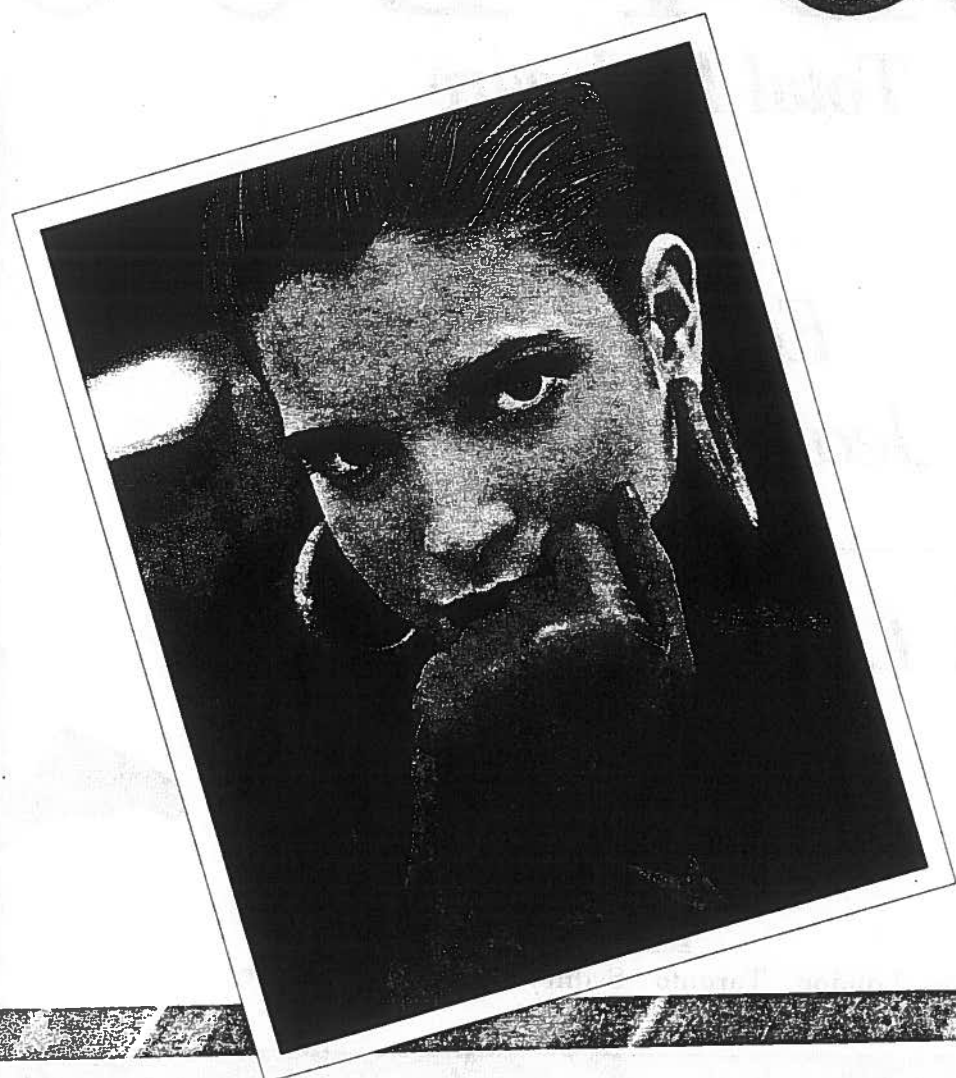


*The Complete*  
**MIND &**



# BODY BOOK

*Total Bodycare*

*Edited by*  
*Dr. Jean Ann Graham*  
— *and* —  
*Dr. Louise M. Wallace*

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# Do Looks Matter?

*"Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes right to the bone" ● Those who are either very good-looking or very bad-looking may be judged, as people, by different standards than those who are average ● But what are good looks?*

IN FAIRY TALES the prince is always handsome and the witch is always ugly. In cowboy movies, underneath their white hats "the good guys" have firm chins and clear blue eyes; "the bad guys" are shifty and sinister looking, perhaps with scars or other disfigurements. In the real world we know that this sort of simple equation is unfair, but psychological research shows that we still tend to judge people by their appearance. There is clear evidence that looks matter enormously to us, and that even when we think we are using objective criteria to describe people or to assess their abilities, we may unconsciously allow their physical appearance to influence our thinking.

At the same time, people tend to live up – or down – to what is expected of them, and as a consequence people's personalities and characters are shaped, in part, by their looks. If you expect someone to be a sour, disagreeable person, you tend to act in ways that help to cause their disagreeable behavior. If you expect someone to be charming and delightful, your actions tend to encourage them to show such positive personality traits. People who are regarded as attractive, consequently, are likely to be more successful in their personal and public lives. But if you are not, there is no need to despair. First, what makes a person attractive is a complex web of talents and traits, of which physical beauty is only one. Second, we can all improve our appearance and the impression we make.

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## Caring about appearance

■ *Is this vanity? While looks should not be emphasized at the expense of all other qualities, everyone can benefit from taking care of their appearance. When we look in a mirror, we are checking how we look, and often the result is that we do something to make ourselves look better. The act of making improvements may itself increase our confidence, increasing the likelihood that others will find us attractive. What do you see when you look in the mirror? Is the person you see there good-looking, average, plain? Research shows that the cycle of expect-*

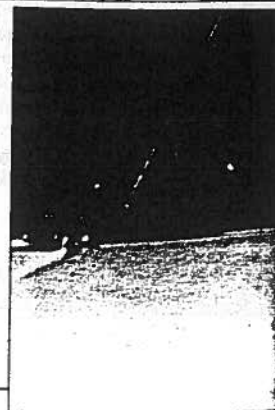
*ation RIGHT depends mostly on how attractive people think they are, not necessarily on how attractive they really are.*

Good-looking people are expected to be more intelligent and socially adept. This influences the way they are treated.

