

XTRA DIFFERENT STROKES, DIFFERENT FOLKS

# OLDER WOMAN, YOUNGER MAN

When it comes to love, age ain't nothing but a number for these men

JOCELYN TEO

HE IS 23 and has a junior post in a local bank. She has just turned 30 and is the senior vice-president at an offshore bank.

They have been dating for the past eight months.

Andy Lee, who graduated from the London School of Economics just a year ago, is among a growing number of young male executives who date women who are at least four years older than them.

Ask Andy why he is attracted to the much older and high-flying Susan, who leads a team of five senior managers and handles million-dollar deals – and he starts waxing lyrical: “She knows what she wants and how to get it. She’s very smart with a wicked sense of humour; that is so sexy!”

But doesn't the seven-year age difference bother him, I ask again.

Andy's answer is a mere shrug.

“I never thought I would be interested in someone older,” he said. “And boy, did my parents make their opinions known. There was so much discouragement from the family when I first declared our relationship to my parents that I never took her to our weekly family dinners until two months ago.”

Andy added: “It was only after meeting her that they realised how well we complement each other, and grew to slowly accept her as THE girlfriend.”

So, why this fascination with older women?

A quick check with my male friends in the 20-25 age group reveals the following preferences when it comes to the dating game.

The woman should be financially stable and not always expect the man to foot the bill.

They also appreciate a partner who is widely read so she is able to carry her own conversations and not expect to be “babied” at get-togethers and events.

Most importantly, the men don't want to be the ones to “wear the pants” all the time and be expected to always know what to do. Most appreciate making decisions together with their partners. The guesswork can be tiring, my male friends tell me.

So, how old is just right for them?

Most found their “older not elder”

girlfriends within the 26-35 age group.

Doesn't age matter? Will the relationship last?

Timothy Thomson, a 26-year-old senior marketing executive of an international fast-food franchise, said: “Why should it matter and how would the length of the

relationship be determined by how old they are? Is there an ‘age index’ for a long-lasting relationship?”

Timothy has been with his 32-year-old fiancée for more than three years. His previous relationship was with a woman two years his senior.

With marriage on the cards, Timothy is very sure she is the one for him.

“What is there not to love about a woman who knows exactly what she wants? It definitely takes the ‘what does she really want?’ game I used to play out of the equation.

“Understanding the types of pressure I face at work is something that I never expected of – but appreciate most – from Linda,” Timothy added. “With the amount of time I spend travelling in a year for work, I'm glad she's not the ‘hovering’ type who expects me to babysit her all the time. I attribute that level of understanding to her being a working professional and a confident woman.”

Having met both couples, I could hardly spot the age difference between them. The witty repartee, never-ending conversation and silent understanding clearly reflect the unspoken intimacy that cements their commitment.

Maybe it's age. Then again, maybe it's that thing called Love.

Age is only a number. As an “older not elder” woman, I would have no qualms about dating someone younger – as long as he is smart, armed with a wicked sense of humour and adores me.

*The writer is “an almost-30” senior consultant in a public relations firm.*



## Same old traffic-stopping story

Letter from JANICE TAY

SHOULD we be worried when we consult a doctor for a persistent cough and he keeps prescribing more of the same medicine?

If the medicine is not helping the cough, a wise doctor would probe further to find out what other factors might be causing the cough and prescribe a different treatment.

Following the same logic, has the Land Transport Authority (LTA) ever wondered why despite putting up more and more Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) gantries, the traffic congestion never seems to ease?

We now have 62 gantries on our small island, and you bet Singaporeans know better than to stop counting.

Whenever a gantry goes up, motorists

using that particular stretch of road are likely to find an alternative route to their destination. And this leads to congestion elsewhere, on these alternative roads.

I know of many motorists who can't stay on these alternatives – and usually longer travelling routes – for long, and they almost always end up inserting their cash-cards reluctantly and using the same old roads again.

And so, the same old story repeats itself – the traffic piles up again, motorists continue paying for the use of equally congested roads while the ERP coffers continue to fill up.

Apart from being a fixture of any bustling city in a developed, affluent country, traffic congestion on our roads can be

attributed to many other factors: Poor road design and a lack of foresight in constructing more roads to meet rising usage, overly easy credit for car ownership, poor public transport design coupled with unreliable travelling times and of course, citizens who simply can't do without cars.

All are problems that have to be tackled with different approaches. The ERP cannot be a fix-all solution.

Each time the LTA announces hikes in ERP rates or more gantries, members of the public have called for more concrete statistics and studies to be presented to show that the ERP is indeed the right panacea for the persistent traffic problems.

However, such calls seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

### CORRECTIONS

The report, “Inflation rising” (Aug 24), stated that “Food, which has the largest weightage in the CPI, increased 2.9 per cent from a year ago, as the costs of cooked food, fruits, fish and milk powder went up ...”. This is incorrect. Prices of fish fell in July compared to a year ago. Besides cooked food, fruits and milk powder, prices of fresh vegetables, rice and bread also went up. The article also stated that “public housing rents, which hit a 10-year high last month is included in the CPI's housing component, unlike private rents”. Both public and private housing rents are included in the CPI.

The letter, “Safe cycling on our roads: It's time for a campaign” (Aug 23), was accompanied by a picture of cyclists. It is a file picture of the Penang-Singapore Homecoming Challenge Ride organised by the NTUC Club and is unrelated to the cyclists mentioned in the letter.