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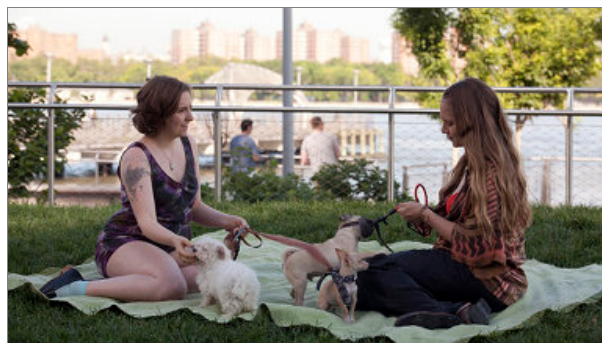
## Why 'Girls' Is a Must-See Show for Anyone Over 50

The HBO series is a painful reminder of why you'd never want to be in your 20s again!

posted by John Stark, January 17, 2013 [More by this author](#)



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Lena Dunham as Hannah Horvath and Jemima Kirke as Jessa Johansson in HBO's "Girls."

Courtesy of HBO

A recent article in The New York Times Arts & Leisure section about the HBO series *Girls* had me reaching for my remote. I needed to access my On Demand ASAP. The article read, in part, "For the seven readers who haven't heard of it or its 26-year-old wunderkind creator, Lena Dunham, *Girls* is a dark and deadpan comedy about four young women in Brooklyn who don't own cool apartments or have glamorous careers, eligible suitors, expensive clothes or even, sometimes, paying jobs."

I was one of those seven readers. At my age I'm very sensitive about not being in the zeitgeist. So last weekend I did a *Girls* marathon. I watched all of Season One, which consists of 10, half-hour episodes. Besides writing and directing each one, Dunham plays its central character, Hannah, a struggling writer. I finished just in time to catch the premiere of Season Two last Sunday.

From the first episode, I was hooked. And that's not because the show, whose executive producer is Judd Apatow, has anything to do with my life, my friends or what we're going through after the age of 50. Quite the opposite. *Girls* has nothing to do with any of those issues. I'm addicted because the show reminds me of what it was like to be in my 20s, when I was trying to figure out who I was, when each misstep along the way felt like the end of the world.

If you hate getting older, watch *Girls*. You'll be thanking God for your wrinkles.

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In a weekly, post-show segment called "Inside the Episode," Dunham talks about that night's storyline. Summing up Episode Two (whose topics include abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, lying boyfriends, anonymous sex and the stigma of being a virgin), Dunham says: "When you're in your 20s, this is supposed to be the most fun, sexy time of your life, and it's both comforting and terrifying to hear older people say in hindsight it was horrible."

Except for my flexible, ache-free body, being in my 20s was horrible! The show's characters are always in emotional turmoil, as I once was. Unlike me, at my age now, they have no inner peace. Their mood meters spin like ceiling fans. When Hannah's beautiful roommate Marnie breaks up with her boyfriend, she takes to her bed for days, believing she'll never fall in love again. Life is over. Being self-centered and dramatic is all part of being young. Marnie has a special talent for interpreting other people's pain as her own.

When the *Girls* characters disagree with each other, they don't quietly talk their problems out like

grown-ups. They yell, break things and slam doors (I remember those days). They like to point out one another's flaws; they think that's how you change someone's behavior (I once thought so too). They're impetuous, not considering the consequences of their actions, like when Hannah quit her job without having money to live on (I did that once; never again). Or when Jenna, Hannah's British bombshell roommate, marries a man she's known for just two weeks (well, at least I never did that).

Boundaries? They're learning about them the hard way, as we all had to. In one episode, Hannah has a very successful job interview. But just as she's about to be hired, she jokingly accuses the man who's interviewing her of being a serial date rapist. He doesn't find it funny and shows her the door.

At my age I know who I am, for better or worse. Jeremiah, Hannah's super-cute ex-boyfriend from college, is still trying to figure out if he's straight, gay or bisexual. In their attempts to define themselves, the show's characters let others define them. Who at our age would put up with Adam, Hannah's high-maintenance boyfriend who's always messing with her mind? We are so done with those games.

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In Episode 9 of Season One, Hannah runs into her college mentor, a writing teacher, at a bookstore. He invites her to read one of her essays at a workshop later that week. Hannah chooses a story she had penned for one of his classes and that he had praised at the time. But when it's her turn Hannah doesn't read that story — instead she reads one that she had hastily written on the subway on her way to the event.

Why? Because Hannah's friends dismissed the first essay as being trivial. She listened to them rather than her own self. Hannah's new story bombs, leaving her feeling humiliated and dismissed. "Why didn't you read the story you were supposed to?" her teacher asks her. "It was great!"

Knowing what advice to take, and from whom, involves lots of trial and error. That sagacity, *Girls*, doesn't come until you're older. "You couldn't pay me to be in my 20s again," Hannah's gynecologist tells her in one episode.

That's why I love the show — I need that weekly reminder.