

# Love, dating gurus and perils of growing older

If the camera never lies....does that mean we also have to believe what we see in the mirror? DICK LUMSDEN has been doing some candid self-assessment.

**T**here are many definitions of what makes news.

Some people believe it is the sexual antics of Premiership footballers. Others believe it is the endless "he said, she said" tittle tattle of backbench politics.

For me though, the definition of newsworthiness is rarity. I believe things deserve their place in newspapers, on TV or even an internet blog, if they are so rare, or happen so seldom, that it is unusual to hear about them.

Thus it was with golden weddings. When I first started out in journalism almost 40 years ago, a 50-year wedding anniversary was unusual.

So unusual that young cub reporters and grizzled veteran photographers were paired up to go knock on the unsuspecting couple's door and make them pose in an awkward cuddle and answer inane questions about the secret of such a (frankly) awesome length of time being hitched... (invariably they couldn't stand the sight of each other and the answers were unrepeatable).

Over time, though, as we all grew older, golden anniversaries became more common, the novelty greetings card manufacturers made a fortune, and the newspapers lost interest.

Many of these couples stayed together out of habit. It was the done thing, and although many of them had probably fallen out of love a long time before, there was a kind of unwritten, unspoken bond which kept them together for companionship, mutual security and a misguided sense that their children and grandchildren expected it.

But in the last few years the tables have been turning. The divorce rates in the UK have – overall – been falling among the younger age groups, but rising in the older age groups.

The average age of divorcees now has crept up into the 40s, but with a great many older than that.

Some of you will know that I have a small, but perfectly formed, panel of people ranging from 50 to 83 who are happy to take part in occasional research questions.

Of the few hundred souls who make up this number, 31% are either divorced, widowed or single. If that was scaled up across the population it would mean there are more than



**STARTING OVER:** Finding a new relationship when you are over 50 can be a scary prospect

relationship is undeniably preferable to the alternative.

But for those people over the age of 50 who find themselves suddenly single... how do you start all over again? It's a scary prospect.

And so it was that I came to be pondering all of this while standing in front of a full length mirror wearing only my boxers – in the privacy of my own home you understand.

I feel I must explain. This month I have been talking to a very interesting man – Eddy Ankrett. Eddy is the larger-than-life character behind Elite Introductions and Dateline – of which he is now chairman.

Himself 66, divorced and re-married, Eddy is something of an expert about the love lives of the over-50s. So much so that he has recently launched a new spin-off company called Dateline Platinum exclusively for older

have to like yourself... and the first place to start is with your appearance.

Unfortunately, our brains are programmed to make snap judgements when we first meet someone. So, although beauty may be more than skin deep, you have to make a bit of an effort from the off.

Eddy's advice is to get yourself in front of a mirror and critically examine every aspect of your appearance. From your hair (or lack of it) to your figure (or lack of it) to the way you carry yourself. If you met you on a date, would you really want to spend more than five minutes with you (assuming you were wearing more than just boxers of course)?

Apparently you would be surprised just how many people register with online dating sites (not Eddy's ones clearly) who have given zero thought to the way they appear and because it is obvious

thought I'd give his mirror system a try in the interests of research.

The results, I have to say, were not encouraging. The stranger looking back at me from the mirror told me I was too short, too bald, and carrying too much weight.

I thought it was a tad unfair, and tried to point out that I have a very dry sense of humour, I can be a charming host and I am a very good listener.

Then I realised I was just a middle-aged guy standing in his boxers talking to himself in front of a mirror. I don't need a dating guru, I need a stiff drink.

**Dick Lumsden is Managing Director of Owl Marketing Solutions, one of the few companies specialising in marketing and advertising to the 50+ group. If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to take**