

**Strategies for Fashion
in the Workplace
(A Woman's Guide to Beauty
The Thrifty Way)**

or

If 50,000 people



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Jennifer Van Horn whose knowledge, beauty, love and encouragement inspired me. Her patience in teaching me has not aged either of us too much.

THANKS

**do a stupid thing,
it is still a stupid thing”:**

Anatole France

@September 2009

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Special thanks are also due to Blair Simmons and Dan Van Horn who believed in me long before I did.

MORE THANKS

Without question my deepest gratitude goes to Howard, my husband, and God, who both inexplicably seems to love me unconditionally no matter what I wear or what color my hair is.

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INTRODUCTION

If you are a visual person, you may have noticed that a woman's presence can be jarring or discordant when there are discrepancies between her clothing, hairstyle, accessories, body language, and her voice, persona, makeup and personality. When all are in harmony, a woman is truly beautiful. Even a woman with an offbeat personality and unusual or very plain features, will appear beautiful if she is in harmony, inside and out.

Invariably, the following questions are raised in anger and outrage. Who is the judge of these things? Is there a fashion police? Should there be?

I am not the final judge and I am not the fashion police. I just have opinions and shopping tips **for those who dare to be beautiful.**

I've been taught that the way to accomplish a big job is to do it little by little. "Slow and steady wins the race." So let's begin.

ADVANCE THINKING AND PLANNING

Pretend that a thrift shop is the only place you can shop. In my case this is sometimes true.

Dispel the myth that wearing thrift store and yard sale clothes will make you look unkempt, unfashionable, and cheap. Shopping with me "The Thrifty Way" can enable you to look expensive, fashionable, elegant, and chauffeur driven no matter where you buy.

I am often asked, "You didn't get THAT in a thrift shop?"

To get over the "low-browness" of it all, ponder this insight. Unless you sew or buy haute couture, there is no such thing as new, unworn clothing. Unless you buy it out of the box before it is hung on the rack, or restrict yourself to catalog sales, someone else or many others have fingered, tried on, or even worn and returned what you buy as "new."

Many women who want to look classic and refined spend up to \$10,000 and more per year on

their wardrobes in department stores and boutiques. And these figures are conservative.

Shopping "The Thrifty Way" can keep a lid on expenses. For \$500 or less you can look lovely for a year and enjoy the adventure of shopping. You will also feel peaceful knowing you've saved money and still look classic and refined.

If you choose to shop in expensive boutiques and department stores, wait for 80% off sales.

If this were not enough incentive, consider the other remark that is frequently made when people find out how and where I shop. "Your husband must really love you." Does that mean if you spend a lot of money on clothing your husband's love is in jeopardy? Well, in the interest of having all husbands fall madly in love again with their wives, try my way on for size.

Make a list before you go of things you want to look for. Include all the members of your family and anyone else for whom you may shop. Include clothing for every season since many shops feature both heavy wools and light cottons year round.

Think ahead, also of gifts. Many times you can find brand new merchandise with the tags still on!

Window-shop in malls. Look in fashion magazines in the library. Look at runway shows on TV. Study before you go and prepare.

Decide in advance what you can spend. Don't exceed it. Bring cash and leave the credit cards home. It helps to stick to a budget.

Look for classic clothing; look for cotton, silk, wool or excellent versions of synthetics; look for designer labels and quality.

Buy only what you need.

Buy only outfits or something to complete what you have. Don't buy one piece, like a blouse, skirt, or pants, if you don't have something to go with it. Ever. You will be sorry.

To try clothing on, even if there is no dressing room, wear something that you can layer clothes over and still maintain some modesty and dignity. Many

thrift stores only have one or two mirrors mounted on clothing racks at the end of an aisle in full view of other shoppers.

Know what colors and styles look best on you. Have a professional help you or ask a group of friends who have good taste what they think. Rarely can anyone be objective enough to do this for oneself.

When you are shopping "The Thrifty Way" for a man without the man in tow, bring measurements and a tape measure. Measure, in particular, from the seam that falls in the middle of the armhole in the back of the jacket. Measure the distance from one arm to the other from this seam. Most often men's jackets and suits don't have the size marked. **Thrift store clothing is not returnable.**

WHAT LOOKS GOOD ON YOU?

Cultivate your aesthetic sensibilities, learn to be visual and use these guidelines for determining what looks good on you?

