

"The bottom line is that I wasn't ready to start dating until I figured myself out."

DATING AT ANY AGE

Sociologist BJ Gallagher has written about love, romance and marriage in books for women, including "Everything I Need to Know I Learned from Other Women."

Her tips for dating at any age include:

1. Flirt at least once a day. It's practice. Flirt with the pool man, the attractive women behind the check-out counter, the person in the car next to you at a stop light. Flirting can be as simple as smiling and making eye contact and holding it 5 or 10 seconds longer than normal.
2. Go out at least once a week to social situations where you can meet potential mates — cocktail parties, singles events, golf tournaments, art gallery openings, happy hour at a local bar, lectures at your local church, etc. Go by yourself. Dress to impress. Be open and receptive so that others might approach you.
3. Go out with everyone who asks you. It's practice. You want to practice on people you're not interested in, so that when someone special comes along, your dating skills are honed.
4. Women: Go out with someone three times before making a decision about him. Give him a chance. Don't rule him out too quickly — you might grow to love him.
5. A person is either attracted to you or not. Don't try to impress someone who clearly isn't interested in you.
6. Men want sex and are willing to trade intimacy to get it; women want intimacy and are willing to trade sex to get it. This doesn't change after 50 — it's still pretty much the norm at any age.
7. Men: Women's feelings are sacred to them. If you want to win points with a woman, cherish her and accept her feelings as legitimate. Never try to use logic on a woman's feelings.
8. There is a perception among women over 50 that there are no good men available out there. If you believe that's true, it is. If you don't believe it's true, then it's not. It's all in your attitude and expectations. You see what you believe.

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