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**Title: When a difference in age matters**

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He's smooth, delicious and aged like a fine wine. He leans in and asks you out. You stall. You've never dated anyone significantly older than you before. You weigh the options and then take one more look at the sheen of his black yet slightly salted hair and go for it. There's something about his magnetism that's animal. Welcome to the world of dating an older man. Just keep yourself in check.

The experience can be intoxicating. He seems like he has it all--answers, access, control; it's a beautiful thing. His rare ability to maneuver any situation is most alluring. Just remember, his power is the result of just being around longer and having more experiences. Most likely when you're his age, you'll be just as settled and self-assured. It's not an inherent stability, just one with more time to develop.

Most likely he has experienced the life stage you're in now, which can make him a great help in crafting your path. That doesn't put him in the driver's seat, though; it just makes him an opinionated passenger. The challenge in these relationships is to manage the imbalance of power, especially when your older partner may very well embrace and enjoy the control his position offers.

Avoid the tendency to fall into the roles of teacher and student, unless we're talking bedroom behavior; then all bets are off. That's where all of that senior experience can come in handy, literally. The chemistry can be tremendous. And this is a definite area where getting a little schooling by an older mentor can be a divine study.

Outside the bedroom, you may have the tendency to give more credence to your older partner than he may deserve. That can be reflective of the age jump or the intimidation of entering a world your partner is comfortable in but that you have never really experienced. Likewise, your partner may not share your interests or vocabulary. Many pop culture and old-school references can be lost in translation. You're busy downloading music while he's alphabetizing his vinyls.

Although separate tastes don't have to be a deal-killer, the larger the jump in age, the more challenging this can be. A 10-year spread or more is when the differences can start becoming barriers. At that point it's a full generation gap. However, that gap matters less the older you are. A healthy age difference is one in which both partners can relate to one another and share common interests and goals.

Regardless, the power needs to be balanced. This is often the tricky part. It's easy to give up authority to someone older and seemingly more knowledgeable. Don't. You have ideas; share them. You want to do something; say it. Value your own opinion and exert it. Your partner was attracted to you in the first place because of what you brought to the table. So, show yourself.

No matter who or what or how old your partner is, it's important to set up a situation in which you both can be empowered and comfortable. Your relationship should be fulfilling on a multitude of levels. An age difference does not have to inhibit that. That's assuming you're in it for deeper reasons.

That's assuming this isn't a looks-for-money trade. Being together for superficialities can only work as long as that's literally all you want for yourself. And is it? You deserve to be fulfilled on all levels. Just consider that both your face and the stock market can fall, and then what?

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