



# SUGAR BABES

What makes a woman choose a man twice her age? His bank balance, sure! But that isn't always the only reason.  
By Amanda Killick

I am 65 years old, am still very sexually active and am looking for a young lady to spoil,' proclaims the personal ad on US dating website *www.sugardaddyforme.com*. The ad goes on to say, 'I consider myself an incurable romantic and am seeking to woo possibly the last great love of my life. Only college girls need apply.'

From sugar-daddy websites to sugar-daddy speed dates, hooking up with an older guy who comes with benefits is gaining in popularity worldwide. And by benefits we don't mean a pension – he's the kind of guy who has a flashy car, a huge house and an even bigger budget to spoil you with. It seems there is a growing number of 20-something women who are shunning men their own age in favour of guys with a bit more mileage ... and moolah.

## KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMANI

Shannon\*, 31, is a Johannesburg florist who met Charlie\* while she was travelling through Europe. He was 53 and she was 27, yet the chemistry was intense. When they returned to South Africa, she says, they were together all the time.

'He treated me like the most precious thing on earth, which is more than guys my own age would do, and spoiled me almost every day,' she says. 'He showered me with attention and gifts – he paid cash for a sports car, which he gave me on our two-month anniversary, as well as a diamond-encrusted platinum key ring to match. And it didn't stop there. I'm not shy to admit that simply by knowing him – and having access to his bank balance – I could live the 24-carat, sugar-coated lifestyle I'd always dreamt about,' she says.

'Every woman wants to be the centre of someone's world,' says Gauteng relationship expert Hanlie Raath. 'We've grown up with the notion of the fairy-tale knight in shining armour. For many girls an older man represents that romantic ideal, because he can offer them security, adoration, stability, wisdom and the lifestyle she craves. Some are seeking a father figure while others simply want to be unquestioningly adored.'

Johannesburg counselling psychologist Lindiwe Mkhondo believes that both parties are fulfilling each other's emotional, physical and psychological needs. She says, 'They feel there's something missing in their lives, on whatever level, and can compensate for it by being together. Either way, the relationship enhances their self-esteem.'

Raath agrees that this kind of relationship provides the couple with a perfect neurotic fit. 'Subconsciously, she's looking for the prince, the saviour, while he'd like to be seen as that figure. She is flattered he'd consider dating her over women his own age. The fact that she finds him attractive affirms his virility. And the fact that he spoils her rotten is obviously a huge plus.'

## WHAT WILL THEY SAY?

'When I first met Mike\*, it was like I'd finally found my Prince Charming,' says Zanele\*, a 27-year-old personal assistant living in KwaZulu-Natal. She met Mike at a work function when she was 22 and he was two years shy of 50. They've been together for five years.

But dating a sugar daddy can test your relationships with family and friends. 'When I told my mother and grandmother that I was seeing an old white guy, I got shame mixed with deep disappointment,' says Zanele. 'It took years of working at it to get them, as well as my siblings, to relate to me in the same way again.'

Zanele and Mike managed to win her family over, but not everyone is so fortunate. Society is quick to classify these women as bimbos, trophy wives or, simply put, gold-diggers – something that Shannon (whose relationship with Charlie lasted just under a year) found to be an insurmountable obstacle. 'A lot of name-calling goes on behind your back and I found that hurtful,' she says. 'All the spoiling in the world wasn't enough

to compensate for people assuming, and even commenting out loud, that I was with my father.'

It's that kind of assumption – where people overlook the possibility that the couple may actually have a deep connection – that can alienate the sugar babe from her peers even more.

Says Raath, 'She already has to work really hard to fit in with his peer group, so when her family and friends stand in judgment of the relationship as well, life can become very difficult.'

Raath says that an older man may show his affection by buying his babe stuff, which can then be interpreted as his 'buying' her affections. Her family may react adversely because they fear she'll be used as a simple sex object, while her friends may become jealous of the attention she is enjoying.

Either way, if she's alienated from her circle, he ends up with more control, because her isolation bonds her to him even more.

## THE EGO HAS LANDED

A relationship with a sugar daddy can present other challenges. The chief culprit is often a midlife crisis. It may sound harsh but the middle years can often make a man fall off the wagon – and into a new one, usually a Porsche!

