

*Don't think you are  
damaged goods*

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**W**hen you reenter the dating world in midlife, it is easy to focus on what is wrong with you. Your body is not as firm and lithe as it was in your 20's. You have wrinkles, perhaps cellulite, maybe some gray hair. You probably don't have as much energy as you used to, or you have physical limitations due to injuries or parts wearing down. You might have kids living at home and feel few men would want to deal with that.

Men seem to be most concerned about their hair loss. Women seem most concerned about weight gain. I've learned that many men are less concerned about a woman's few extra pounds; women are less concerned about a man's receding hairline.

You should never feel as if you are damaged goods. If you are having self-doubts, make a list (maybe with the aid of a good friend) of all your positive characteristics. You want to exude confidence (without arrogance) so a man knows he is lucky to spend time with you.



If you feel you could update your image, go to the makeup counter at one of the major department stores and have a makeover. It's typically free. Buy some of the makeup and wear it when you go out, even to the grocery store. You never know if you'll run into your next husband in the cat food aisle, as one of my friends did.

Also, Macy's and Nordstrom have personal shoppers that can help you update your look. There is no cost for the service. Call and make an appointment. Tell her you're looking for some dating clothes, give her your size and colors, and when you arrive she will have pulled items for you to try. I've used these services many, many times. You aren't obligated to buy anything, and she will bring you sale items as well as full-priced ones. She will help put together the whole outfit, including shoes, hose, and accessories so you feel totally pulled together.

If you're out of shape, start walking even if it's only 15 minutes a day. It will do wonders for your outlook on life, and it will begin to tone things up. If you are more energetic, take an exercise class. It's amazing how quickly your energy and body can change.

So there is no excuse for you to feel that you are less than stellar. You want to put your best foot forward on each date, so do what you need to do to accomplish that.

What do you need to do to get ready for dating? Put your plan into action this week.



*You are (probably)  
more attractive  
than you think!*

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**I**t seems that people have a mismatch on their expectation of attractiveness. The stereotype is that a man wants (and often gets) a woman who is much more attractive than he is. Women often put money, status, demeanor and sense of humor ahead of attractiveness, when looks are often at or near the top of the “must haves” for men.

In college I duplicated a study matching couples by attractiveness. I took the pictures of 10 long-term couples from my high-school yearbook and had subjects rate the attractiveness of all 20 people individually. Then I had them match people who seemed to go together. While few people found the true couples, they did match approximate attractiveness levels. So those rated 8-10 (10 being high) were put together, as were the 5-7s, 4-6s, etc.

So why do men who would be rated a 6 seem to think



they can get a woman who's an 8? They think they're "all that" when really they're so so. Because the woman only thinks she's a 5, 6, or 7.

In a recent study, school children were asked what level of student they were. The girls consistently rated themselves lower than their average performance; the boys rated themselves higher. An A-student girl said she was a B or B+ student. A B-student boy said he was an A student. So girls and boys have a skewed image of themselves, with boys thinking more highly of themselves than warranted, and girls thinking lower of themselves.



So women (generally) think they aren't as attractive or as desirable as independent raters would assess them.

How would you rate yourself? Whatever the number, bump it a bit. You're no doubt a better catch than you think yourself to be!



# *The downside of considering yourself pretty*

**M**ost of the women I know underestimate their attractiveness, not overestimate it. It is easy to be acutely aware of each of your “flaws” since you examine millimeters of your face and body every day — sometimes at 5x magnification. I am astounded when I hear top models complaining about a crooked nose, uneven skin tone or wrinkles no one else would see.

But there are women who consider themselves hot, stunning, and/or breathtaking. Such vanity can either be a sign of true high self-esteem, focusing on only one’s positive attributes. Or it can be an outward showing of low self-esteem — if one believes herself ugly but thinks that pretending to be beautiful will make others believe so. Sort of like the Emperor’s New Clothes — if you project it, others will believe it.