With such favorable treatment, they respond more positively and confidently, confirming and reinforcing positive expectations.

## The good, the bad and the ugly

Do we really treat people differently according to how they look? Most people feel that making discriminations on the basis of looks is wrong, but privately most of us seem to assume that attractive and unattractive people are different. Most often we perceive that attractive people have the more desirable traits. Research has shown that most people assume that the good-looking are far more socially appealing and socially skilled and somewhat more intelligent, effective and well-adjusted than the homely. Consequently the good-looking get better treatment. Over time, a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy occurs. The way we treat people





shapes the way they think about themselves and, as a result, the kind of people they become. Studies show that this sort of cause and effect occurs in many areas of our lives.

### **Good looks at work**

Time and again studies have shown that personnel managers and employers are more likely to hire good-looking men and women, to pay them more and to promote them more readily. In three national surveys, conducted by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, researchers interviewed more than 1,270 men and women, aged 16 and up, who were working full time. First, interviewers rated the employees' physical appearance. (Were they strikingly handsome or beautiful, good-looking, average-looking, quite plain, or homely?) Then, the interviewers asked them exactly what their jobs were and how much they were paid. They found that for both men and women, good looks were closely linked with salary and occupational prestige. The income of handsome men was as much as \$1,869 higher than that of plain men. The income of beautiful women was on average \$1,227 higher than that of their plain counterparts. Height and weight also play a part – tall men tend to get on better than short ones, and slim women better than their plumper equivalents.

The researchers assessed employees' occupational

prestige according to *Duncan's Socioeconomic Status Scale*, which lists the prestige of almost every conceivable job on a scale of 1 to 100. The prestige rating for good-looking men's and women's jobs was around 49-50. (The jobs in this range included clergymen, music teachers, floor manager, bookkeepers, photographers, student nurses and managers of food stores.) Homely looking men and women had jobs of lower prestige rating, in the 31-34 range. (These jobs included housekeepers, building superintendents and managers, boilermakers, machinists, and managers of service-stations.) Obviously good looks pay – both in money and in prestige.

### **Fitting the looks to the job**

Physical attractiveness is only one factor that helps determine how quickly men and women are hired, how much they are paid, and how quickly they are promoted, but other things count too. A person's appearance must be appropriate for the job they want to do. Some jobs seem more suitable for men, others for women. For a traditional man's job such as a mechanic, delicate beauty might be a disadvantage. And different jobs might have different physical qualifications. The same rough good looks that we would regard as ideal in a sports personality might work against someone looking for a desk-bound job. Professional



demeanor, intelligence, education and experience are critically important too. Although appearance is clearly important in the business world, it is probably more important to look appropriate and to seem intelligent, well qualified for the job and hardworking.

### ***Living up to expectations***

How do our looks affect our social interactions? Do homely people have restricted social lives? Do they get along with people differently as a consequence? Often expectations are a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.

The fact that people often act just as we expect them to was demonstrated in an intriguing study by Mark Snyder, Edward Tanke and Ellen Berscheid. Men and women at the University of Minnesota, who were strangers, were recruited and paired off for a study on "the processes by which people become acquainted with each other." As the men and women arrived, they were sent to different rooms without meeting each other and they had to use the telephone to become acquainted.

Before the conversation began, each man was given a snapshot of his partner, along with some biographical information. They were not allowed to see their partner in person, however. In truth, the snapshot was not of their partner, but was of either a good-looking or a homely woman. Men were asked their initial impressions of the women before the telephone conversations began. Men who thought they would be talking to an attractive woman expected her to be sociable, poised, humorous, and socially adept. Men who had been led to believe that their telephone partner was homely, expected her to be unsociable, awkward, serious, and socially inept. Those were the men's *expectations* and they do not surprise us. We already know that good-looking women make a more positive first

impression than homely ones. What is startling is that the men's expectations had a dramatic impact on the women's responses in the short space of a telephone call. Some men talked to a partner they thought was beautiful. Others talked to someone they thought was quite unattractive. In fact, the women on the other end of the line had no resemblance to the photos shown to their male partners. Some were attractive, some average, some extremely plain. Nonetheless, the women became what the men expected them to be. What the men and women said on the telephone was recorded separately.

The researchers then asked judges to listen to the women's voices and to estimate what they might be like. If a man thought he was talking to a beautiful woman, she soon sensed that, and began acting that way, too.

Women who had been presented as attractive became more animated, confident, and socially skilled. Women who had been presented as homely acted exactly that way. As the organizers put it: "What had initially been reality in



### **Good looks on trial**

► *Special treatment is given to all people who are extremely attractive, not just to well-known personalities and movie stars. However, there are disadvantages. Very good-looking people stand accused, by common assumption, of being selfish and vain. Confirmation of the assumption may be seized upon, whenever it seems to appear. RIGHT Good-looking celebrities are constantly on trial in the public eye. If their livelihood depends on their looks, they may find their lives falling apart when they begin to age. Famous people may be criticized in the media if they*

*gain weight, begin to wrinkle or otherwise let themselves go; stars are supposed to be beautiful forever.*

#### **■ Appearance influences the perceptions of judges and jurors in courtroom trials.**

Good-looking defendants who engage in illegal activities are less likely to get caught in the first place. If caught, their crimes are less likely to be reported; if they do go to court, they are likely to receive more lenient treatment – except attractive women who have used their looks to commit a crime.

