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What's this?

An age-old story as love starts to go wrong for the '60s generation

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By Catherine Scott

It is easy to assume that once people reach middle age, relationships have become settled into a familiar pattern, but that often isn't case.

As people live longer and the baby boom generation hit their 50s and 60s they have a lot of questions that remain unanswered.

Now life coach and counsellor Keren Smedley has written *Who's That Sleeping in My Bed* specifically for these people, giving advice on the different issues that come up in a relationship as we get older.

"I wrote this book as a woman in my 50s for my peers. After all we were the first generation to take the contraceptive pill, challenge marriage, campaign for women's rights, and gay rights, too. We had a freedom that previous generations didn't with the introduction of the Pill in the early 60s; and we didn't have the fears that later generations have been brought up with of sexually transmitted diseases that could kill, as they only became apparent in the 1980s. We had a window and were 'let out' to explore an unknown and exciting world."

But Keren says with this new-found freedom has come some disillusionment.

"Many of us in our 50s facing our 60s (some of us already there!) have found it's not quite as we'd expected. We thought we'd worked it all out but many of us find ourselves uncertain how to keep the spark in long-term relationships; or on our own when we thought we'd married for life, or having finally accepted our sexuality and acknowledged we're gay, or that we really want to be single and possibly celibate, or that now is the time to explore but we don't know the new rules. All in all, it isn't as straightforward as we thought."

As a counsellor and coach for the over-50s, Keren has been asked many questions.

"The kinds of things I get asked are, 'how do you keep sex exciting after 30 years of marriage?' 'I'm very happy to be single, so why is everyone trying to partner me with their best friend?' 'My father in law is coming to live with us, how will my partner and I get any space to be together?' 'I think I'm gay, how do I tell my husband (or wife)?' 'I'm divorced, I've met a great guy, how do I tell my children?'"

"Many of us in spite of our early sexual freedoms know little about preventing sexually transmitted diseases and are not protecting ourselves well enough."

"There is a high rise in the number of 50 and 60-year-olds visiting STD clinics."

Baby boomer are living through a unique period when there are more people over 65 than there are 16-year-olds.

"Things are different for us," she says.

"The Office of National Statistics in 2008 revealed that the trend in long-term marriages ending in divorce shows no sign of abating and that the greatest percentage increase in failed marriages turn out to be those of over 30 years' standing."

"The consequence is that there are now more and more single individuals in their 50s and 60s either looking for a relationship or learning to be single again."

"Nearly a third of women are living alone by the time they reach retirement age."

"Many of us, won't see 50 again and we face our own special issues such as how to enjoy sex when our bodies creak a bit or how to take time to be intimate when there are so many other pressures in our lives."

"We are prepared to ask and to explore ideas to help us make decisions on how to make our lives more fulfilled."

"Even though we were part of a sexual revolution, we now find ourselves with very few places that offer the help we need at our age."

Her book is written in a question and answer format and offers answers to all of these questions and more. Keren says it discusses topics that we normally shy away from but that we need to deal with if we want to have happy and healthy relationships.

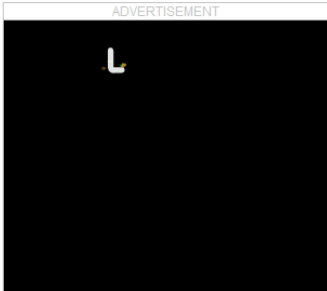
"We're a formidable body of people who've been pioneers from the word go and will continue to be so as we age. The more we understand one another, the better our communication and the happier our lives."

"Whatever your situation, I hope this book offers you some answers."

n *Who's That Sleeping In My Bed?* –The Art of Relationships for Grown Ups is published by *Headline Springboard* at £7.99 tomorrow and can be purchased via www.amazon.co.uk. To order a copy from the Yorkshire Post Bookshop, call free on 0800 0153232 or go online at www.yorkshirepostbookshop.co.uk. Postage and packing is £2.75.



A new book by relationships counsellor Keren Smedley aims to help older couples tackle relationship issues



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