



Turning back THE HANDS OF TIME

Society is challenging the definition of beauty and giving permission for us to age gracefully Jenny Hodder discovered.

The results of a recent global study exploring what beauty means to today's women clearly affirms that, while the word includes physical attractiveness, it also includes happiness, kindness, wisdom, dignity, love, authenticity and self realisation.

However, from Brazil to the Netherlands to Argentina, across cultures, ages and race – the women surveyed made it clear there was a one dimensional and narrow, physical definition of beauty. The findings showed that the ideas of beauty and physical attractiveness were largely synonymous, and although both were highly-valued by society, both were almost impossible to attain.

'The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report' was commissioned by US beauty products company, Dove. Data was gathered from 3200 women aged between 18 and 64 years in ten countries – USA, Canada, Great Britain, Italy, France, Portugal, Netherlands, Brazil, Argentina and Japan with no reference to brand.

The report's most startling finding was that only two per cent of the women surveyed consider themselves beautiful, only nine per cent felt comfortable describing themselves as attractive while 49 per cent responded that women who were more beautiful had greater opportunities in life. But 85 per cent said every woman had something beautiful about her.

Encouraged by the results, Dove launched a global advertising campaign that questioned whether 'model' attributes such as youth, slimness and symmetrical features were required for beauty – or were relevant to it. Each advertisement presented an image of a woman whose appearance differed from the stereotypical physical ideal and asked readers and viewers to check off a box, effectively asking for a definition of beauty by choosing one of two responses.

Probably the advertisement that attracted most attention featured a 96-year-old African American woman named Irene and asks 'Wrinkled? Wonderful? Will society ever accept old can be beautiful?' Another pictured a voluptuous woman and offered the choice, 'Oversized? Outstanding? Does true beauty only squeeze into a size six?'

However, while such campaigns challenge the definition of beauty and give permission for women to age gracefully, it is clear that women's interest in, and pre-occupation with, beauty is not some easily-dismissed concern and they judge it as crucial as they navigate getting older in today's world.

As we live longer thanks to advances in medical research, access to fresh foods and a range of therapies and treatments, baby boomers are not accepting ideas of slowing down but are investing in lifestyles which support the view that retirement is the beginning of another fun-filled journey.

According to Dr Sherry Rogers, a leading authority on environmental medicine we were designed to live well past our '90s and die in our sleep with no disease labels and no medications.

In her book 'Detoxify or Die', she suggests that the closest we can come to turning back the hands of time is to give ourselves a body with a reduced chemical load, similar to the body we had in our youth.

Rogers says toxins are in our foods, the air we breathe, water, detergents, plastic water bottles, aluminium cooking implements, household furniture and mother's breast milk. Over time these toxins stockpile in our body.

Her views on the need for a healthy, toxin-free body and staying well as a way to assist ageing gracefully are supported by many health and lifestyle experts.

WORKING UP A SWEAT FOR GOOD HEALTH – THE DETOX BOX

Subiaco naturopath Toni Fisher is one of the first in Perth to introduce the use of the detox box that uses sweating therapy – long recognised as a valid way to reduce the severity of illness and encourage good health.

Dr Sherry Rogers suggests the 'bottom line is that sweat is the only proven method for getting the most damaging toxins out of the body'.

Toni's detox box is made with non-toxic Russian spruce and contains conveniences such as internal controls and a Sony CD player. It took Toni and husband Geoff a couple of hours to set it up and according to its maker, running it costs just 12 cents in electricity per session.

According to Toni the detox box releases infra-red rays that are safe and naturally occurring as part of the light spectrum. The air is warm and dry, as opposed to controlled by high heat or steam as in traditional saunas.

"The result is the detox box is easy to breathe in and comfortable. A number of my clients have felt the effects of infra-red as the deep warmth one gets from the sun on an early winter's morning," Toni said. The benefits of the detox box included detoxification from heavy metals, pain relief, skin enhancement, stress reduction and weight loss.

One study reported in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology found that patients who had a 15 minute infra-red treatment every day for two weeks had a significant improvement in blood vessel function, blood sugars and weight loss, she said. And as Sherry Rogers says; "let's face it – high-tech pollution requires high-tech solutions".

COSMETIC SURGERY

As Australians start to take better care of themselves and plan for long, active busy lives, they have started looking at ways to repair a myriad of problems caused by a lifetime of exposure to the sun, wind, chemicals, inappropriate diet, lack of exercise and the effects of just getting older.

It seems that a post-war generation determined to stay youthful and active is one of the main factors fuelling an interest in plastic and cosmetic surgery.

According to statistics released earlier this year by the American Society of Plastic Surgery, reality television shows are creating a greater public awareness of cosmetic surgery. Last year, the number of cosmetic plastic surgery procedures increased by five per cent.

According to Sean Hamilton, president of the WA Society of Plastic Surgeons, West Australians are following the United States trends.