## Consulting about your image

■ Politicians, actors, and some people not so much in the public eye, employ image consultants to advise them how to dress, style their hair, apply makeup, even how to walk and talk, to convey the desired image of authority, confidence or sensuality.

An image consultant will go through your wardrobe and advise you what to keep, what to throw out, and what to have altered. They will take you on a shopping trip to buy new and more suitable clothes.

You will also learn *how* to shop and what your weak-

nesses are in this area – do you buy on impulse and then regret your purchase? Are you too cautious? Image consultants will help you build up a set of clothing and accessories that will suit you, your job, and your lifestyle.

They will also make recommendations about how you might change your hair and makeup, either in ways that will suit your face or that are more in keeping with what you do. A woman lawyer, for instance, might be persuaded to tame attractive but girlish long hair into a neater style which is still

attractive but gives her more authority.

Politicians and film stars often take elocution lessons. You may feel this is unnecessary, but image consultants can give tips for self-presentation which make enormous differences – trying not to raise your voice at the end of a sentence, but lowering it instead makes your speech sound more confident.

Some people who employ an image consultant have their instincts about clothes, hair-styles and self-presentation confirmed; others can be radically transformed. In either case

you have the assurance that you are doing the right thing about your appearance, and that in itself builds confidence.

It can be expensive, as you will have to pay a consultant's fee and commit yourself to purchasing new clothing; but the consultants argue that you actually save money by equipping yourself with a good working wardrobe, and that your improved image will reap dividends in new work and social opportunities. Certainly improved self-confidence is worth a great deal.



## The attractive child

■ Teachers expect a cute child to do well in school, and looks do seem to play some part in the evaluation and grading of children.

In a typical study, two psychologists asked 400 teachers to take a look at a few children's academic files, which included false photographs.

Some teachers saw a picture of a boy or girl who was quite attractive in a file. For others, the same file included a photograph of an exceedingly plain child. In spite of the abundance of more objective information, when files included attractive photographs, teachers assessed boys and girls as more intelligent. They thought that their parents were more interested in education, and that they would be more likely to get advanced degrees than other students. The teachers in the experiment expected good-looking students to be popular as well as academic.



the minds of the men had now become reality in the behavior of the women they interacted with." The men expected beautiful women to be more sociable so anyone that they perceived as beautiful acted in that way.

### **How looks influence behavior**

What happened to transfer the perceptions of confidence, humor and friendliness in the minds of the men, into reality in the behavior of the women? When the men's sides of the conversations were analyzed, it was found that those who thought they were talking to a beautiful woman were more

sociable, sexually warm, interesting, independent, sexually permissive, bold, outgoing, humorous and socially adept than were men who thought they were talking to a homely woman. The men assigned to an "attractive woman" were also judged to be more comfortable, to enjoy themselves more and to use their voices more effectively. In a nutshell, the men who thought they had an attractive partner made more effort.

If the stereotypes in these men's minds became a social reality within only ten minutes of a telephone conversation, we can imagine what happens over several years. If, year

### **Pairing off – like attracts like**

■ Your appearance is important in almost every area of life, but nowhere does it matter more than in intimate encounters. Although most of us can describe the ideal date or partner of our dreams, what we want and what we get are two different things. We generally end up with partners whose assets and liabilities overall match our own. Studies in the United States, Canada, Germany, and Japan find that people generally end up dating and marrying someone who is similar in appearance.

In a typical study, researchers photographed and videotaped couples in a variety of natural settings – in movie theater lines, in singles bars, and at assorted social events. Next, researchers rated the daters' looks. Not surprisingly, it was found that most couples were remarkably similar in attractiveness. A handsome

man was most likely to have a beautiful woman on his arm. A homely man was likely to be spotted buying a drink for a homely woman.

It was also found that "similarity breeds content." The more similar couples were in looks, the more delighted they

seemed to be with one another, judging by the way they touched each other. Sixty percent of the couples of similar attractiveness were engaged in some type of intimate touching: they stood close to one another, engaged in horseplay, or hung on one

another's arms. In contrast, only 22 percent of those couples who were mismatched were touching.

We may be most comfortable with those who match us in levels of attractiveness because we have similar social skills and stratagems.



#### **► An obvious match?**

*Couples are more likely to be attracted to each other when they are equally attractive. Good-looking people tend to gravitate toward others who are good-looking, while those who are plain may feel more comfortable with people of similar appearance. Studies have shown that couples who are equally attractive are more likely to touch each other and appear to be enjoying each other's company in public.*



after year, attractive people are given more opportunities and more encouragement in social interaction than unattractive people, then undoubtedly, attractive and unattractive people become different social beings.

What would happen if, in a similar study, the man was not initially biased and had no idea what his partner looked like? Would the woman's real appearance shine through? In reality, do attractive men and women display more social skill over the telephone? Such a study *was* conducted and it was found that attractive men and women were judged by their telephone partners to be more socially skilled than unattractive men and women. Clearly, even when we cannot be seen, we conform to the expectations people have of us based on our appearance.

### ***Attracting the opposite sex***

In general, researchers have concluded that attractive and homely men and women have very different everyday social experiences. In one study, male and female students in their first term at the University of Rochester in New York kept records of their social encounters for 40 days. Not surprisingly, handsome men encountered more women, more frequently and for longer periods of time than homely men.

