

THE *midlife* DATING GAME

having fun after 50

The reality star, 52, shares her relationship secrets.

Sometimes it pays to break the rules. Patti Stanger, creator of Bravo's popular reality series *Millionaire Matchmaker*, is a dating expert. But when she deliberately ignored a piece of her own advice, she found the man of her dreams.

"I lied about my age to get you," Stanger says to her boyfriend of 16 months, David Krause, 43, a mortgage broker, photographer and website builder. They met on a dating website, Plenty of Fish.

On their first date, Stanger revealed her real age, and Krause didn't care. "You like older women," Stanger says, looking over at Krause while eating lunch in the Marina del Rey headquarters of her company.

"Men don't want to pick you if you're over 50," Stanger says. "The minute you say you're 50, you're out. But if you say you're 40, you're in. There's an ageism in our society, but if I said to a client, 'Jennifer Aniston wants to date you,' he'd say, 'Sure.' She's 45. Madonna's 55."

Stanger doesn't encourage lying. However, shaving a couple of years off your age on an online profile might improve your prospects. "I knew right away" when he fell for Stanger, Krause says. "If the first date hadn't gone well, I wouldn't have called her back for the second."

NEXT: STANGER'S DATING DO'S AND DON'TS

BY NANCY MILLS



Stanger, "The Millionaire Matchmaker," knows when to make the rules — and when to break them.

Dating Do's

"Change up your game: Get a new wardrobe, get your hair done, buy a new lipstick that makes you feel good about yourself."

"If a date doesn't pan out, say: 'I think you're a great catch, but do you have a friend that you think might be right for me? Maybe I can fix you up with one of my friends.' You have to network. It's better to ask."

"Watch romantic movies that inspire you — *Annie Hall*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*. I love *Hope Springs* with Meryl Streep and Tommy Lee Jones."

"Say what you want — whether it's to get married, hook up or have a serious relationship."

"Always look your best, even if you're going to the gas station."

"Google him (or her)."

"Smile. Your calling card is your smile. If you don't see a ring on, flash those pearly whites."

Dating Don'ts

"Don't rely on friends. Go on websites and put down your interests."

"Never talk about old relationships or your widowhood or the process of dating. That neutralizes the situation and you end up becoming friends."

"People are everywhere. If you smile at 10 people a week who aren't wearing a ring, at least two of them will ask you out."

"Don't drink more than two drinks. You don't want to be sloppy."

"Don't analyze and obsess and live in the past. Forget the past. Happy, open women get happy men."

"Don't be closing doors if they don't have everything on your wish list."

Stanger sums it up: "A lot of people over 50 think it's 'game over.' It's not. Don't get discouraged. You see many people getting married, often for the second or third time."

The survey says ...

For singles looking to date after 50, it's never too late for love.

BY SHARON JAYSON

Dating at 50 or older may sound daunting, whether you're recently single or have been going it alone for awhile. And although things may have changed a lot from dating as a twentysomething (think texting, sexting and TTYL), millions of singles of a certain age are looking for love.

But it doesn't mean older singles aren't discerning about potential partners. Among those ages 50-65, the top three dealbreakers were poor health, financial instability and a potential partner they find physically unattractive, according to 2,033 singles surveyed over the summer. The results were revealed exclusively to USA WEEKEND.

At least three-quarters or more of those surveyed — members of the online dating site OurTime.com, for singles over 50 — cited those factors as deal breakers. Poor health topped the list at 78%, followed by financial instability at 76% and physical unattractiveness at 75%.

"When you are 50 and



older and thinking about dating, you're thinking about going out and having somebody to do things with and having a companion and living life," says social psychologist Terri Orbuch of Detroit, the website's relationship expert and a research professor at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research.

The survey for OurTime about dating behaviors, beliefs and the overall dating landscape by SurveyMonkey of Palo Alto, Calif., also found that among the respondents, 71% are divorced, 80% have children and 99% are heterosexual.

Ron Rizzi, 59, a digital media specialist and marketing professional in Fort Lauderdale who participated in the survey, says

his divorce was final in January after 32 years of marriage.

Rizzi, who has two sons, ages 19 and 22, says he and his former wife have "focused on being amicable."

Clinical psychologist Judith Ruskay Rabinor of New York City believes it's so important to

57%
believe in
the idea of
"THE ONE."

have a friendly relationship with your ex that she wrote a book about it. *Befriending Your Ex After Divorce: Making Life Better for You, Your Kids, and Yes, Your Ex* was published earlier this year.

The survey also asked whether respondents wanted to marry at this stage of life. The reaction was split — tipping slightly toward the altar, with 51% wanting to marry and 49% against it. Among women, 52% wanted to



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marry. Among men, 52% don't.

Debra Stevenson, 60, of Los Angeles is divorced. She's the founder of an event marketing and consulting company. "I'm looking for a partnership," she says. "If it ends up in marriage, that's a possibility. I haven't had the experience of a really good marriage, and I'd like to have a chance to have a good relationship."

Of the participants, 15% wanted someone the same age, and 26% were looking for a partner one to five years younger. One-quarter of the respondents didn't care about age. Stevenson, who responded that she

50+

singles are upfront
about their dating
DEAL
BREAKERS

seeks a partner of the same age or one to five years younger observes, "There seems to be a break around 63 or 64 that's generational." She says, "What I've found is I don't have as much in common with the people older than I am."

Stevenson says dating is a lot different from when she was younger.

"We've figured out that we're living longer and we're more active," she says. "Hopefully, most of us know a lot more about ourselves and potentially can be a better partner." ❏

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