"We are seeing more and more people keen to look at ways we can help them to look more youthful or age more slowly and gracefully," he said. "These include people such as geologists and engineers who worked unprotected in our very harsh climate before it was known the serious damage that would be caused by not taking care of their skin. Others include those working and competing with younger people in their chosen field."

While the ages of clients remains varied, the over-55 age group makes up the majority of Australians undergoing a range of procedures. Interestingly, there has been an increase in the number of men using the services. They come from a range of professions including sales and marketing.

THREE CARDINAL RULES

Dr Joe Kosterich, chief executive of the Perth-based Australasian Institute of Anti-Ageing Medicine argues that while ageing is a given, how the body performs as it ages depends on how it is looked after:

"There is not a single factor but a range of factors that should be combined and planned for in a similar way that people invest and plan for their financial security

in retirement," he said. "It is like a health insurance policy and in essence it comes down to three points – what you eat, what you smoke and how active you stay, especially from middle age.

"A balanced diet, an exercise regime which includes a combination of cardio and flexibility activities are the building blocks of anti-ageing.

"This policy should also include caring for your mental and emotional attitudes and doing things which minimise stress and anxiety and give you a sense of inner peace. This can be as simple as maintaining or developing a group of friends especially if your workplace had been a source for social activities, reading, doing a crossword, playing cards or doing some volunteer work."



Anti-ageing specialist Dr Joe Kosterich. Photo Michael O'Brien

Tips on ageing gracefully from Dr Joe Kosterich

- 1. Diet:** Eat foods rich in green and red vegetables with some yellow too, as well as fruit. Make sure you have an adequate intake of good fats such as olive oil, fish oil and flaxseed oil and enough protein such as lean meat, fish, poultry and pulses such as lentils and chickpeas. Limit refined carbs and go for wholegrain low GI (glycaemic index) carbs. The 'polymeal' of vegetables, fish, almonds, garlic, olive oil, fruit, dark chocolate and red wine is better than any polypill. Blueberries and broccoli are nature's power foods so eat up.
- 2. Water:** Drink at least two litres of water a day, preferably filtered.
- 3. Weight:** Aim for a BMI (body mass index or weight in kilos divided by height squared) of 20-25. Excess weight is one of the biggest contributors to age-related illness such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, arthritis, reflux and even some cancers.
- 4. Exercise:** Be physically active three to four times a week with a mix of cardiovascular exercise for fitness and resistance exercise for bones and lean muscle mass.
- 5. Sleep:** Get eight hours sleep per night and if you are short some nights catch up on it on the weekend.
- 6. Supplements:** Despite what the experts tell us, many people need vitamin and mineral supplements because much of our food has less goodness than we are led to believe, given the delays between garden or farm and the table.
- 7. Stress:** Manage your stress levels and consider meditation, walks in the park, spa visits, regular massage and reducing your commitments.
- 8. Have fun:** Each week, but preferably daily, do something you enjoy and that makes you smile or laugh.
- 9. Eliminate toxins:** Do not smoke, have alcohol in moderation and limit caffeine. Also avoid being surrounded by 'toxic' people who can drain you.
- 10. Have health check ups.**
- 11. Mental attitude:** It is important to have a positive mindset to retirement and back it up with positive actions.

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Jeremy Dalton wears a body suit as he undergoes endermologie treatment to reduce his 'love handles' at a Claremont clinic. Photos Ron D'Raine

MORE MEN ARE UNDERGOING COSMETIC TREATMENTS AND SURGERY

"The most common procedures performed include face lifts, brow lifts, rhinoplasty, eye-lid surgery, laser therapy and the use of fillers to achieve these objectives," Dr Hamilton said.

Most people had realistic and sensible expectations and did not want to change their features, but simply wished to look younger. "In an environment where we seem to be so driven to worship perfection, our work helps to give people a belief in themselves and a better sense of wellbeing which engenders a more balanced and less stressful life and can only support ageing with grace and confidence."

Dr Hamilton said another factor contributing to the popularity of cosmetic and plastic surgery procedures was the improvement in surgical practices. Currently, there are 25 members of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) working in WA. ASPS members are fully qualified in both reconstructive and cosmetic plastic surgery and all are Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS) or equivalent – the benchmark standard for surgical training in Australia.

Dr Hamilton agrees that while reality television shows raised community awareness about cosmetic surgery they had also, in some instances, produced problems for the profession by creating unrealistic expectations. However, on the positive side people were doing more research before making decisions.

"Do not take unnecessary risks by choosing unqualified practitioners to perform your procedures. Not all medical practitioners performing cosmetic surgery are

plastic surgeons so always ask and check about their training and experience with the procedure being considered," he said.

Dr Hamilton suggested visiting the website at www.plasticsurgery.org.au

ENJOYING LIFE

Jeremy's story

Jeremy Dalton sees cosmetic surgery as an acceptable part of his life. His refreshing approach to wanting to feel and look good reflects a shift in men's attitudes to their overall grooming. It has led to a massive increase in men having a range of treatments at health, beauty and wellbeing clinics.