- What type of neckline is the most flattering: jewel, boat (bateau), cowl, V, scoop, turtleneck or mock turtleneck?
- What is your best hemline: short, knee length, calf length or below.
- Which skirt shape is the most flattering to your figure: straight, A-line, gathered, pleated, very full?
- For suit jackets or blazers, which hem length is best: above the waist, waist length, slightly below the waist, hip length. Which jacket style suits you: constructed or unconstructed?
- Which fabrics set you off best: stiff or loose, neutral fibers, blends or synthetics? Do you look well put together with fabrics that have many threads per

square inch or fewer in a loose weave? What about heavy or light fabrics: which suit your body temperature best? Which provide you with the most flattering frame for the picture, which is YOU?

- Do you wear belts? If the pants or skirts you wear have belt loops, wear a belt. If you are tall, a contrasting belt color will work. If height is not an asset, stay with a belt that matches the outfit. Empty belt loops look like a crystal vase without flowers, a perfect container just begging to be filled. Remove belt loops that will never be used.
- Shoes and hose that match either the outfit or your hair color are the most elegant. This means, that if your hair is in the blond family, from dark to light, shoes can be taupe, camel, or bone and look perfect. For darker hair colors, darker shoes will blend the best. I prefer hose to match the shoe color for a lengthened leg appearance. Also, if your shoes are a different color from your hose, your feet may look big. The top and bottom of the frame should just be the outline for YOU, the picture, which is the most important part of the picture. (I learned this working for a year in an upscale framing shop for fine art.)

•“Nude” hose will always look lovely on any Caucasian skin tone. “Suntan” may artificially darken your legs in an unattractive way unless your skin tone is the tone of the hose. Tinted hose that match skin tone will “finish” your legs, as powder finishes your face.

• Some fabrics are lined and some are unlined in good clothing. Which looks best on you and which helps the fabric drape the best?

• Are you the trendy or classic fashion type?

• When it comes to color, prints and solids determine your best look. My theory is that most people look best in solids and that’s why thrift stores have so many prints, plaids and other mixes of colors on the racks. I think people get tired of prints much more quickly than of classic solids. Also, I think women tend to buy prints when they need a pick-me-up or are temporarily “hormonally deranged”. Then when they are back to normal, they are bothered by the busyness of a print.

• What are your best accessories, including scarves, jewelry (gold or silver tone), hats, and capes?
• Consider in advance what upkeep you are willing to handle: dry-cleaning, handwashing, and machine washables, ironing? Don’t buy clothes that need more care than you can give.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THE ABOVE 12 POINTS, YOU ARE LIABLE TO MAKE COSTLY MISTAKES. AT LEAST THE THRIFTY WAY OF BUYING MINIMIZES YOUR LOSSES.

COLOR

What colors are your best colors? The answer to this maybe as challenging as the secrets of the sphinx are to unravel.

My own example should explain.

I have had my colors "done" by several experts over the years. That means that someone trained in color and fashion spent about two hours with me and selected swatches of individual colors and color families from their "system" that were my best. The most well-known of these is the season of the year "system" made popular by Carole Jackson in her book called "**Color Me Beautiful™**."

I had this done when my naturally brown hair with red and blonde highlights turned charcoal gray at thirty. I had this done again when I covered the gray and became a mousy brown. When the brown oxidized at the end of a month when I needed to have my roots covered and the brown started looking red, I took the plunge and embarked on a color fest of red. I have been every shade of red there is from the darkest

auburn to the lightest strawberry blonde and every stage in between.

When I wear blonde hair, I think I am a "winter" and wear mostly white and black, and strong jewel tones with icy pastels as accents. (I tried using my natural very dark eyebrows. Then I tried bleaching them to match my hair; I prefer my light brows.)

When I'm light ash brown with blonde highlights and it appears that I look best in blended colors, like toast brown, coral, medium blue, aqua, and other spring shades. Brown is my black but I wear black when it is offset by gold or other accent trims.

Consequently, at different times and with different hair colors I have thought that I was an "autumn", a "winter", and a "spring." In the systems that didn't give names to the colors, I've been all over the map.

Now that I have dared to become "rootless", letting my natural color of silver white be what frames my face, I think that a blend of winter and autumn colors look best, mostly autumn. When I am

living in my Florida home, my color palette is wider and more varied. When I am in Virginia, I tend to wear white, black, navy, beige, reds, turquoise and other strong colors. But the darks predominate and the accents remain just that, accents.

The lesson here is that no "system" is perfect because individuals are not alike, not even twins. Trial and error and **systems can give you some help, but they are not THE LAW.**

When you are completely stumped, look around for someone to observe with your coloring: eyes, hair and skin tone and study what looks best on them. Then copy their successes and see if they work for you.

