

I'm Doug Weiss, and I'm Alvean Lyons, Welcome to Love Life

My dear Alvean, today's topic is one that you and I could probably relate to. It's about the subject of age differences in relationships. We've all heard about, read about or seen a movie about a May, December romance, one partner is older than the other. And there are a lot of, conventions about that. Sometimes popular media treat in a way that makes it seem like a simple thing. But in practice, it can be a great deal more complex. So the question I guess that was posed to us is, how do you navigate when there are those large age differences? Maybe the place to start is to say, what is a large difference? Now, Peggy and I are three years apart, that doesn't seem like a lot. I've been in a relationship where there were six years difference.

Did you feel differently in that relationship?

A little bit. I think that we had some coming of age differences. We came of age at a different point in time, then early in our dating life, we found that there were some commonalities we didn't share. But it certainly wasn't a significant challenge. Because it was six years.

Do you think that is true for decades? Okay, so I'll say a couple of things. One, I think that depending upon what age you are, when you're looking at these spaces, makes a difference. For instance, if you are 25, and the person you're dating is 10 years younger than you, that makes them 15, that's a problem. If you are 50, and she's 40, that's not as big a deal to me. So I think it matters what age were starting at, because I think that those spaces can become either very fluid, if we're within the same generation, so to speak, or they can be very fixed. If you're talking about, 18 and 28, if you're talking about 17 and 27, those are very different kinds of ages. And I have peers and professional friends that have significant age gaps between them and their partners. Interestingly enough, recently I'm finding more women that are with significantly younger men. I will admit that I'm a woman who has dated men younger than me, many times. My husband is younger than I am, just slightly, but I've dated men significantly younger than I am. And what is it. I would totally admit that particularly in the way that women are wired, most women are wired, you have to work against this element of your personhood that wants to almost mother, your partner. And I think that when you find yourself leaning in that direction, that's when it can become a bit more problematic. Because relationships in their healthiest forms are relationships that are fundamentally mutually respectful. And when I see you as lesser in maturity, or lesser in understanding or lesser in wisdom, I when I don't see you as my equal, (we could be equal and different), but if I don't see you as my equal, I think that can undermine the quality of a relationship over time. And that's where I have found it struck more of a struggle for people in relationships.

That gives me the heebie jeebies

It's very it's very technical, you'll find it in your DSM four. But I do sometimes get the heebie jeebies when I see men with women that could easily have been their daughters.

I've commented on this a number of times, but to me, coming up, one of my criteria, was that I would never ever date someone that was too close in age to my daughter. And in there were practical reasons for that as well. Not least of which was what do we have to talk about what do we have in common? When I was growing up, that was what we saw, older men, younger women. There was a social club where I lived in Florida that had a median age of 40, 60 year old men, 20 year old women. But I'm fascinated by the prospect that you raise, more women dating younger men. Do you think that's just because it's more socially acceptable?

I think that you have a combination of things. You have women who have put career first, and in so doing find themselves in a shrinking dating pool, because men have always been able to kind of date wherever they wanted to. If you have a conversation with women, they'll talk about it all the time. My biological clock is ticking, but he has forever before anything changes for him. So here, I am ready to have kids, and he is still thinking about whether or not he even wants to move in together. The, the pace can be very different. And, I think that women in pursuit of expanding their dating circle are considering more and more freedoms and finding love and coming outside of those boxes that have included dating men that are significantly younger than them.

I wonder, and I think this goes in both directions, whether or not this is actually a reflection of the rate at which men and women mature, both psychologically emotionally, Guys, you may not like to hear this, but a lot of us are in Arrested Development, It takes us a lot longer to get to the same level of maturity as women as a general rule, at least that's been my observation. But physically, we may be at our peak a lot earlier and a lot longer. So, there are, some physiological and psychological differences in the rate at which the genders age. These are massive generalizations, but I wonder to what degree that suggests that there's a sort of inherent interest or drive towards age differences. But to get back to where we started with this, one of my questions to you is this: you find yourself in a relationship with someone that's older or younger than you are by enough that it's not the average relationship. There's some dislocation in terms of your experiential life. How do you avoid making that either the tentpole of your relationship or the albatross?

