Ageing stereotypes

If you order a cappuccino, are still on Facebook and your underwear is from M&S, you are officially ancient according to Gen Z.* Ouch!

CelebRity


Choreographer

and former Strictly judge, 77

We need to see older women on television.

We can’t only be seen as grannies – children need to grow up realising that every generation has a value.

When I was let go from Strictly in 2009, it opened up a conversation about older women, not just on TV, but in many roles in the workplace. I never think about whether I’d go back to Strictly, because they’re not going to ask me! But I’ll just go on loving the show – it will always be a big part of my life.

Marriage vows don’t have to mean it’s forever. I learned that from my first marriage and subsequent divorce [from Danny Noble, 68]. I think we should enter into relationships with the best intentions, hoping it will be life-long – but knowing that’s not always a reality. Having a marriage certificate makes no difference. I’ve been with my partner Angus, 65, for 36 years now and we’re not married, but we’re as strongly together as any couple could be. We share friendship, trust and attraction. Finding someone you want to wake up to each day is precious.

Whenever I’ve fallen flat on my face, I’ve known I have to get up. And I’m the only one who can make that happen. I lost my mum Rita to leukaemia at 15 and grew up in poverty as one of the have-nots. That made me tough. That same “power of me” got me through my dad Abraham’s Alzheimer’s. He had no memory, and his body was tormented, but he had a strong beating heart, so he lived with it for 10 years before he died aged 89, in 2000. It was a slow, emotional journey and the hardest part was that he didn’t recognise me. I had to draw on the power within to cope.

I can never not be doing something. The motto I live by is: “Get off your arse, Arlene!” I’ll be sitting on the sofa, watching a drama and all the time I’m thinking: “The second this finishes, get off your arse, Arlene!” No matter how gripping it is, I’ll be messaging, or looking at something on the computer. I can’t ever give myself to one thing.

Kindness doesn’t take much – but boy, does it go a long way. My mother used to say to me: “Do unto others as you would wish to be done to you.” And I think that’s very important. My mother, like most mothers, bound the family together. When she died, if anything, we became more fractured.

It’s easier to be a grandparent than a parent. As a parent, you question whether you’re doing the right things, but with a grandchild, there’s no pressure – you just give them your love. You’ve got the knowledge and patience from nurturing your own child, so the chance to fall in love with a baby again is extraordinary. You just get on the floor and play with them, totally abandoning yourself to the child. My granddaughters Lila and Emme are two and six months, and the joy they give is unique.

● Dementia Action Week runs May 17-23. To find out more, or to fund-raise for Alzheimer’s Society, visit Alzheimers.org.uk.

Arlene Phillips

LEARNING CURVE

Graph of greatness

The good and bad of what we’re talking about this week

Billie Piper

We’re buzzing to see the Doctor Who star leading the pack in her own black comedy flick Rare Beasts, in cinemas Friday.

Waleed Shah

This incredible photographer’s new book Rock Your Ugly is the ultimate body-positivity inspo.

Saying Thank You

Order an adorbs box from Ta, filled with tasty treats, to send to missed friends and fam.

Waleed Shah

She’s the quirky new singer-songwriter who’s released her song Womb about the female monthly cycle. Yes, Fable!

Fable

This incredible photographer’s new book Rock Your Ugly is the ultimate body-positivity inspo.

Talking heads

We swore we’d use lockdown to create more life balance, but we’re already overloading ourselves with plans.

Amazon fashion

We’re digging the cute new edit by British stylist and influencer Monikh Dale.

Social hangovers

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