Good-looking people spent more of their time with others conversing or partying, while less attractive people spent more time engaged in tasks. Attractive men and women said they were more satisfied with their encounters with the opposite sex than less attractive people. The net result was that over time the physically attractive people became more and more satisfied with their relationships.

Other researchers support the notion that attractive men and women have the most satisfying social interactions. Some psychologists have found that attractive people tend to have more intimate and open relationships on the whole than those who are plain.

### ***The attractive personality***

Even if we did have a single ideal *physical* type in mind when we evaluate appearance, attractiveness is still not a simple issue. We all know beautiful women and handsome men who do not photograph well – and vice versa. Their laughing, talking, animated faces are more than the sum of their physical features. And we probably all remember the class clown, often an awkward, gawky child who was popular because of an attractive and confident personality. All the research on what attractiveness is shows that the ability



#### **◀ An obvious mismatch?**

Psychologist Bernard Murstein and his colleagues named the pairing of unlikely looking couples "complex matching." A couple that appear to be mismatched physically may be "compensating" in other ways. A typical example of compensatory exchange occurs when an older man with money and social status marries a young beautiful woman. He is in effect trading his prestige and power for her youth and attractiveness. Such couples appear to break the rules of pairing off because of the disparities in their levels of individual attractiveness, and bystanders may be puzzled at seeing them together.

to put others at ease and to be amusing and interesting, is an important part of being attractive. Those who are obviously beautiful or handsome have an immoderate advantage because people expect and encourage them to be socially skilled. But the research also shows that if we project a confident and friendly personality, people will therefore expect us to be attractive.

***Finding a balanced approach***

The advice to be "moderate" is hard to accept. It is always appealing to see the world in simple terms. "What is beautiful is good." "More is better." But things are more complicated than that. Real life is lived in the gray areas: the realm of complexities, ambiguities and half-truths. As we

have seen, attractiveness is not a simple or a single quality, and it is easy to think that "If only I was ten pounds lighter" or "two inches taller" everything would be fine.

A variety of factors – self-esteem, intelligence, an exciting personality, vivacity, sensitivity and compassion, money, power and prestige – as well as physical characteristics, all have an impact on how good-looking we seem to others. Clinical psychologists have observed that many people focus too much on looks and neglect the things that really count. Such people may end up spiritually, personally, socially and economically impoverished and, ironically, *not very attractive.*

Becoming a more attractive person involves many different aspects of your looks and personality. If we spend too

**But what are "good looks"?**



■ Identifying a good appearance is not a simple matter. Like the rest of us, psychologists find it hard to say just what makes someone good-looking or not. Some psychologists

define physical attractiveness as "whatever represents the ideal in appearance...and gives the greatest degree of pleasure to the senses;" but this only describes what we feel about attractive people, not why we find them attractive.

Ideals of attractiveness vary enormously. We all have our own personal preferences, but, if asked for an opinion, we may still rate a person as attractive even if they are not of a physical type which appeals to us personally. We not only apply

personal preferences but also social standards.

Social standards, of course, vary with time and from one culture to another. In the fifties feminine beauty was often coyly packaged in a flower print dress and a shy smile LEFT. The modern woman ABOVE wears practical clothes in bold colors. Her expression is confident and self-assured. In evaluating attractiveness today we place more emphasis on a person's assessment of themselves than on purely visual characteristics.

much time on our physical appearance and too little time learning about people, seeking out friends, getting an education and buckling down to work, we will not be attractive people, though we may be pleasant to look at.

### ***Thinking positively and responsively***

Balance is the key. Improving your physical appearance, for instance, is not just a matter of applying makeup correctly and dressing beautifully. Taking care of your body, eating properly and getting enough exercise and sleep are crucial to your basic appearance. Living healthily makes you look better and it makes you feel better, too. If you are confident about yourself physically you will project a more attractive image and others will respond positively in return.

Balance is also required in the other elements which go to make up attractiveness. The handicapped face special challenges and difficulties in life. Still the evidence makes it clear that even those who are the most disfigured and handicapped have a good chance of happiness if they can develop some of the other aspects of attractiveness – compassion, excitement with life and so forth. Many handicapped people are sensitive to the worries and problems of others, and have many friends who value them.

We cannot all be beautiful or handsome, but we can learn to treat other people well, to listen to them, draw them out and respond with warmth and interest. Because people tend unconsciously to associate the good and the beautiful, good listeners are often rated as popular and attractive.

### ***Improve your personality***

A good listener who has nothing to say, however, often becomes a doormat for other people. If you do not project an interesting as well as an interested personality you will not improve your overall attractiveness. Very beautiful people, for instance, may have no ability to hold a conversation. They are less attractive and successful than those who, by developing their full potential – getting an education, furthering a chosen career or pursuing a fascinating hobby – always have lots to talk about.

Your character is shaped in part by your looks. But your appearance is also affected by your personality. By developing all your strong points, you can make enormous improvements to your appearance. If you like the person you have become, you will project the confidence and zest for life which people associate with good looks – and they will respond with enthusiasm. **EH**



■ **Changing culture, changing ideals of beauty.** As national barriers become less rigid, the standards of beauty for one culture may begin to permeate another, aided by mass media and technology. Where once the women in Japan most renowned for beauty were the geisha – ABOVE in traditional costume and makeup – many Japanese women now favor a more international look LEFT. Cosmetic surgery to create “Western” eyes and noses has become popular in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and other Asian countries, where foreign models (blond Europeans) are often used in advertising.



