

More Seniors are Divorcing, Dating, and Shacking Up

My grandparents were 58-years-young when they divorced. After 38 years of marriage, my grandma decided she's rather go it alone than remain in her marriage 'til death did she part.

At the time I remember my mom talking with her friends about how odd it must be to get divorced so late in life. Here she was going through a divorce of her own at 37, unable to imagine a separation at 21 years her senior.

The Washington Post reports that "gray divorce," the catchy non-EL James term for divorces among seniors is on the rise in Fairfax County, VA. According to statistics compiled by Arlington law firm Tully Rinckey Show, from 2006 to 2010, divorce rates for Fairfax men increased by 2.7 percent among those ages 55 to 64. Fairfax men ages 65 and older saw an increase in divorce rates by 1.3 percent.

While the increase in the gray divorce rate may not be staggering, the change implies a generational shift in paradigm. Attorney H. Eugene Oliver told The Fairfax Times.com, "The 'gray divorce' trend is highlighting how there is never a point of no return. There is no longer a stigma attached to divorce for this generation of aging baby boomers, and there is now a dating scene for seniors that didn't exist even 10 years ago."

Divorce stigma be dammed. It seems folks in their golden ages are no longer willing to spend their remaining years in unhappy marriages. In the sunset of their lives, seniors are increasingly eager to reclaim their personal happiness.

A large part of that personal happiness often includes a second chance at love and companionship. Make no mistake; once seniors find it, they're in no hurry to make it official. Live Science reports that cohabitation for those ages 50+ has more than doubled in the last decade. According to data collected from the 1998-2006 Health and Retirement Study and the 2000 and 2010 Current Population Survey, as of 2010, 2.75 million unmarried adults over 50 were shacking up.

In a statement from the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University, lead researcher and co-director Susan Brown said, "Older adults desire an intimate partnership, but without the legal constraints marriage entails."

We can all agree that a miserable marriage does not a happy life make. Bravo to those brave enough to search for their happiness ever after; no matter their age.