It's a really interesting question. And I cannot say that I have a definitive answer, I can say some things that I think contribute to the wellness or illness inside of that relationship as a byproduct of that. But I don't know that there's a perfect answer. I think that the more you have differences inside of a relationship, the more significant the conversations are going to need to be. And that's to say that relationships by themselves have a nature of gravity associated with them, we don't live in a culture that unfortunately really nurtures people coming together and staying together, we're in a very different kind of culture. So you're always working against this gravity of separation, this gravity of leveling up, this gravity of one upping all kinds of things that work against people growing through their stuff, and growing closer as opposed to apart. So, whenever you're adding to the list of things that just humans in general have to go through. and you add age to that, I think that those significant differences require us to have more significant conversation about how we will do these things. You can never plan for everything. but when you have something that significant, how are we going to address the fact that what I

may love and what you may love may be very different? How I relate to something based on my socialization and my era might be a little bit different than how you relate to it. How does it make you feel when I do ABC and D? Does it in any way make you feel like I'm treating you as if you are too old, or I'm treating you as if you are too young, because both of those feelings can be negative, depending upon the person who's receiving them. So I think that some of that in order to figure out if this thing can work means that we have to have kinds of conversations that maybe the average couple who shares more commonalities don't necessarily have to have. What do you think, Douglas, because I'm sure you have had peers that have made those choices, perhaps at some point.

Yes, I do. And the thing that comes across to me the most is the match or mismatch of energy levels. By that I mean that if a couple both have the same sort of interests and an energy, a passion for life: they like to travel and they like to go out camping or they both love sports and they love to go to games, that works. What doesn't work so well is when one partner wants to stay at home and read a book and the other one wants to party. Then you've got a mismatch and that's where you start to develop a friction. I think you can still navigate those things but there is some truth to the fact that at different points in our life chronologically our interests and our enthusiasm and frankly our physical ability to do things changes and that just comes with the territory. If that doesn't happen to coincide and there's not a lot of tolerance between the couple then it becomes the negative aspect and becomes the point of friction in the relationship rather than essentially something that doesn't matter that much.

We have some real-life experience, celebrity experiences right now. I mean Geraldo Rivera is like 30 years younger than his wife, the president's wife, yes our current president about 30 years younger than him. For a younger generation Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra are over a decade apart and just gotten engaged. So, you can see this happening out there and one is always intrigued by how well this will go and how long this will last. George Clooney and his wife. There's enough out there to make us kind of wonder what's the longevity going to be on these relationships. But it seems that to your point, the more we fundamentally have in common, the more insignificant the age factor tends to be. If our values are the same our energies the same, our visions for our lives very similar, than age really is just a number rather than a defining pillar.

Well, I still have what I call my squeamishness factor about this. My squeamishness is this, you mentioned earlier, the 10 year gap, the decade gap. I think any of our listeners would agree that a 20 year old and a 10 year old should never should never be together. But we say to ourselves well, at 50 and 40 that doesn't seem like a problem. Why is that, because we assume that somehow once we all get to that point called adulthood, we've leveled the playing field, it does seem that way. But I'm not sure that we're entirely level.

I think that a lot of that comes from the fact that our worlds become very similar. A 20 year old and a 10 year old don't have similar worlds. But a 50 year old and a 40 year old can both be VPs at a bank working together on similar projects with similar energy and commitment and the list goes on and on. You can find so many commonalities and the way that we live that that thing

that we call age becomes kind of fades into the background because the thing we call life is far more significant.

Well another episode of love life gone, it went by too quickly.

We hope you'll be back with us next week. In the meantime, if you have questions or would like to write to us please Write to us at [doug@lovelife.digital](mailto:doug@lovelife.digital) or [alvean@lovelife.digital](mailto:alvean@lovelife.digital)

We want to thank Kamaria Mason, our producer, Todd Washburn, our Recording Engineer and the entire Love Life family, including you, our listeners. We'll be back next week with another episode. Until then, have a wonderful week. Bye folks.