# How much beauty is enough?

■ People generally perceive the good-looking to be special, treat them that way, and as a consequence they benefit in their education, careers and social lives. What conclusions should we draw from this? Perhaps not what you would expect. Clinicians and experimental social psychologists have come to agree that what is needed is not an even greater emphasis on beauty, but balance.

## Beauty at a disadvantage

Sheer physical beauty can be a positive disadvantage in life. A famous model and actress once complained that she seldom dated at school because people found her intimidating; men felt they could not possibly be "good enough" for her. As a result she spent more time alone in the evenings than her less stunning classmates.

Good-looking people may also have trouble making friends of their own sex, and may be suspicious of approaches from the opposite sex, believing that they are "only wanted for their looks."

Research also indicates that the only thing people do not expect from good-looking people is integrity or concern for others. We expect the attractive to be selfish and self-involved. And this expectation, like the others mentioned earlier, can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Extraordinarily good-looking people are likely to get jobs that are dependent upon appearance and attract lovers who are very concerned about looks. This often works well so long as the person is young and beautiful. But all of us inevitably have off-days; worse still, we grow older. Being very attractive can be a difficult standard to maintain, especially on a purely physical level. We all want to improve our appearance, but in our pursuit of good looks we have to find a balanced approach in order to be truly attractive.

## Average is almost as good

Men and women should certainly spend some time maintaining their appearance. Time and again research supports the notion that good-looking (or even average) men and women have a real advantage in life. But if they invest too much time in achieving and maintaining merely physical

appeal, the immediate short-term rewards may be great, but the long-term sacrifices may be even greater. We may all secretly hope to become extraordinarily good-looking, but evidence suggests that if we did, we would find, to our disappointment, that our lives would not change much.

Research reveals that good-looking people have an advantage over average-looking people who in turn, have an advantage over homely and disfigured people. But we are so obsessed with good looks that we forget that the spectrum of appearance includes "beautiful" people, average-looking ones, ugly people and people with disfiguring handicaps. If we look carefully at the relationship between appearance and a host of other variables – self-esteem, job opportunities, dating popularity, happiness – we discover that there is only a small advantage to being more beautiful or handsome than average. You would gain something if, through great creativity and sacrifice, you became a stunning person instead of an ordinary one...but not much.

Stunning people have only a slight advantage over their more ordinary peers but the average looking have a real advantage over the homely or the disfigured. EH

► **Haunted beauty.** *Marilyn Monroe, seen here with her third husband, the playwright Arthur Miller, was adored for a decade as the most beautiful woman in the world. Trends of fashion and loveliness usually do not last this long. According to cultural ideals, she should have been happy. Yet she was childless, twice divorced, suffered depression and problems with alcohol, and died in mysterious circumstances from a drug overdose before she reached middle age. The rock star Elton John paid tribute to her in "Candle in the Wind," a song describing her struggle with private demons under the glaring eye of world fame. She was hounded by the media even after her death, which is still the subject of documentaries and biographies nearly 30 years later. Ironically, had she belonged to a later generation, she would have been considered too fleshy to be the embodiment of feminine perfection.*

## Good looks and self-esteem

■ Psychologists have found surprisingly little relationship between people's self-esteem and how good they actually look (as assessed by objective judges). At most there is a tendency for good-looking people to have slightly higher self-esteem than unattractive people. The tendency is extremely slight.

When reasonably attractive but ordinary-looking people sit down to complete a self-esteem questionnaire they tend to end up with scores that are surprisingly similar to those of very good-looking people.

What about the relationship between people's self-esteem and what they *think* they look like? Psychologists have found that men and women who are

satisfied with their looks also have high self-esteem – they consider themselves moral, sensitive, honest, fair, likable. Those dissatisfied with their looks are likely, on the whole, to have low self-esteem.

About 45 percent of 62,000 surveyed in a body-image questionnaire (see *Ch20*) were only "somewhat satisfied" or "somewhat dissatisfied" with their looks.

About half were *more* than somewhat satisfied. Slightly more men than women (55 percent versus 45 percent) came into this category.

A trivial 4 percent of men and 7 percent of women turned out to be quite or extremely dissatisfied with their overall appearance. EH





# Looking Better With Age

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*Looking good is not necessarily a preoccupation of the young ● We feel dismayed when the years begin to take a toll on our appearance ● But looking better with age is achieved in the same way as looking good in youth.*