Someone I once met at the Salvation Army shopping said that her father told her about this benchmark. It may be that if you are complimented on a particular item of clothing that means it calls undue attention to itself and doesn't necessarily flatter you. However, usually if you are complimented on how well YOU look, it means you are wearing just the right colors, style and fit for you. This is one of the mysteries of life to ponder.

When you think you know what your best colors are, don't invest a lot of money in your research until you're sure. Instead, only buy tee shirts, cotton turtle necks and scarves in your new "best" colors and wait to see what others think and how you feel in the new colors. That way you won't waste a lot of money.

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR BLACK?

When you look best in cool colors, colors that favor black, navy and colors with blue undertones in them, like red/blue, green/blue and the icy versions of pastels, you might latch onto black as your base wardrobe color. For example, a great black skirt and a black pair of pants can be topped with any of your other colors and you can mix and match them endlessly.

Sometimes you will favor navy blue, charcoal gray, burgundy, or a bluish forest green instead of or in addition to black as your base and then its easy to add other colors. But you know that black, navy, or gray shoes and handbags will coordinate with your outfits. If the prints you wear have an accent of black, navy, or gray as well, you will always look coordinated.

If your best colors are warm, with hints of yellow in them, even yellow reds, yellow blues, and yellow pinks, then your black will look better if it is brown. This is not doublespeak. I'm just inferring that brown will be a better base color for skirts, pants and

accessories than black. Dark greens with yellow tones or dark rust will also be other choices.

You've heard of the phrase, the "little black dress." Well, if brown is your black, then you need a "little brown dress" for dress up.

Shopping is less frustrating if you figure these things out in advance. That way you can go through racks of clothing looking for your colors and not digress into someone else's palette.

N.B. Recently, a friend shared this nugget of wisdom. In cheap clothing, plastics and other constructions, the color black will always look the most impressive and the most expensive. This is another mystery to ponder.

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR WHITE?

If you look best in pure white, then that is your best contrast to your black. If your white is better as cream, tan or other darker whites, then partner that with your black, which is probably brown.

Some people wear white instead of black and look like angels with halos if white is their best hue. Is that you?

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR METAL?

If silver is your first choice, it probably looks best when you wear white and black and that confirms your color palette. If gold looks best, you probably look best in warm colors usually associated with autumn or spring. If orange is very good on you, you can also wear copper and brass accessories.

CLOSET PURGE

Before you shop, study your needs. Invite someone into your closet to help you evaluate what you already own. Group outfits together. Put each outfit on one all-purpose hanger. Color coordinate as you hang, putting all the reds together, all the blues together and so on. Weed out what you haven't worn in a year. Put pieces together differently: make new ensembles out of old outfits, e.g. instead of a blue blouse with the blue skirt and a red blazer, put a white blouse and different jacket with the blue skirt. Play the game "how many new outfits can I rearrange out of the same old outfits?"

For disposal of clothing you haven't worn and don't need, consign the best to sell at consignment shops, give some to friends, and donate the rest to the Salvation Army or Goodwill Industries. Of course, stained, ripped and otherwise unusable clothing should be consigned to the ragbag or the garbage. Raid discarded clothing for reusable buttons and zippers that you or a "crafty" friend might use again. Never donate clothing that belongs in the trash, never.

One time when I changed my "look", I emptied half of my closet into my church's yard sale, trying to raise money for a kitchen oven. The other half was strewn on a spare bed to be picked over by friends that I invited to have a look. It gives me a thrill to share this way with my friends or anyone I find out about who would like to shop for free in my closet. The last time I changed my look, I boxed up 3 loads of clothes and sent them to a dear friend in Indiana. It gives my great joy to imagine her in outfits that were my favorites. I always have a shelf of giveaways, in case the perfect person for my stuff visits.

CHART A COURSE

Before you shop, plan your route. How many miles are you willing to travel? My husband, who has been dubbed the Chancellor of the Exchequer (CEO) because he pays the bills, will drive as many as 14 miles to buy cheap gas.

Check the yellow pages for listings under "Thrift Stores and Consignment Shops." Many jurisdictions have directories of these places. Call one store to find out if there is a published listing and order one before you shop. Check also for a special boutique so you can track their special sales. Uptown Lady in my hometown is my favorite.

When you have some time to spare between errands, walk or drive around neighborhoods that are new to you and look for funky names of stores that are clues to what they sell, like "White Elephant, Once is Not Enough, Yesterday's Rose, Thrifty Sisters, New To You," etc.

