



An age-old problem: How old is too old?

Question

<p>Dear Alice,</p>

<p>For some reason I'm only attracted men who are about ten years older than I am (currently 21). I drive my poor mother crazy, but whenever I try to date someone my own age I end up finding them naive, too eager, and/or boring.</p>

<p>My last boyfriend was a med school student, he and I were together for a little under two years and he's nine years older. My boyfriend now is an economist, ten years older. I mean to say that these guys are not dumb or unsuccessful, and it's not just about sex. It feels natural for me to be with someone older.</p>

<p>Am I just a pervert, or should my mother be more understanding? Or both?</p>

<p>Thanks,

Too sexy for my age-group</p>

Answer

<p>Dear Too sexy for my age-group,</p>


<p>There seem to be two main issues here. First, you're questioning why you tend to prefer older guys and if this makes you a pervert. It probably doesn't, but you could choose to look a little deeper at your reasons for dating only older guys, if you want to. Second, it sounds like you are looking to lessen the tension between you and your mom by increasing understanding between you.</p>


<p>First, about your preference for older guys... one important point to remember is that people mature and develop at different rates (you've heard the idea of late bloomers and early bloomers). It's possible you are mature for your age and relate better to older folks. It's also possible that older men, who have inevitably had more time for life experiences than the younger men, offer insights, perspectives, or status that you find appealing. You can ask yourself some questions, such as:</p>


<ul type="disc">Who are my friends? Are they older too?

What is it about the older men that I like — their experience? That they have careers? How they make me feel about myself?

Are my relationships fair and equal? Am I treated with respect? Do I feel free to pursue my own goals? (Read more about relationships.)

Have I always liked older men?

<p>This is surely a personal matter that you could choose talk over with friends, your mom, or a professional counselor. If you want to explore your attractions, and the reasons for them, a counselor may be a great way to delve deeper. Here are some resources: </p>



<ul type="disc">If you're a student, you can make an appointment at your school's counseling department or mental health clinic.

Student or not, you can log into the National Institute of Mental Health's website on Getting Help: Locate Services, which offers more information on finding a counselor in your area.

If you've got health insurance, your plan may have a list of counselors and a procedure for connecting with services. That information should be on their website or brochure. You could also call the company to get more guidance.

<p>The other problem you're facing is the strain this puts on your relationship with your mom. The hard truth is that, even if you think your mom should be more understanding, it's really your mom's choice whether or not she approves of your attraction to older guys. And, it's your choice whether, or not, you let your mom's comfort or discomfort with your dating preferences influence your dating decisions.</p>



<p>Since you both have a choice in the matter, it might help to hear each other out. Do you think a good talk might help you both understand the situation better? What would it be like to sit down with your mom to chat about your point of view and hers? Maybe your mom has some darn good reasons for her concern. Her reasons might relate to her own past, your past, or her general beliefs about age and dating. Also, you've got some pretty good reasons, yourself, for continuing to date older men. Who knows, you and your mom might learn some new things about each other, and yourselves, during such a discussion! </p>



<p>Whether or not you choose to delve into your personal reasons for digging older guys, it's hopeful that you and your mom can get to know each other's concerns and preferences better through talking and listening. It's hard when parents don't approve, however your concern and willingness to look deeper at this difficult issue reflects your maturity.</p>



<p>Best of luck in your conversations,</p>

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