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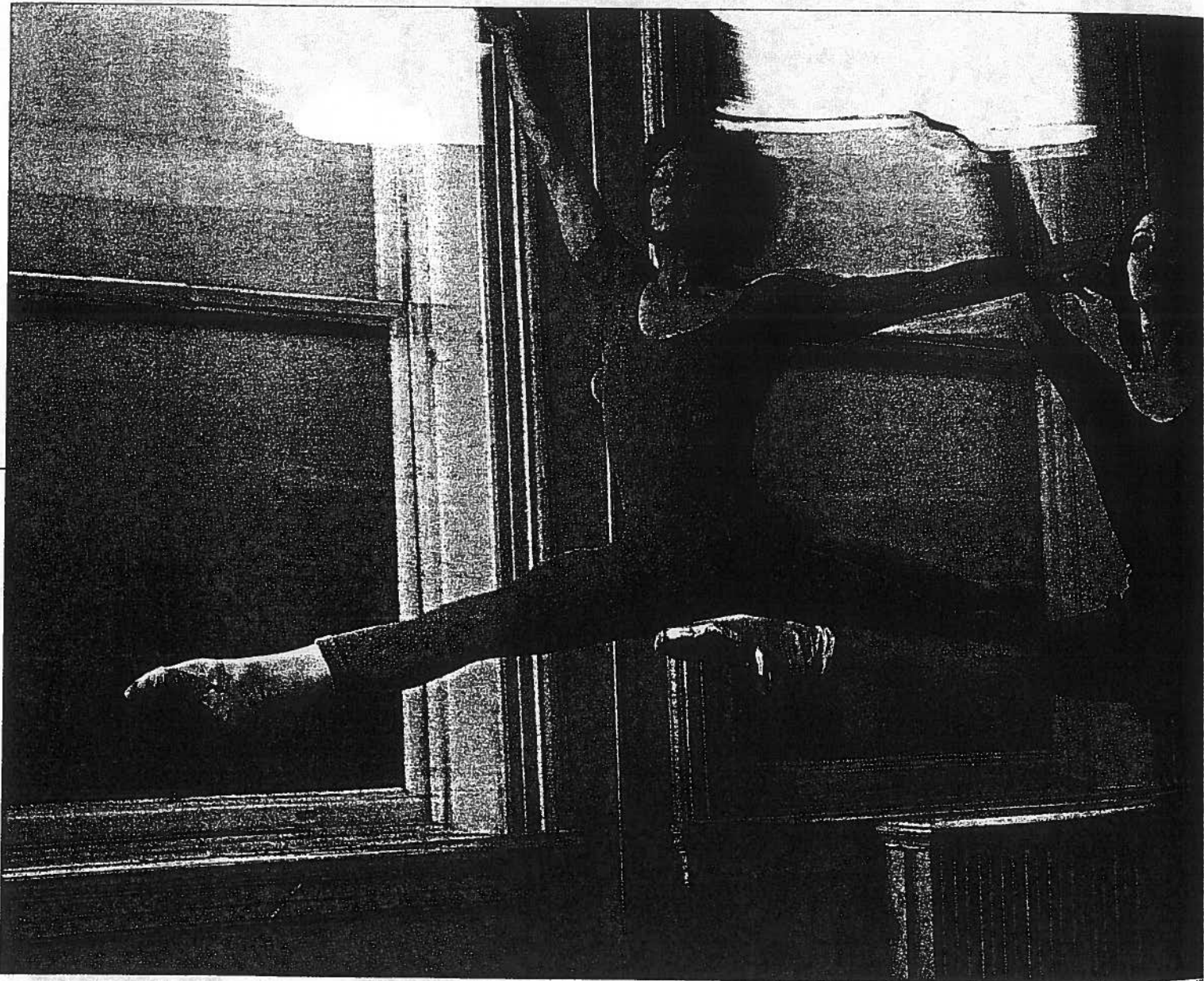
OUR BODIES change as we grow older. Find an old photograph album and look at some pictures of yourself as a child, a teenager, a young adult and an older person. How have your face and body changed? Are your facial bones more prominent, or is your nose longer? Have you developed the classic pear-shaped body? Do you have any wrinkles? These changes are part of the pattern of growing older. Some of them can be delayed or eliminated; others

are unstoppable. Some are desirable – no one regrets the disappearance of adolescent skin problems – and others make us less happy.

## ***Aging and self-esteem***

All these changes affect the way we think about ourselves. We tend to assume that the heyday of attractiveness is the twenties, and after that it is “all downhill,” especially for women. People often say of an older woman, “you can tell she was a great beauty once.” We do tend to judge the attractiveness of *others* partly in terms of how well they age; but “old” does not have to mean “unattractive.” In terms of our image of *ourselves*, young, middle-aged and elderly people are equally satisfied with or critical of their bodies throughout the lifespan.

In a survey of 62,000 Americans, scientists asked men and





women from three major age-groups – 24 and younger, 24 to 44, and over 45 – how they felt about their looks. The results were astonishing. Young adults, despite the generally held view that this age-group is the most physically appealing, seemed to be no more satisfied with their own looks than the elderly.

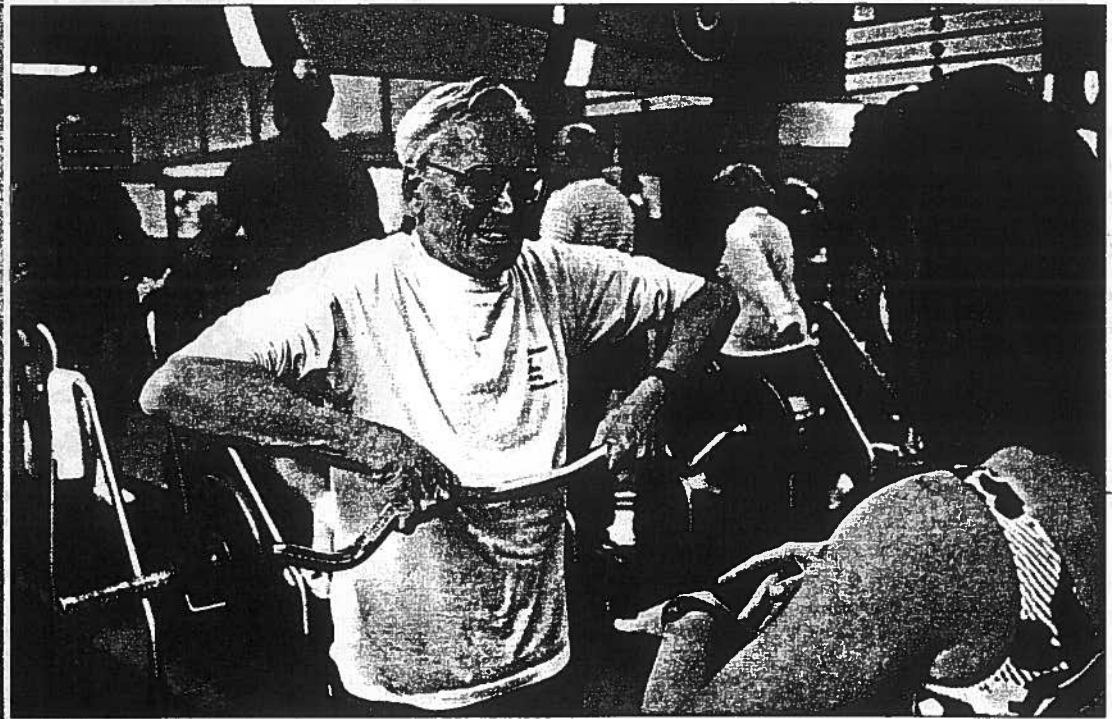
### ***How do good-looking people age?***