Get the sizes of all those for whom you will be shopping. Keep in a little notebook that stays in your handbag, briefcase or backpack.

Plan what you'll wear, how long you'll spend shopping, and how you'll pay for your purchases.

When you return home from shopping, get rid of one piece of clothing for every "new to you" one that you just acquired. **Our aim is not an overstuffed closet, but a useful one.**

CREATIVITY WHILE SHOPPING

While shopping, be creative. A \$1.00 skirt might become the fabric for a pillow or a vest. Remnants on sale might be blankets, curtains, or quilts to be created in disguise. Cotton skirts or dresses in very large sizes can be made into napkins or place mats. A silk scarf can be a wall hanging affixed with brass tacks. Silk flowers can be added to real flowers or plant arrangements.

Craft supplies can often be found for a fraction of their retail cost if you look into thrift shop corners. Look for sales, end-of-season or periodic markdowns, labels of a certain color, meaning half price, or buy one or two and get one free.

Lamps, art work, bedspreads, candles, picture frames, and old furniture are some of the discoveries you can buy and redesign their use for your home. Recently a friend noticed a lovely framed piece that featured two ships, the RMS Arundel Castle and the SS Mauritania.

He was excited because he had family connections to folks that had sailed on both of the

ships and it fueled his imagination. It fueled mine as well. Since he was recently engaged, I said, "Keep it as an early wedding present." Who knows, I may have gifted him with a picture worth hundreds or more. It was win/win for both of us.

PLANNING

Have you ever been late to work, a meeting, church, a party, a concert, etc. because you couldn't find anything to wear? Of course you have. We all have. Why? Because we didn't plan ahead of time.

Plan what to wear to work, church, social occasions, grocery shopping, car-pooling, etc. Planning means making sure your selection is clean and pressed, making sure it fits, making sure it's appropriate for the weather and the event, making sure you know how you want to accessorize it and that you have those things handy.

Does well-dressed mean you always have to wear a different outfit? No. **Well-dressed means appropriately attired for the occasion in something that is clean, well fitting, a flattering style and color for you, worn with confidence. It usually means you look classic and refined.**

SEASON SENSE

Are any colors, fabrics, and styles off-limits for certain seasons? Hardly anymore. However, when you violate the old rules, which included dressing in the colors of the season during that season (summer, fall, winter, spring), you will naturally stand out. Sometimes wearing white or off-white as the dominant color in fall, winter and spring makes a very elegant statement. On the other hand, wearing thin, white cotton in the winter will make everyone including you shiver unless you live in the tropics.

As a rule, the fabrics you wear should get heavier and darker as the temperature gets colder. But as a rule, you can violate the rules with good reason in order to be classic, lovely and appropriate, i.e. if we have a heat wave in February.

I think seasonless dressing is almost the new rule. Maybe it's because people travel so much because of work and may be in and out of varying climates regularly. Maybe it's because central heating and air conditioning regulate indoor temperatures to be the same regardless of the season.

Whatever the reason, it seems to me that fabrics that are very lightweight wool gabardine or very substantial cotton can pass as appropriate any time of the year. Opt for these when shopping so your wardrobe can be more all-purpose. You will need less and wear it more.

STYLE OR FASHION TYPE

What do I mean when I ask "What style are you?" What are the choices to consider? At the very least, the categories I use are: romantic, classic, dramatic, and country. Please take note that the names of the fashion types do not refer to personality, just fashion.

Romantic assumes you look good in lace, flowing fabrics, and ruffles. Small prints are also flattering. Light colors, light weight accessories and the gauzy look will work for you.

Classic means you look good in tailored clothing that has straight, clean lines. It is timeless. A classic suit can be worn for years. Wear tailored clothing that has symmetrical lines and is well-pressed. Medium stripes, matched patterns and solid colors work best with medium sized accessories.

Dramatic means that you look good in a high contrast of colors: black and white, bright yellow and navy, geometrics and angular looks. You can wear shiny

fabrics and bold designs, faddish trends and large accessories.

Country means you look good in textured fabrics, such as nubby wools, long gathered skirts and generally unconstructed, loose fitting clothing. Utilitarian styles, even coveralls will look trendy on you. Choose prints and plaids in natural fabrics and wear small sized or no accessories.

When in doubt, choose classic.

You know you've chosen wrong when you never feel attractive enough and when others never spontaneously give you a compliment about your appearance. If you think you often look messy, old or out of style, you are just conforming to the wrong fashion category. Choose differently and see if it makes a difference. If you don't know what each style is, ask someone who knows, an acquaintance or a salesperson in a pricey store, consult the fashion guides in the library, and look in fashion magazines and catalogs.

