

TADPOLING



Older women are best because they always think they may be doing it for the last time. *Ian Fleming*

Instead of kissing a lot of frogs, mature women may prefer “tadpoles” (younger men). Don’t call it cradle robbing—tadpoling is much cuter. Becky Fletcher of the San Francisco Examiner calls it “babysitting with perks.” A group of spunky women in that forward thinking city by the bay even declared National Tadpole Week and they’re lobbying to get this new definition of tadpole into the latest edition of Webster’s dictionary. The verb “to tadpole” would be the practice of women dating men who are ten or more years younger and the noun “tadpole” is that delightful creature, a man who is at least ten years his lover’s junior.

So you’re tired of dating men your age who will take you to a fabulous dinner but then nod off during the sex scene in the movies? There’s no harm in having the best of both worlds. Get your expensive

jewelry from the geezer and gorilla sex from the young stud muffin.

Experience is highly over rated when it comes to lovemaking—enthusiasm and frequency make up for a lot!

When we are in our twenties and thirties we design the man of our dreams and make a mental list of desirable attributes: We want him to be handsome, stylish, hard bodied and successful. He must appreciate the finer things in life like gourmet dining and giving fabulous jewelry. Oh, and he definitely has to be an imaginative, romantic lover.

But let's face facts. As the years go by, the list of requirements shrinks until by the time we turn sixty we often think the best we can hope for in a man is that he's still breathing and doesn't miss the toilet when he pees. This, my darlings, might be the perfect time to consider the sport of tadpoling.

And don't go thinking that this is a treat reserved for the rich, famous or beautiful. There's a tadpole out there for every woman if only she would open her eyes and her mind. It's not that you should be trolling the nurseries or daycare facilities, but be receptive to the idea that you needn't limit your dating pool to the nearest rest home and that you very well could be considered attractive and sexy to a younger man. It's just

possible that when that young taxi driver complimented your legs he wasn't just angling for a bigger tip. He may have been trying to break the ice just as a man your own age would do.

Men have traditionally had to deal with the stigma of rejection and it's no less a bummer to be shut down by someone older than by a twenty something babe. Often the problem for the younger man is that he is unsure of how to approach an older woman. If he's tried it once or twice, he may have been shut down, particularly if he tried one of those lame pickup lines that we heard in our twenties. If he gets chucked under the chin or called "sonny" or some such motherly endearment, he's not going to pursue it further. More likely he'll be embarrassed and retreat to his den (depending upon his age, that might be his messy one bedroom apartment).

Back in the 70s, Burt Reynolds shocked the entertainment world when he appeared naked in Playgirl magazine, his package discreetly tucked between his legs. Dinah was pushing sixty when she took up with her thirty something hunk and they flung themselves wholeheartedly into the scandalous love affair (oh, how easy it was to outrage people in those more innocent days). I was sitting near them at a dinner party after they

first got together and I overheard her say to him, “Eat your vegetables, darling.”

“I don’t *want* to eat my vegetables,” he replied petulantly.

Poor Dinah was on the cutting edge of the tadpole game and had apparently not yet learned to reign in her maternal instincts.

What, you may be asking, is the value of having a relationship with a younger man rather than an older one? There’s really not that much difference when you consider that men never really mature anyway. So the question should be instead, “What’s the harm in it?”

To remodel an old joke:

A sixty year old woman tells her friend about the wild sex she’s having with her 30 year old tadpole lover.

“My dear,” asked her friend, “aren’t you afraid that all that exertion might cause a heart attack?”

After a moment’s consideration, the woman replies, “Well, if he dies, he dies!”

The Sexagenarian woman may have trouble adjusting at first. After all, we are used to thinking the man should be at least a little older than

the woman. That's old hat, darlings, and heaven knows we want the height of fashion in any hat, and the younger man is definitely in fashion. It's everywhere in the gossip columns and magazine articles. There's plenty of reading material on the menopausal woman, although not much of it suggests that this just might be the sexiest time of your life. It's up to you how you spend—or squander—your later years.

It doesn't matter what you look like. Somewhere out there is a young man who finds you beautiful for all the right reasons. There's no need for you to dress provocatively or behave like a siren. A good tadpole appreciates the older woman's wisdom, confidence and mature view of life. He knows she understands that life doesn't have to be taken seriously all of the time and that a good laugh is preferably to any high drama. Oh, and a sense of humor doesn't mean you tell him jokes. It means you laugh at his.

With any luck you'll be at your most financially stable, have the most free time to spend making yourself look and feel fabulous and have the confidence and flair that many younger (and older) men find compelling. It's up to you to use those assets to your best advantage.

As the older woman, your first instinct might be that he's after your money, even if you don't have a significant amount of it. If you are fortunate to be truly wealthy, this might be a genuine issue, but generally it's only a small fraction of the attraction. While the younger man might appreciate a woman who can pull her own weight, that doesn't mean he's out to drain your bank account and turn your relationship into something that ends up on *Unsolved Mysteries*. This doesn't mean that you should make him privy to your finances—quite the opposite—but you needn't let suspicion rule your sex life. After all, you're probably not looking to marry the guy, nor he you, so why not have a little fun even if you do pick up your share of the tab? There's not harm in going Dutch, but let's remember that the situation changes if you start paying for everything.

