When Seniors Remarry Late in Life What is Different and What Pitfalls Could Be Avoided

A lot has been written about romance but there isn't much available data about senior romance. It's actually in a class by itself and needs special treatment.

First of all, the normal hurdles that younger couples have to work their way through are seldom of concern. Careers are over for most seniors. Children are raised and have left home. Home buying and other major acquisitions were made in the distant past. Well, then, it sounds like all should be quiet on the romantic front, doesn't it?

That's not necessarily so. Seniors who have reached an advanced age, say past seventy, have often established some very strong opinions. One person put it to me this way..."There are a lot of ways to go to the mailbox." It isn't something that is often noticed on the surface. Habits become solidified and attitudes, opinions and reactions become pretty firmly entrenched without much fanfare. Long, comfortable marriages seem to support the "I Did It My Way" that Frank Sinatra once sang about.

Seniors who find themselves alone, usually because of the loss of a partner, don't have current skills at dating and selecting a mate. How could they? And what worked in their late teens or early twenties is usually way beyond obsolete. Unfortunately, most "don't know that they don't know" and assumptions are usually rampant.

Dating often becomes a stiff affair involving a meal out with friends or alone and maybe a movie. More often than not, a marriage is contracted with no baseline of reality to hold it together. Each partner knows how things should be, which is how they always were in the past, right? Wrong! Issues of all kinds arise when no serious consideration is given to varying points of view.

The land of assumptions is the direct opposite of deep, investigative conversations. What should be seriously addressed are attitudes about sexual behavior, the handling of finances, the division of labor in the home and yard and how various adult children are going to be involved. And that's just for starters.

Even when this is done, deep honesty may be by-passed. Telling it how it would be "lov-er-ly"...not how it is can be an easy trap to fall into when trying to win someone over. Often adult children react to a late in life marriage of a cherished parent differently than the hopeful parent thought they would. In other words, they may be hard to second guess.

One senior couple I know quite well sailed into marital bliss with the wife being promised "nooners" by a husband who was sure she would be the cure for his sexual impotence. He also guaranteed that his grown kids would love anyone he loved and that turned out to be a bust. They hadn't talked about finances because neither of them was comfortable with the subject, so another hurdle loomed. A decade later they are doing very well but it looked, from my vantage point at least, like it was a long, uphill climb.

What seems to work is to take it slow and easy, and see what evolves. Neither partner can be a replacement for the one who is gone. New attitudes may have to be considered and new patterns created. When seniors marry it is not usually a rerun of an early-in-life romance where the pieces just fall in place automatically. It is new and different and needs to be treated with great respect. Seniors are wiser, we can all hope, but not as durable in most cases. The resilience of youth has usually come and gone.

Anyone wanting to remarry late in life might be wise to talk with other senior newly-weds, their own grown kids, a beloved minister and/or even a counselor. Why not stack the deck favorably?

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