Unusually high self-regard can be detrimental. In the 1722 novel by Daniel Defoe *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, the title character says that those who think of themselves as beautiful are

easier to seduce: “If a young woman once thinks herself handsome, she never doubts the truth of any man that tells her he is in love with her; for she believes herself charming enough to captivate him, ’tis natural to expect the effects of it.”

So are women who consider themselves beautiful more vulnerable to manipulation? Are they prone to believe any man who tells them they are beautiful because, well, they are? So they think they have beguiled a man, when he may just be saying that or it may be for a momentary seduction.

We could argue that a woman who doesn’t consider herself attractive is more vulnerable as she can be manipulated by a man who tells her she is beautiful. She may not hear compliments as often so feels he must be sincere.

What do you think — is it easier to be manipulated if you think you are beautiful or unattractive?

A related piece, “Why men don’t tell you you’re pretty“ is in the *Embracing Midlife Men: Insights Into Curious Behaviors* book.



# They aren't called "hate handles"

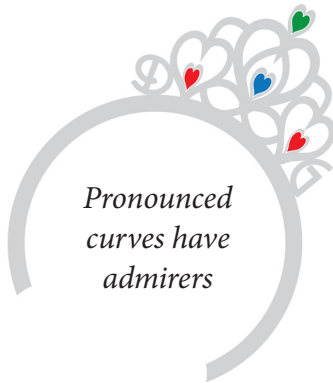
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Many midlife women have bodies with a bit more to love than they did in their twenties. Some are self-conscious about their less-than-model-like shapes. I have been.

But then a few men have helped me see that pronounced curves have admirers. When discussing our body images with one beau, I shared that I wasn't happy with my generous hips. His reply: "I love your hips. You know, they aren't called 'hate handles.'" Of course, I kissed him right then and there.

Another commented that my considerable tush should "be proclaimed a national treasure." Now you've got to just love a man who says things like that!

I was reminded of these sweet-talking endearments upon hearing a



comment by Guy Ritchie after his and Madonna's divorce announcement. I've long admired her lithe, chiseled body. But evidently he did not. During their estrangement, he was quoted saying that making love to Madonna was like "having sex with gristle."

The point is that there are men who love all body types. And what may seem attractive to you in other women, may not be at all attractive to many men. We need to embrace who we are and appreciate whatever we bring to the party, knowing there are some men who will love us for — or despite — whatever part of ourselves we may not fully love.



*“I could really see us  
together if you lost  
weight”*

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**M**ost of us would be incensed hearing this. I wasn't. A dear male pal, someone I'd dated briefly 18 months ago, told me this recently. We were having a heart to heart, honest talk about the ups and downs of dating and why I hadn't found Mr. Right yet.

About a month after our first date, we decided we weren't a good match, but we still enjoyed each others' company. We've kept in touch regularly, seeing each other monthly and talking weekly. While he thinks I'm pretty and sexy, my body type is not the kind that turns him on. And as much as I adore him as a pal, he has some quirks that would drive me crazy if he was my man.

What if someone who really interested you said this? Would you be crushed, incensed, or step up your efforts to lose some lingering extra pounds? Both genders long for someone who will love us exactly the way we are. Yet

it is commonly acknowledged that women often see a man as a project, wanting to change his wardrobe, job, car, friends, furnishings, hair cut, etc. How is this different than a man wanting us to sculpt our body closer to what he desires?

Today I heard Ruben Studdard singing “Change Me.” In it, he asks his woman how would she feel if he complained about her hair, nail polish color, clothes, friends, job, cooking, housekeeping, etc. His point is that she wouldn’t like it, so why does she think he will put up with her constant complaints about him? The chorus, “Why do you want to change me?” echoes what men and women have felt for ages.

You have to decide what the deal breakers are for you. And if there are things you’d like him to change, consider how easy they are to change. And how important are they to him? What if he really likes his job, but you think he doesn’t make enough money? Can you live with it, or are you willing to figure out how you both could create more income for both of you without his changing jobs? Or is it a deal breaker?

Better identify your deal breakers while early in the dating cycle lest you try to change a deal breaker that he is unwilling to modify — after you’ve invested months in the relationship. And what would you be willing to change for someone you cared about?