



## **Who do you think you are?**

We live in a world that seems to be perpetuated by images of perfection. It doesn't matter how old you are, magazines, newspapers and television shows all tell you that in order to be acceptable, and feel good about yourself, you must look a certain way.

Celebrity culture has given us all some kind of unattainable benchmark of beauty that it's nigh on impossible for all but a very few privileged women to meet. Airbrushed images of beautiful models and film stars are used to sell us expensive make up and beauty products, feeding our feelings of not quite matching up, not being ideal, and wanting to look like the women we see in the media.

### **Stop and think about it**

It's easy to get caught up in this perfectionism and start to berate yourself for a bit of a tummy, a wrinkle or hair that won't stay where you blow dry it. But if you stopped to think about it for a while, you'd realise that the women we are supposed to idealise are not perfect either.

Professional models are paid so much because they are blessed with stunning bone structure and figures that look good with size six clothes hanging off them. Most of them, with the exception of Kate Moss, perhaps, are in their teens and early twenties. Of course they look great on the catwalk in scraps of nothing. If we all looked that good, they wouldn't be able to command such huge fees for walking up and down along a catwalk, would they? Added to that, your average catwalk model is a beautiful freak of nature – usually taller than most women and very thin with it. We can't all look like that. It would just be boring.

The shelf life of your average model isn't very long. Their 'look' goes out of fashion, they gain a bit of weight, they age, or they have a child. All of these things mean that their careers are on the wane, they aren't so sought after and they have to think of another way to make money. And when you're famous only for your looks, that does tend to narrow your options. For every Linda Evangelista or Naomi Campbell who are still known well into their thirties and forties, there are many forgettable models who may have made it down the catwalk for Versace once back in 2003 but nobody hears about them anymore.

### **What about me?**

So, how does all this make you feel better? Well, once you realise that beauty as it's promoted to women through adverts and magazines is purely transient, and

somebody else's ideal of what looks good at the time, you can start thinking of why you are beautiful – and unique.

We all have off days, where nothing we seem to do looks right. Every woman knows what a 'bad hair day' or a 'fat day' is, and how they can make you feel rotten all day, convinced that everybody else is looking at you because you have dodgy hair or your jeans are just a smidge too tight. But you know what? Most people aren't. In truth, most people are so wrapped up in their own fat days, or to-do lists, or whatever else is on their mind, that your hair or size really aren't an issue to them. It's very unlikely that they will stop dead at the sight of a spot that you think needs its own postcode. In fact, it's also extremely unlikely that if you go out feeling absolutely spot on, drop dead gorgeous and that you could take on the world that anyone is really going to notice as they go about their business. It's a fact of life, the only person that really matters when it comes to how you feel about yourself and your appearance... is you.

### **The only person that matters**

It's corny, but if you feel good about yourself, you will radiate a confidence that attracts people to you, whether you look like Jennifer Lopez or woke up feeling more like her husband, Marc Anthony. Have you ever noticed that it's usually people who are on diets or hung up about their own weight who make negative comments about the weight of other women? There's a reason for that – projection. They are simply projecting the way they feel about themselves onto other people, and if you're honest, does listening to their critical comments really make you feel any better about your spare tyre? Of course it doesn't.

### **When appearance is important**

You really do attract back what you give out, so even in a situation where image and appearance are important, like a first date, or a job interview, use the power of your mind to convince yourself that you feel great, and turn your attention to the person you're about to meet. For example, the first date. You've already established that the guy likes you. He may have already met you, or you've been talking online, but you've established that there's an attraction. So go with it. Believe that you are adorable, and sail into the place you've agreed to meet with a smile on your face, knowing that this is going to be a great evening, whatever the outcome.

Don't focus on what he thinks of you – assume he already thinks you're great and focus on him. Do you like the guy? Do you enjoy his company? Can you talk to him? Is he interesting? Are you physically attracted to him? Be interested in what he has to say, and don't be tempted to be self deprecating if he compliments you. If he says you look nice, don't you dare reply, "What, me? I thought I looked a mess and it took me ages to find something that fits me" – just smile, and reply "Thank you." Compliment him back if you feel like it. Don't throw his compliment back at him – it's just rude, and very boring.

## **You're gorgeous...**

Really, we all have something to offer, and if we stopped being so hung up on what other people think of us, whether we are wearing the right clothes or are too fat, life for some of us would be so much nicer. You know how dull it is to be around a friend who constantly seeks reassurance that she's not fat...when you know full well she's just perfectly normal and you'd love her to bits if she gained a few pounds anyway.

Don't let that person be you. Realise that we are all different, and all gorgeous in our own sweet way. Get up and have a beautiful day...

### **Summary:**

- Models are fortunate freaks of nature and we can't all look that way
- Most people don't even notice what we look like
- Other people are attracted to confidence
- The only person whose opinion of you really matters...is you.

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A wide range of women's health resources are available at [www.healthywomen.org.uk](http://www.healthywomen.org.uk)

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