



Elisabetta and George: Daddy Dearest?

# 4 Is a 'fatherly' boyfriend just too weird?

Elisabetta Canalis, 33, says she had a 'father-daughter relationship' with ex George Clooney, 50. *Grazia* girls face off



**NO**  
**AMY**  
**MOLLOY**  
DEPUTY EDITOR,  
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WHEN I read that Elisabetta described George, her boyfriend of two years, as "like a father", I didn't automatically class it as a disturbing comment.

Don't most little girls, at some stage, want to marry their daddy? OK, aged 27, maybe I should've grown out of it by now, but my dad is still the most admirable man I know – why wouldn't I want a partner to emulate his qualities?

My first husband was 13 years older than me; the second added another year to the age gap.

It's no coincidence I stopped dating age-appropriately when my dad was diagnosed with cancer and could no longer perform his fatherly duties (putting oil in my car; calculating my taxes). But that doesn't mean these relationships are any less valid. What's so wrong with dating someone you respect, can learn from and feel safe with?

I'm often told I have an old head on young shoulders, so feel more in sync with the generation above mine anyway.

At least I never have to vie for attention with a computer game or worry that, if I dare bring up starting a family, the conversation will take second place to a Batman remake.

It's not some warped, backwards Oedipus complex either – the comparisons to my dad stop at the bedroom door, thank you.

My husband is my best friend, my lover, my mentor. So George, take Elisabetta's "father" description as a compliment. Just no "Who's the daddy?" jokes, please...



**YES**  
**RENAE**  
**LEITH-MANOS**  
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THERE'S an intimacy, a sense of completeness, that comes from sitting on a couch with the man you love, eating popcorn and watching a movie from an era you both relate to. You laugh at the same jokes, wince at the same moments and are together within that whole experience. Quite simply, you share a history.

That cannot happen in the same way with a much older man. Not because anyone is badly intentioned – it's simply because the differences are just too great. And yes, I know better than most...

At 23 I met a man who was 25 years older than me. After 13 years, we split up when I was 36 and he was 62.

Why isn't dating a father-figure healthy? There's that constant need to get back to your own tribe; i.e. your own age group. It's not dissimilar to a couple from different cultures or countries – you can't escape the cold, hard facts and the myriad of mismatched experiences between you.

When random strangers started to assume my man was my father, it was tough for both of our egos to handle.

Everyone assumes life is easy for a younger woman dating a much older man, that they're being princess-worshipped at every turn and taken care of both physically and emotionally. Instead, I look at Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas and take my hat off to her, as I know exactly how hard it can be.