When you are dressed in a style that suits you perfectly, people will very often compliment your appearance or say you look well-put-together.



WISDOM NOT FOR WIMPS

When pondering your own appearance, spend a few minutes to meditate on these thoughts.

- The wrapper on a present tells you a lot about the giver and the present. **Advertising sells.** What are you selling? What do your clothes say about you? What do you want them to say?

- Even Mother Theresa took appearance into consideration when she designed her order's habit in order "to look" humble. In my estimation she succeeded in framing the beauty of her "sisters" magnificently. The classic white sari with blue trim is a beautiful frame for a woman of God to wear. With the utmost respect, I must admit that I see deep inner beauty when I look at photos of Mother Theresa. And yet outward beauty was not something she aspired to.

- **"Even if 50,000 women wear a particular piece of clothing, it may not work for you."** (My apologies are to Anatole France who said, "Even if

50,000 people say a stupid thing, it is still a stupid thing.")

- What you are attracted to in clothing may not look best on you.

- What you feel best in, may not make you look your best.

Make logical decisions, not emotional ones when buying clothing. Emotional decisions are usually costly.

A beautiful smile and a clear gaze are worth more than a designer outfit from Neiman Marcus or jewelry from Tiffany's, unless you bought them for under \$10.00 from a thrift store.

BEAUTY

It seems to me that there is an ideal standard of female physical beauty. No one ever really achieves it. However, certain guidelines can help many to get close.

Basically, the female looks best when shoulder width is close to hip width. This can be enhanced with shoulder pads, color and texture. I have needed to create shoulders for my narrow sloping ones since high school. The distance from my shoulders is a tad short for regular sizes but not short enough for petite. Shoulders and four inches in height would help me out a lot. I've learned to overcompensate with these "tricks."

- For example wearing a light color above the waist and a darker color from the waist down helps to create this illusion. Wide, horizontal stripes above the waist and a solid color from the waist down help create this illusion as well.

- Women with broad shoulders should be grateful that clothes will always hang well. If you wear darker colors below the waist, you will appear taller and thinner.
- Very thin women can appear larger from the waist down with gathered, full, or A-line skirts.
- Larger women can downplay hips with straight skirts in dark colors. Lifting weights and doing shoulder enhancing exercises in the gym really help. My shoulder pads are rusting in my drawer, (Just kidding.)
- Train a seamstress to sew darts to shape the bustline and to lift shoulders in jackets and tops that you must have but need altering.

It seems to me that it would be desirable for a woman (perhaps everyone) to look her best almost all of the time. If I say all of the time, I will be stoned to death! But it is a worthy goal. Even jeans and tee shirt worn to mop a floor can be in the right color with the right fit.

For those who refuse to accommodate the aesthetic tastes of others, let me add that how I feel about how I look is very important to me. If I think I look awful, I can descend into a bad mood and not be fun to have around. So my looks matter to me and I like to try to look good for myself as well.

Even when the circumstances of life make it almost impossible to tend to one's appearance, looking good is still a noble goal and some aspects can be achieved. **As a mother of babies, during times of illness, as a constant caretaker of the elderly, infirm or handicapped, or as a missionary in the field, a wardrobe of one jeans skirt, one pair of jeans, two tee shirts, one scarf, and one pair of shoes can be elegant, fashionable and help you look beautiful, if the sizes are right, the style is right, and the colors your BEST.**

My children and husband seem to enjoy my efforts to look refined, classic and well groomed. Sometimes they help me when I make a mistake. For example, I put on a "new to me" outfit for one of my son's graduations and the "about to be feted" young man instantly got teary eyed. I knew I had made a

mistake. I now can see that the outfit had too much color and pattern and called too much attention to itself. At the time I didn't see myself objectively enough, but to respect my son's sensibilities, I went upstairs, changed into a much more classic dress and his smiles reassured me I had gotten it right this time.

You may wonder how a woman who cares so much about her appearance could have made such a big mistake for an important occasion. The answer is, "I don't know."

I do know that we do it all the time and that most women only wear about 20 % of what is hanging in their closets. This is another mystery of life that we should ponder when we wind up with lots of mistakes in the give away bag for our friends and charity.

Most women want to look attractive. Many give it up because they think it is beyond their reach. It is a lie. **Anyone can be beautiful!**

A beautiful woman is an inspiration to others.

What do we admire in a garden? The flowers or the weeds? Women need to look more like the flowers than the weeds.

