

## Online dating after 60: A world full of opportunities and challenges

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In an increasingly digitally connected world, online risks are becoming more and more present. A study conducted in April 2025 shows that over 60% of urban residents have been targeted by online fraud attempts, with the most common consequences being device infections with malware and financial losses. Among the most dangerous types of scams are romance scams—a growing phenomenon that primarily targets emotionally vulnerable individuals, such as those who are single, divorced, or widowed, and who are often less familiar with the traps of the internet. These situations highlight how important digital education and awareness are, especially for older age groups. As more people use the internet to meet new people, serious risks have emerged. One of the most dangerous is when someone pretends to be a romantic partner just to get money or personal information.

Here are the most common scenarios:

- The soldier on a mission. Someone claims to be a soldier on a mission abroad and says they have no access to money. They want to come see you but need help paying for the plane ticket or a fee.
- The successful doctor or engineer. The person pretends to have a respectable and well-paying profession, but suddenly a temporary problem arises—a blocked account or an urgent investment.
- The lonely and sincere widower. They say they lost their spouse and are looking for a second chance at love. They are very emotional, message you daily, and seem to fall in love quickly.
- I urgently need help. After gaining your trust, the person says they have an emergency—an accident, illness, or bank issue—and ask you to help them financially.
- The blocked inheritance. They claim they have inherited money or have a large amount stuck in a bank but need help to pay taxes or fees to access it.
- Let's invest together. Once you grow closer, they talk about a unique investment opportunity (usually in cryptocurrency). They show fake profits and convince you to send money.
- They vanish without a trace. After daily messages and maybe even receiving money, the person disappears, stops replying, blocks you, and can no longer be contacted.

Never send money to someone you've only met online, no matter how sincere they seem. This is not about naivety or weakness. The people who commit these scams are skilled—they know what to say, how to act, how to create the illusion of closeness, and, most importantly, how to exploit emotions. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, single or married, educated or not—anyone can be

tricked when the other person's intentions are hidden and well prepared. For these scammers, the goal is always the same: to get what they want.

If you've been through such an experience, you might feel ashamed. The thought of being deceived can be hard to bear, but it's important to know you are not alone. There is nothing shameful about trusting someone. Trust is a strength, not a fault. You may also feel afraid—afraid to talk to others about what happened, worried you'll be judged or misunderstood. But close people—like children, grandchildren, or friends—can be there for you, if you let them in.



Betrayal can also bring great sadness. You may feel tired, hopeless, or even guilty. These feelings are natural and deserve to be heard, not hidden. Everyone needs to be listened to and supported, especially during a difficult time.

These things happen because the online world is still new for many of us. We didn't grow up with smartphones, apps, or messages from strangers. And when someone behaves kindly, writes carefully, and seems warm and attentive, it's only natural to respond. It's human to seek attention, affection, and someone who seems to truly see us. That's exactly why scammers build fake relationships. They pretend to be honest, destined lovers, people stuck in foreign countries, or respected professionals. It's all part of their plan—and at the end of the road, there is almost always a request for money or information.

What can you do if you find yourself in such a situation?

First, talk to someone you trust. It could be a close friend, a family member, or even your family doctor. You don't have to go through this alone. Then, cut all contact with the person who scammed you. Block them on social media, delete the conversations—but keep evidence if you want to file a report. Don't send money, no matter how sincere they seem. It's crucial to protect your resources. If you believe you've been the victim of a scam, go to the police. You don't need to have all the evidence. It's enough to explain what happened and ask for advice. If you need emotional or legal support, you can reach out to professionals. There are free helplines, such as the Elder Helpline offered by the Royal Margareta of Romania Foundation. In your city, you can also seek help from the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection. Many non-governmental organizations also offer counseling and support tailored to individual needs.

You are not alone. You are not to blame. And you deserve the help you need.

Dating after 60 can be the beginning of an extraordinary chapter: a rediscovery of self, a new form of joy and connection. But like any new beginning, it's important to approach it with wisdom and caution. With accurate information, emotional support, and a few safety measures, the chances of building authentic and safe relationships are much greater.

Love has no age—and wisdom can make it even more beautiful.

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