

# LOVE IS IN THE AIR: AGING AND INTIMACY

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Love, both physical and emotional, in late life is something to be cherished. Adults at every age can benefit from the improved mental and physical health, not to mention increased lifespan that a close intimate relationship brings. The benefits of having a fulfilled and active love life are no different in your 80s than in your 40s.

As we age many things slow down, however the desire for intimacy is timeless and sexual intimacy is integral to a wholly satisfying relationship. If you are an older adult who is currently in a relationship or is open to the possibility of romance:

**Focus on intimacy and physical touch.** It's not just sex. Intimacy can be about emotional pleasure, sensory

pleasure, and relationship pleasure. Sharing stories, taking time to hold hands, and cuddling is very sexy.

**Find what works for you.** Holding each other, kissing, massage, can be used in place of, or to supplement, conventional intercourse. Changing your routine and playfulness is important at any age.

**Accept and celebrate who you are.** According to Jack Benny, "Age is strictly a case of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." Reap the benefits of your experience. You may feel better about yourself and know more about what you want at 72, than you did at 22. Wrinkles and flab, and maybe a few battle scars, just aren't as worrisome as they used to be. Your body may have changed over the years, but so, too, has your partners.

**Communicate with your partner.** Be playful and honest. Let your partner know about how you are feeling and what you'd like out of a relationship.

**Restart a stalled sex drive.** Understand roadblocks. Emotional obstacles such as depression, stress, and anxiety can affect your interest and ability. Body image, low self-esteem, and performance worries can also be a hindrance to intimacy.

**Know when to seek help.** No matter what your age, losing your desire for intimacy and touch isn't normal. In fact, loss of interest or function can be a sign of a medical condition or be a result or side effect of a medication you are taking. Don't let embarrassment keep you from talking to your doctor or other trained professionals to find out about help. Although there is no longer the worry of pregnancy, STDs, and HIV/AIDS are still of concern.

The Baby Boomers of the 1960's who preached "peace, love and rock and roll" and helped shape the nation's current views on sex and intimacy will continue to do so well into their 80's. After all, baby boomers did invent the slogan "Make love, not war!"

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