Good-looking men and women are probably more affected by age than average-looking or unattractive people. Two popular but conflicting theories about age and handsomeness jostle for our attention. Some people maintain that “a thing of beauty is a joy forever,” and that men and women who are good-looking in their teens start with an advantage that they maintain throughout their lives. A second theory holds that beauty is short-lived, and good

looks are soon ravaged by time. People who are stunning in youth are tempted to rely on their good looks, and when these external attributes fade, they are left with empty lives and poor self-esteem.

The truth presents a somewhat different picture from both these theories. Social psychologists asked women and men ranging in age from 10 to 90 how attractive they were in childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age and old age. They also asked them how happy they were at various ages and how happy they were at present. People indicated their general satisfaction with life on a ten-point scale ranging from “living an ideal, happy life” (10) to “living the worst possible life” (1).

This study showed a clear link between good looks and happiness. Childhood and adolescent attractiveness went hand in hand with early happiness. The child or teenager who felt unattractive was also miserable. Childhood beauty or homeliness had little connection with a person's later happiness or unhappiness, however. By the time people



◀ **An active life is the key to remaining in good physical condition into middle and old age. People who take regular exercise, as well as athletes and dancers who continue their activity past their prime, will feel younger than those with sedentary lifestyles. Good physical health contributes to good mental health. Both of these promote an active and rewarding life.**

▲ **Weight training is not just for muscular young men. Many elderly people find that this form of exercise is both beneficial and enjoyable. It is especially helpful in building and maintaining bone density in women, who are more likely to suffer from brittle bone disease (osteoporosis) in later life (see Ch 2).**

reach college age it seems to make little difference whether they were attractive as children or not. On the other hand, adolescent attractiveness or unattractiveness seems to leave its mark forever. People who were unattractive as teenagers were affected by low self-esteem related to their looks, and had low happiness ratings, regardless of how they rated their looks at a later age. People who were attractive as adolescents maintained good self-esteem and happiness over a significantly longer period.

### **Body image and life satisfaction**

Nevertheless, people who were handsome as teenagers do tend to experience a drop in general feelings of happiness from middle age. The decline is not great and levels out by old age, but it does seem that people who were attractive adolescents find it more difficult to cope with the effects of aging in their middle years. Homely teenagers, on the other hand, tend to get happier as they get older, with their self-esteem ratings increasing dramatically in the middle years (though they never quite draw equal with those who were attractive adolescents).

Keeping up appearances is just as important to mental and physical health in older people as it is for the young. The elderly who feel their looks no longer matter and "let themselves go" are usually depressed and unhappy. With effort, personal appearance can be changed for the better when we are older as well as in early life. **EH**

### **Growing old gracefully**

Body image is just as important in old age as it is in youth. It is a good idea to keep working on your appearance even when you are past the age when, formerly, these things were thought to stop being important. Attitudes are changing — you do not have to be young to be beautiful anymore.

## **Does smiling give you wrinkles?**

■ How does facial movement affect the development of wrinkles? Certainly we call the wrinkles that run from nose to mouth and the crinkly marks at the corners of the eye "laughter lines," because they do parallel the wrinkles that appear on our faces when we laugh or talk animatedly.

One school of thought proposes that to prevent wrinkles we should try not to screw up our eyes, squint, frown or laugh too much, and should avoid touching our faces, leaning a cheek on the hand, etc.

But laughter is healthy and good for the spirit, and a person afraid to respond to emotion for

fear of creating a few wrinkles would be very uninteresting. After all, wrinkles are not unhealthy, just a sign of expression through the years.

■ **Another school of thought** holds that wrinkles develop along laughter and expression lines because of the way skin drapes over our facial features, not because of excessive facial expressiveness, and that exaggerated facial movements exercise facial muscles and actually prevent the skin from sagging and wrinkling.

A number of facial exercise regimes include the repetition of exaggerated frowning, smil-

ing, and grimacing to exercise the face, claiming that this tones and invigorates the skin and muscle. It probably does stimulate circulation in the skin, but our facial muscles probably get enough exercise in the course of daily interactions. Keeping the skin moist and supple probably does more for it, allowing the skin to stretch and contract freely when we laugh, cry, and talk. **JAG**



## **Well-preserved women**



■ Twenty years ago, women over 40 were thought to be old. Today women well into their forties and beyond are fighting for the title of "Most Glamorous Woman in the World."

All these famous women are past 50, and while we might think that their attractiveness stems, at least in part, from the fact that they look younger than they really are, theirs is not the beauty of young women but has a quality of its own.