I have heard of bosses, who on seeing an employee early in the day, say, "Please go home and try again. That won't work here."

There is a funky trend in gardening that touts weeds as artistic additions to gardening. Let's not quibble. **Lovely is always in. Ugly goes in and out.**

LOOKING THINNER

Here are some suggestions for women who weigh more than they would like.

- Wear tailored clothing. Vests, jackets with straight lines, solid colors, dark on bottom, all one-color outfits, or just a very small splash of contrast are best.
- Avoid a filmy or flimsy romantic look. For romance, try a tightly woven, tailored, dark lace dress or blouse with a lace jacket.
- Jackets or overblouses are best if they end just a few inches below the waist. Don't cover hips with a long jacket.
- V necks and straight lines are better than scoop necks and curves.
- Unless you have a very long neck, avoid high cowl or turtle neck tops

- Don't layer too much unless it is a carefully constructed layering in a dark, thin fabric. Otherwise, many layers will increase the appearance of bulk.

- Even though it may be painful, periodically check an outfit in a three-way mirror or better department stores. It's better to know what others see than to avoid the truth. I hate those mirrors, especially during bathing suit season. But I'd rather die in private than get unwanted stares at the beach or swimming pool.

- If you're overweight, be tall! Seriously, it's not fair for us short women who are overweight. Taller women can carry it better. Short women need lots of optical illusion to create a thinner appearance. But it can be done.

- If you are wearing a top and bottom of different colors and you are somewhat large or short waisted, wear a belt to match the top, not the bottom, to create a leaner, longer look.

- Pay attention to your underwear. Bras, panties and girdles can slenderize or help you look lumpy. If you've never bought underwear in a shop where you get personalized service, such as a "bra boutique", treat yourself at least once. The wrong bra can make you look larger, lumpy and saggy. The right one can uplift, minimize, and enhance your bustline. I know some women think girdles are outdated and a plot of maniacal men who want to keep women in bondage. But many men wish only the best for their women and that includes looking great, even if it means wearing a girdle. Young and older women alike can tame large loose buttock muscles or flab with a proper fitting girdle. **The "Jell-O" look is never in.** When I don't wear a girdle and catch a look at myself in a store window or mirror, I am instantly reminded as to why I need one. You will be too!

- Target and Wal-Mart are great sources of quality foundation garments: bras, girdles for all sizes. It wouldn't cost you a pay check to look "tucked" and "toned."
- Corsets that are short, long without covering the panty or bra area are now sold in stores and on the shopping

channels. They are wonderful and can shape you up without pain in a minute.

BATHING SUITS

Bathing suits are a sticky subject for many, including me. I'd like to get this off my mind once and for all. **I don't know what a refined woman should do about bathing suits.** In my youth I wore one piece suits, bikinis, "string" bikinis, and I'm sure I caused some wise folk to pray for me. I am not comfortable in a bathing suit anymore. I don't feel modest, with some cleavage and a lot of leg and thigh showing. I don't know how virile men cope at the pool or beach when looking at women as some dress, or undress.

I have a Christian friend who concocted a "bathing costume" a few years ago with knee-length spandex and a skirted bathing suit. It probably was a combination of biking shorts and a romper or sunsuit. She loved it. My current solution is to wear a bathing suit and then wear exercise shorts, or my son's lacrosse shorts over it. And I have purchased my first suit in the skirted style.

Nonetheless, it's hard to retain a modest, non-provocative look in a bathing suit. The more you swim

and the less you sit and walk around, the easier it might be.

For young women who feel the weight of peer pressure, try for flattering one piece suits with removable sarong skirts as a cover-up for walking around.

I realize that your choice of bathing suit is a highly personal matter. The lesson here is that you have choices. Make them carefully.

SLACKS, PANTS, LEGGING, STIRRUP PANTS,
JEANS

First, let me issue an often forgotten medical advisory. Fabric too tight across a female crotch can cause a yeast infection, or aggravate and prevent one from healing. I believe this is an inborn caution for us to heed. If we have been created in such a way that this is true, I'm sure God knew that our clothing would be off the mark some day. Obviously, He was right.

For women with anything more than a flat or "slightly rounded" stomach, pant with front pleats are the most flattering. When wearing leggings and stirrup pants, the top (shirt, sweater, etc.) should be long enough to cover the buttocks. Skin-tight leggings and stirrup pants are tricky for very large sizes. Be careful to look in a 3-way mirror before venturing out.

