Sex: For Mature Audiences Too

How to deal with this “fact of life”

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When I was 13, I stumbled on a fiftysomething school secretary and a handyman engaged in a heavy-duty, make-out session in my school’s darkened stairwell. I was in total shock, not only because of my unexpected discovery, but also by the idea that two “old” people were carrying on like school kids.

While sex is a natural part of life, like me at 13, not everyone is comfortable with the “senior” crowd getting busy. And with 50 being the new 30 and older people remaining vital well into their later years, families are faced with this fact of life—even grandma and grandpa are having sex.

So how can you cope? Hilda Hutcherson, MD, sex expert and clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at New York City’s Columbia University Medical Center, offers this key piece of advice: “Get a grip! Sex and pleasure should not end because people get older. Sex is good for the heart, the immune system and mental health. Studies show that people who have satisfying sex lives live longer.”

For older people dealing with interfering family members, Dr. Hutcherson says, “Tell people to mind their business. If you can’t say that, then stress that you appreciate their concern, but sex is a healthy part of life.” She adds, “People need to start looking at sex as something that is not nasty or something to be ashamed of—then it is very easy to come to the conclusion that grandma should be having sex.”

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