

## Senior Advice: Flirting friends frustrating

by *Doug\_Mayberry*

Q: After my husband of 27 years died, I moved to a retirement community. My husband was ill for several years, and I loved and took care of him. Now, I am facing my own mortality because my health is failing. Two of my widowed friends spend most of their time talking and flirting with the available men in our park. I don't join in, and tell them I am no longer interested in a relationship. They think I am kidding and ignore my point of view and want me to flirt, too. They are fun to be with, but how can I stop their pressure to bring me to their need for a new partner?

A: You can't. Our lives go through many transitions, some by choice, and others are mandated by health, finances or addictions over which we have little control. You are now on a different path.

Your priorities have changed, and you are being challenged by your own needs and do not need complications. Tell your friends how much you enjoy their friendship, but you are quite serious about not wanting to become involved with a new partner. You may be able to minimize their chatter somewhat, but that is where their interest lies.

In aging we are not the same person we were at either 18 or 49. Sometimes, because of the loss of a partner, we feel relieved of responsibilities and commitments we made when we were younger. These feelings can cause us to feel guilty about our newfound happiness and relief. We should not feel guilty.

You and your husband were loved, blessed and shared many years together. The point is you had them. Remember them lovingly! Many of us are not given the opportunity.

Q: My husband and I have a new game we enjoy in which we mentally guess how other couples' sex lives compare to ours. As we are in our 70s and still enjoy sexual pleasure, we guess if others are also doing so. Have you learned of other couples playing this game?

A: Yes. It's harmless and entertaining. Of course, second-guessing is just what it is, guessing. However, sometimes we do find out after our guess that we actually learn whether we were right or wrong. Restaurant observing is a great place to begin. As you look around at the tables do you see couples who are talking and are animated? That's a good tip they are still energized and sharing mutual interests.

If the couple doesn't talk or one is reading the paper you can make a different judgment. We guess they are each doing their own thing and probably not sexually involved. Of course we could be wrong because some couples are shy and not comfortable by displaying their affection publicly.

As you watch couples walking together, sometimes with their dog, do they hold hands and touch each other frequently? Do they walk side-by-side or walk in front or back of the other? These indicators are significant, and may indicate they are not sharing their feelings.

In church or in the theater, do you notice couples touching, laughing, hugging and kissing their lover? In social situations, do couples stand or sit together during the party? Is loving animation going on between them or does one partner wander through the crowd alone?

Recently the New England Journal of Medicine, a highly respected professional magazine reported that scientists confirmed in an updated comprehensive survey that older couples have not given up on sex. Of those who were sexually active the previous year 53 percent of those surveyed between the ages of 64 to 75 most said they did it two to three times a month or more. A stunning statistic was that half of those aging from 57 to 75 confirmed they received or gave oral sex. I don't think Dr. Kinsey would be surprised!

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