ALTERATIONS

A clothing bargain becomes meaningless if you have to spend a lot of money on alterations. When shopping, there are common problems that we might be tempted to fix. Some are: hemlines of skirts, pants, dresses and jackets; sleeve lengths; loose wrist cuff on blouses and dresses; pegging or tapering a straight skirt; adjusting jackets made for tall women and wanting to be worn by short women.

Tackling jacket tailoring or any kind of tailoring is the hardest. Many petite women wear jackets meant for taller women and they are overpowered by more jacket than they can handle. Or dresses seem okay if only the shoulders could be raised a few inches. There are many sizes available to suit the variety of body types we see around us: petite, regular sizes, junior sizes, women's sizes, plus sizes, and tall sizes.

It's hard to make the wrong proportions fit a body it's not designed to enhance. What's my advice if you are constantly frustrated in this regard? Give it up and keep looking.

I only alter clothing if the item is so gorgeous and so inexpensive, not to mention flattering and classic, that I know I'll wear it for several years. Otherwise, if more is entailed, I know if I keep shopping, I'll find a better fit.

Unless you are a very accomplished seamstress and you enjoy sewing and tailoring, and you have more time than money and you will make the time soon to fix a garment (so it won't sit in a pile for a year), don't plan on altering clothing. Don't buy clothing that needs lots of fixing, unless you can do the work yourself and you enjoy doing it. (Or unless you know a wonderful seamstress that is inexpensive. Lucy's Alterations in Palm Coast, FL has changed the way I shop. She can make clothes bigger as well as smaller, and rebuilt an expensive jacket for \$30.)

It's hard, however, to pay \$16 to shorten the cuffs on a blazer when it only cost \$8 to buy. But if the color and fit were perfect, I might pay \$5.00

Take an old blazer, gently rip out the cuff hem and the lining and examine how it was done. Don't

worry if you don't know how to turn the sleeve and lining inside out in order to conceal all the stitching. Couture clothing has lovely handstitching on all hems and your cuffs can be altered by hand, upgrading the quality of construction.

Never put clothing in need of repair or cleaning in your closet. Take it to the cleaners or tailor or put it in your fix-it pile at your first opportunity.

COMFORT

Many women shop for comfortable clothes at the expense of lovely colors, lines, fabrics, and design. Good clothing should be all these things, as well as comfortable and flattering.

There is a dress style, with a dropped waist, gathers and a long flowing skirt that is worn by millions of women for comfort. I myself think this is a very comfortable piece of clothing. It's as comfortable as a bathrobe. But the problem is that it makes most women look plump, shapeless and much larger than they really are.

I believe that it is possible to have beauty, fashion and comfort. It just may take more time to find.

MAKEUP

I have several women friends who I think are beautiful. They wear no makeup, either because of religious convictions or economy. They are beautiful to me because they either have inner beauty, which shines brightly or they have good taste in clothing, which brings out their best. Ideally, if you are wearing flattering lines and color, makeup is not essential. When used correctly, it simply enhances what is already lovely.

In my case, my mother always told me, "Go wash your face," even when it was clean. This told me that my natural skin tone did not look clean and fresh. I learned to use makeup at a very early age in order to look as if I wasn't wearing any but had a clean face!

I wear hypoallergenic makeup. My essentials are mascara, lipstick, under eye concealer, a dot of foundation and always some bronzer or my lipstick as rouge. I use contouring and other secrets when I have a lot of time, which is not often. However, when teaching in front of groups I require a bit of "applied magic" for me to feel prepared.

JEWELRY

Jewelry is an accessory like scarves, belts, bows and ribbons. Like the frame on a painting, it should gently provide the finishing touch, but not be the main attraction.

Today's fakes can be gorgeous and indistinguishable from the real thing except to the trained eye of an expert. Real or fake, a rock to knock your eye out or a delicate stone, these symbols are not important.

Most of the time, less is more.

HAIR

I am hardly someone to advise anyone about how to wear his or her hair. I have changed my hair length and color more than most women do in a lifetime. I have a photo of me at age 5 with multiple hair lengths from an experiment with scissors when my mom wasn't around. And I remember a high school dance that I was late for because when my friends came to pick me up, I made them wait an hour while I dramatically cut and restyled my hair. My hair stories could go on endlessly.

It is wise to study photos of women whose face shape is similar to yours for ideas and suggestions. Some beauty salons and websites can project how your face would look in over 20 styles. Color, length and style of hair can transform any woman easily.

I have noticed that women with sharp features look much softer with blonde hair, than with dark hair. I wish I'd known those years ago.

I have also noticed that "big" hair looks terrible on TV unless you have the big persona to go with it.