He commonly begins to question his life, his achievements (or lack thereof), his virility and, ultimately, his happiness

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and he'll do anything he can to make sure that society sees him as 'powerful'.

'Dating a pretty young thing is a perfect foil,' says Raath. 'The men who do so have often been married and had a family already, so when midlife hits, many try to shed their responsibilities, get divorced, buy a fast and flashy car, and go on the pull.'

'And he's quite a catch,' says Mkhondo. 'He's got status, personal ▶

## RELATIONSHIPS

wealth and a huge amount of sexual experience. It becomes the aphrodisiac that drives the relationship.'

Sometimes, of course, it really is just the money. Take, for example, the saga of Anna Nicole Smith, her marriage to billionaire J Howard Marshall II and the \$88.6-million (about R560-million) he is said to have left her on his death. Even though he was 89 years old and wheelchair-bound when they married, the 26-year-old Anna claimed to be in love with him, not his fortune. But according to [www.femalefirst.co.uk](http://www.femalefirst.co.uk), Anna's uncle has been quoted as saying, 'She was out for every cent she could get. I'm sure she cared for him but it was not love in my book.'

## MARRIAGE POTENTIAL?

Even though Zanele has been with Mike for five years, there's still no sign that they'll ever get married. 'That was never part of the deal,' she says. 'We're together, having fun and enjoying life. He's already done all that and doesn't really want the same thing with me. Making me happy is his main focus; it's a trade-off I'm happy to make.'

But what works for Zanele might not work for you. If you're looking for the whole nine yards – complete with a big white dress, loads of guests and a honeymoon somewhere sun-drenched and secluded – you might have a challenge ahead of you.

He may be the king of seduction. He may shower you with gifts and take you on fabulous holidays but trying to pin him down to a date for the wedding is very likely to be like trying to nail jelly to a wall – impossible.

'Many of these guys don't want to be married or have kids again,' says Raath. 'They've done that all before. This time round, they're in it to have a good time. He'd rather try to keep you enchanted than marry you. That way the relationship may still be long-term, just minus the official commitment.'

Says Raath, 'If you're the kind of girl who longs to have kids, you should perhaps reconsider and look for someone who is open to the same ideas you are.'

## FIT THE MOULD

Women often see their older man as someone who not only can foot the bill but can also offer guidance based on his experience, says Raath. By playing to his ego (and often his insecurities), she also knows that's how she'll keep him. 'He knows this and relishes the idea that she's immature enough to be "trained" to fit his ideal,' says Raath.

When Shannon and Charlie were together, she says it was as if the 'real' her just wasn't good enough for him. 'It really annoyed Charlie that I wasn't as sophisticated as his friends' wives or girlfriends were,' she says, 'so he started trying to change me. At first it was quite subtle and didn't bother me. But then it became a case of not letting me leave the house by myself – he had to be with me – and I couldn't wear any outfit that he hadn't selected the night before. I was only "allowed" to watch news channels, which he'd quiz me on, so that I came across as well-educated in conversation with his friends. He was mortified that I hadn't gone to a private school!'

Towards the end of their relationship, a depressed Shannon had had enough – she wanted her old life and independence back. 'My shrink told me that spending every hour of every day together was unhealthy and deep down I knew that. Every girl needs her own space sometimes, as well as a sense of purpose. And I had neither.'

## HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

But for every girl who's only dating her guy for the big payday, there's also the girl who genuinely manages to find love in the arms of a man almost twice her age. Many of these relationships just seem to work without difficulties, while in others there's an agenda to be followed and a line – such as suggesting marriage and children – that should never be crossed.

But no matter where you find love, your happiness is the only thing that matters. And that's up to you.

\* NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED

## MIND THE GAP!



63 YEARS

Anna Nicole Smith, 26 at time of wedding to J Howard Marshall II, 89



24 YEARS

Donald Trump, 59, and Melania Knauss, 35



22 YEARS

Calista Flockhart, 41, and Harrison Ford, 63



21 YEARS

Alice Kim, 21, and Nicolas Cage, 42



16 YEARS

Katie Holmes, 27, and Tom Cruise, 43