Jeremy, a former Australian junior tennis player, regards his range of treatments as part of a healthy lifestyle regime. His first procedure was to have unwanted body hair on his back, which he found unattractive and distressing, permanently removed.

Claremont clinic owner Catherine Lee said hair reduction was one of the most common aesthetic treatments performed at the clinic.

Jeremy then researched and discussed other treatments which he believed would help build his self esteem and sense of wellbeing. "It is now part



of my routine and I do not see it as spoiling myself but a way of looking after myself," he said.

Jeremy is currently undergoing a process known as endermologie. It is a process that gives an 'extra push' to help get rid of localised fat deposits – in Jeremy's case his 'love handles'. This process allows toxins and fluids that have built up to be expelled, resulting in a firmer silhouette and better muscle definition.

Jeremy said the process helped to stretch muscles and was very relaxing. The same treatment is used by national rugby team, the Wallabies straight after a game.

According to Jeremy, many men, especially baby boomers, were becoming more aware of the procedures available to them to treat and or prevent problems such as sun damage. "These non-invasive treatments enhance their appearance and give them renewed confidence," he said.

People also had more disposable income putting cosmetic procedures within the reach of more people. "When there were four or five children to raise, even having a massage was regarded as a luxury item and procedures were really only available to the very wealthy.

"Looking good isn't about vanity; it is about taking care of your skin and wellbeing."



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Looking good isn't about vanity; it is about taking care of your skin and wellbeing, according to cosmetic surgery patient Jeremy Dalton. Photo Ron D'Raine

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Looking Good!



Carol undergoes skin photo rejuvenation treatment to repair sun damage. Photos Ron D'Raine

Carol's story

Forty-nine-year-old Carol's children have grown up and now she has the time and the ability to look after herself and repair the damage caused by the sun.

Carol is undergoing a skin photo rejuvenation program. "It's not about vanity," she said. "I grew up in Sydney where my father was a painter. He used to paint all the surf clubs on Sydney's northern beaches. I spent my time on the beaches while he painted and by the age of 15 my skin had been badly damaged. I used to get sunburnt constantly and, at times even blistered, not to mention peeling frequently."

Now, many years later, she never goes out in the sun without protection and cannot believe that she even helped damage her skin by smothering herself in layers of a mixture of baby and coconut oil!

About 12 months ago she visited a clinic for the first time and started on a series of treatments including dermabrasions, a skin resurfacing treatment and photo-facial treatments. The procedure uses Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) to reduce redness and flushing and also removes sun spots, broken capillaries and acne.

Carol has had the treatment on her face, neck and chest and is yet to have it on the sun-spots on her hands. She is delighted with the results and feels fantastic and full of energy.

"As a nurse I am in the public eye and my appearance is important in my work. I feel great, especially in the past two months, as people are noticing and commenting on the changes in my appearance."

However, Carol does not see her treatments as a quick fix and works on having a balanced lifestyle which includes a balanced and nutritional diet, exercise and developing life skills to reduce stress and other factors which give her a sense of wellbeing.

Like Jeremy she agrees that she has greater disposable income and this has given her the chance to take advantage of the procedures. "Now my children are grown and after 20 years of taking care of them it was time to think about myself. I think I am like many women who put their needs on hold to raise their families."

Carol's days of being a 'sun bunny' are long behind her and she knows that her feelings about her changed self have raised her self-esteem. For Carol, ageing more slowly and gracefully comes not only from external factors but from internal feelings of balance and wellbeing.

AGEING GRACEFULLY

SOME THOUGHTS FROM JULIE BISHOP,
FEDERAL MINISTER FOR AGEING.

According to Julie Bishop, while our appearance is a matter of personal choice, she believes we should embrace ageing as a natural part of life and free ourselves of the anxiety or fear or discontent that can be associated with ageing.

"Australians have one of the highest life expectancies in the world. Through improved public health, better nutrition, scientific breakthroughs and a better quality of life we are living longer. The challenge is to live a longer, healthier and more active life. But old age is like everything else – to make a success of it you need to start young," she said.

The minister recommends a healthy diet and regular exercise as part of our lifestyle and it is never too late to start – a daily walk lasting half an hour can bring significant benefit to people of all ages.



Federal Minister for Ageing Julie Bishop says the baby boomer generation is set to dispel many of the myths about ageing.

As we age, being physically and mentally active is even more important. Taking the dog for a walk, doing leg lifts during television commercial breaks, playing chess, doing crosswords or even tackling a Sudoku puzzle are some of her suggestions.

"I have a vision of a society where everyone has the opportunity to age with grace, dignity and purpose. The baby boomer generation, our next 'older generation', will dispel many of the myths about ageing. But as Victor Hugo said: "When grace is joined with wrinkles, it is adorable." **VITA**

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