While improved makeup and skin care regimes have allowed women to keep more youthful looks, one of the main reasons for this social change may be the demographic changes of the last 20 years. The bulk of the population is no longer under 30, as it once was. The "baby

halted by adopting good habits later in life. Older people do need to be careful about exercise, taking things a little more slowly and allowing themselves more time to warm up and cool down. But otherwise the rules of a healthy lifestyle are the same: take regular exercise, eat a balanced diet, avoid smoking and drink only in moderation.

Adapting your skin care habits as you grow older is another main strategy for maintaining a satisfying appearance. For details, see Chapter 25.

### Age and stress

We think of our later years as a time to sit back and rest, but older people are prone to stress and suffer more seriously from it when it occurs. Ensuring time to relax is just as important for the older retired person as for the busy working person in mid-life. Although surveys show that retired people overall are happier than those still at work, retirement itself can be frustrating, especially for those who have been very active and worked all their lives. Even women who do not work outside the home may find their husbands' retirement stressful if they have been used to having the



■ **Touched by the hand of time, these famous actresses have still retained their looks past middle age.** *Sophia Loren FAR LEFT, elegant and sophisticated at 32, had not changed much at 50. At 29, Lauren Bacall LEFT was cool and imposing; at 55 LEFT she favored a classic style but was more relaxed and outgoing. Jane Russell at 32 LOWER LEFT was a well-known sex symbol. At 67 BELOW she had the same inviting smile. While some older women may feel the need for surgical procedures such as face-lifts, proper diet and exercise and a happy lifestyle are the best weapons against the ravages of time.*



### Hormone replacement

■ Hormone replacement therapy was originally developed to help women cope with the more distressing symptoms of the menopause, many of which are caused by an excessive drop in estrogen production. The treatment is sometimes regarded as a way to combat the aging process in women (there is no male equivalent).

Hormone replacement can improve skin condition and stop the development of excess facial hair and loss or thinning of scalp hair. It is more useful medically in preventing severe loss of bone mass, (osteoporosis), a condition that can lead to fragile and easily breakable bones, especially in elderly women.

Some doctors have expressed concern at a possible relationship between hormone replacement therapy and the incidence of breast cancer. Until all the results are in, taking hormones for purely cosmetic reasons may be unwise, unless a woman has experienced the effects of aging very rapidly. Hormone replacement therapy is still a very valuable treatment for serious menopausal discomfort and osteoporosis.

boomers," people born in the postwar birth explosion of the 1940s and early 1950s, are no longer children. This group is large enough to dominate social outlook, and their favorite icons are, naturally enough, no longer young people.

The teenage era is said to have been created in the late 1950s, when baby boomers ceased to want to look like their parents and developed a youth look and a mass market of their own. With advertising, sales and social developments all directed toward this aging group, we may again see a time, in the not too distant future, when teenagers try to look like their mothers and fathers, rather than parents attempting to appear as young as possible.



house to themselves most of the day. The inevitable aches and pains, the fears about bad health and a growing awareness of being unable to manage alone can also induce stress in the elderly. Using relaxation techniques to reduce stress and anxiety can be extremely beneficial for the health of the elderly person.

### **Correcting vision and hearing**

Good health and a relaxed attitude are the groundwork of attractiveness, but there is much more the elderly person can do to improve body image and self-esteem. Many elderly people feel cut off from life around them, and may appear dull and uninteresting. Decaying vision and hearing may be among the causes of this. Older people should have frequent vision and hearing tests – as often as once every six months, if they suspect problems are developing – to keep prescription lenses adjusted and fit a hearing aid if necessary. Taking an interest in the world and in other people, a prerequisite of attractiveness, is much easier if we can see and hear what is going on properly.

### **Youthful posture**

■ Posture can make or break your appearance, at any age. People who slouch or are round-shouldered tend to look sloppy and unself-confident most of the time.

In old age, the inevitable loss of bone mass and the shrinking of cartilage in the backbone and joints can also lead to poor posture. Stiff muscles and joints due to lack of exercise, or diseases like arthritis and rheumatism, which tend to be common in the elderly, can have the same effect.

Exercise, and treatment for diseases of the joints, will help

you retain your suppleness and improve your posture to some extent, but a good look in the mirror can be very beneficial too. Are you standing and sitting up straight, or do you tend to slump and hump your shoulders?

Make a conscious effort to pull yourself upright. You may find that you still have a waist and that your "widow's hump" is due partly to the way you are standing. Good posture is better for your internal organs, your muscles and bones, and it can make a difference to your appearance.

### **Well-preserved men**

■ Men have always been thought to age more gracefully than women, and male film stars in particular did not face the same decline in roles and popularity as they got older.

In fact, male skin appears to be more resistant to the effects of weather and sun than the thinner, more delicate and drier skin of women. Especially before the advent of readily available moisturizers and skin creams, men's skin did seem to take longer to show signs of aging than women's.

Perhaps more importantly, however, male attractiveness in a purely physical sense has never been thought to be as important as female beauty. Older men are more likely to have money and power, and it is likely to be these things that will attract other people to them rather than their looks. Although this attraction equation between



males and power and females and physical beauty has been changing as the social relationships of men and women alter, it still remains a powerful influence over how we evaluate people in relation to their appearance.



■ Longevity favors leading men, who continue to have career opportunities as they progress to distinguished middle and old age. Their careers may expand, allowing them to take on a wider scope of roles than when they were

typecast as handsome heroes. At 33, Sean Connery LEFT was well established as a screen idol. In middle age CENTER his roles reflected not only his good looks but also strong character. The trend continued as he approached 60 RIGHT.