One younger man I've dated (he's twenty years my junior) said that he likes going out with me because I'm smarter than women his age. He's a well-educated historian and let's face it, I've lived more history than most of the women he dates have even read about. He finds it intriguing that I can talk about the second World War and that I can quote Dorothy Parker. He's also an old movie buff and once we start talking about black and white films, the years between us fade away.

He also says that he finds that I am less demanding about where we go and what we do. I first I took this to mean that he thought I was a pushover. Then I realized that when I was younger I was more demanding, especially about less important things like which movie or restaurant we chose. Oddly, it would seem I was less demanding in crucial areas such as character and substance in the men I dated. It was more important that he brought flowers than that he have a brain or a conscience.

Don't get me wrong, but that brain thing can be totally overrated. Ignorance really can be bliss at times. While you may not like 'em big and stupid, it can be a lot less taxing to sleep with a dumb guy than to try to have a real relationship with a smart guy who has a lot of baggage. And speaking of baggage, younger men tend to have less of it, especially the ones who are looking to date an older woman. Of course, there will be those with ex-wives and alimony payments, but often they are those terminal bachelors who haven't been able to settle down just yet. As long as you're not committed to making him commit, everything should go fine.

You need to watch out for your own luggage as well. Baggage is something we all carry but there is no reason to share it with the man you're romancing, no matter his age. He doesn't want to hear about who else you've slept with and he most certainly doesn't want to hear about how tough your life has been. Before he unzips his pants, you'd better zip your lip.

Lest it all sound too rosy, let's discuss just what younger men *don't* like about older women. Surprisingly, it doesn't have anything to do with what we look like. Generally, we look a whole heck of a lot better than the men our age and often just as good as men ten or even fifteen years younger. And if we work at it, we can look at least as good as any woman ten years our junior. It just takes longer.

What they abhor can be summed up in one word: bitterness. Bitter is not at all attractive. Some women are resentful about the way they were treated in the past, about not having a husband, about real or imagined slights in their careers or social lives. Sometimes it's that they never had the chance for a really steamy affair. So, now's the perfect

opportunity. And as the saying goes, when opportunity knocks, answer the door naked.

It's most important to remember that you are, as it was said in that wonderful movie *Calendar Girls*, in the full flower of your womanhood. I say get busy getting pollinated before you go to seed!

How young should your tadpole be? The seven-year rule (similar to the rules for choosing an Islamic wife) is a pretty good yardstick: Pick a man who is half your age plus seven. That means when you're sixty you can feel comfortable going out (or just sleeping with) a 37 year old man. And if someone even younger approaches you, don't be afraid to bend the rule. I'm big on rule bending, but the one rule that never goes out the window is this: I never date any man whose mother is younger than I am.

It's important to tread carefully on that fine line that separates the joyous tadpole from the predatory old bag looking to hang on to her youth. Avoid that trap by remembering that you're not looking to fall in love, just a roll in the hay. If it becomes something more, then you have cause to celebrate.

Actually, research shows that tadpoling is not always just about the sex. There's a level of fun attached and even sometimes spirited conversations (younger people tend to be more passionate about their opinions). The tadpole will complain less about being "dragged" to the theatre to see, say, *Urinetown*, and will most certainly be more willing to go for new experiences. What are the odds you'll get that older fuddy duddy dentist boyfriend to try indoor rock climbing with you? Or doing anything after 10 p.m.?

Lest you think this is all just a flash in the pants, there is evidence that tadpole relationships tend to actually have legs, most lasting around ten years, and the average age difference is about 13 years. According to Becky Fletcher, who is too young for tadpoling, but nevertheless wrote an article about it, there's little fear that your young stud will dump you for some pretty young thing. Nope, turns out it's the older women who usually breaks it off. Probably because he's gotten too old for her.

And there is certainly no lack of role models in the arena of dating younger men. Madonna pretty much invented the Boy Toy concept but Cher carried on the tradition without ever settling down. And then there

was Demi Moore and her twenty something Ashton. Rumor had it that he lied down about his age just to make the difference seem bigger! It's good to know that men are consistent when it comes to lying about the size of things.

Long time May-December relationships abound in Hollywood, and who knows what lurks in the suburban bedrooms across the country. Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins have weathered their 12 year age difference; Mary Tyler Moore chose S. Robert Levine, 18 years her junior after divorcing Grant Tinker; Raquel Welch gave it a try before dumping Richard Palmer (15 year gap) and there are 19 years separating Ralph Fiennes and Francesca Annis. Carol Burnett's sweetie Brian Miller was 25 years younger and Joan Collins gets the Tadpoling Lifetime Award for pushing the envelope with Percy Gibson and a whopping 33 year discrepancy!

And that's just in America. Take a trip to Paris if you really want to see older women holding the reins. There, long-in-the-tooth lasses are prized for their glamour and their experience, in both life and the bedroom. They don't seem to be trying to hang on to their youth but

rather to flaunt their maturity. Where else could a sixty something actress like Jean Moreau, with a face lined by years of living, prance around in a slip and still be considered sexy? Heck, if she could do it, why can't we?

And maybe, just maybe, tadpoling can be good for your health and well being—and not just because you'll be getting more exercise.

Statistics show that there is more than three times the number of single women over sixty than bachelors in the same age group. The younger pool of single men is much larger, nearly the same as the Sexagenarian women group. And since men tend to die younger than women, it might just mean that if the relationship has longevity, you and your significant tadpole will die at the same time. Preferably in the sack.