I have also noticed that naturally curly hair is gorgeous when left natural, if it is shaped to fit your features.

Now that I am naturally silver white with a thin face, I think that chin to shoulder length looks the best on me. I look at women my age on TV, especially Martha Stewart and Diane Sawyer and use them as role models. Who are yours? Think about it carefully.

What should professionals in the workplace wear to "dress for success?"

The thirst for a casual look has so invaded the workplace that no longer can a professional 'image' maker counsel young people to buy the success suits of the early to mid 1990's. Casual dress days are not limited to Fridays in much of the high tech industry, for example, and jeans, tee shirts, flannel skirts and sweats are seen not only behind computer terminals, but in boardrooms as well. High-tech computer geniuses are courted for their brain synapses, not their fashion acumen.

Therefore, a dress for success manual requires the prospective reader to research the targeted workplace thoroughly before spending a dime. It may be that clothing dollars can be allocated to cars, homes, and vacations without losing any workplace clout whatsoever. If you are new to an area, plan to visit the offices at which you might be applying for a job. Ask questions, and see what others do.

A conservative business environment requires suits or "pieced together" ensembles made up of

blazers and/or skirts and pants with any number of matching tops. A trendy business such as a hair salon or offices related to the entertainment business has a wide tolerance for trendiness. Know what is expected before you buy.

The more conservative the color, the more you can wear the outfit. Bright colors and patterns are so memorable that women soon tire of them. We feel like we need new clothes more frequently if these are the mainstays of our wardrobes.

In high school I had a friend from a wealthy family who owned five beautiful wool plaid skirts and five coordinated turtleneck tops, all purchased from one of the finest and most expensive New York department stores. She wore one each of the five schooldays and repeated the sequence weekly.

Unwittingly, she had created her own uniform code, saved lots of her parents' money and always looked well groomed and classic. In fact, she could have had much more, as her dad owned a controlling interest in a major automotive corporation and the

family lived in at least a 10-room apartment on Madison Avenue in New York City. But she didn't.

The lesson here is that, as always, less is more, and classic always works.

A good business look is accessorized sparingly. Clothes are clean, well pressed and well fitting. Wool, cotton, and silk are always good. The newest synthetics also resist wrinkles and breathe well.

For women, scarves and blouses can change a suit. For men, different ties and shirts can change your suit as well. Therefore, you need fewer suits and more of the less expensive elements to have some variety and be well dressed.

Shoes must be clean, polished and be well heeled. A good shoe repair shop can make shoes last three times as long as they otherwise might.

Handbags and briefcases don't have to be expensive leather but they should be sleek and unobtrusive. In the context of your overall

appearance, they will look more expensive and better than they are.

Just as women's fashion magazines have been declaring for over forty years, hair and nails must be scrupulously clean and well styled.

Unusual body piercings, tattoos, and long fingernails and multiple earrings in each ear always detract in a serious business atmosphere. Resist letting your own sense of taste and protocol be ruled by fads. However, I have learned to be tolerant. In the workplace, I simply look at someone's eyes, if the nose and lips are filled with jewelry. As a parent, I would rather have body jewelry on my children than designer drugs in their veins. In fashion as in the rest of life, choose your issues very carefully.

But this rule remains. Your credibility in the workplace is greatly influenced by what you wear and don't wear. I have always dressed for the job I wanted to have: top of the line consultant with a 6 figure bank account. Regardless of whether or not that has ever been true for me, I want to look the part. And it has always paid off for me. Try it.

When in doubt, leave home without.

Most of the time I can not go out of my home unless I feel I look "as good as I can", whether it is in jeans, or a suit. Short of a real emergency or time crunch out of the ordinary, I don't feel good unless I've tried to put it together well.

That means, for me, that I need to be wearing "my best colors", in a squared-off look to camouflage my natural roundness. When I look round, I look messy. When I look squared-off, I look professional, together, and just plain old better.

Know your best look and learn to achieve it in pajamas, jeans, pants, skirts, suits, swimwear, and evening wear. You will feel good about yourself and your confidence will help you inspire others.



SUMMARY

- Dare to be beautiful.
 - The Thrifty Way of buying minimizes your losses when you make a mistake.
 - "Systems" can give you help, but they are not THE LAW.
 - Our aim is not an overstuffed closet, but a useful one.
 - When in doubt, choose classic style.
 - Anyone can be beautiful.
 - A beautiful woman is an inspiration to others.
 - Lovely is always in. Ugly, as beautiful, goes in and out.
 - Most of the time, less is more.
- Don't assume that expensive stores will always be out of reach.