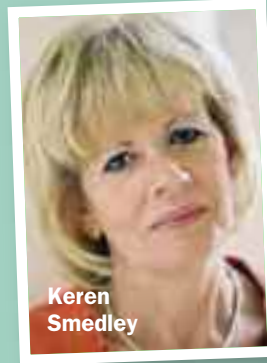


How To Love The Age You Are!



Keren Smedley

Keren Smedley, author of *Who's that Woman in the Mirror?* is here to tell you how to embrace your age...

The majority of us have passed a mirror or shop window, caught a glimpse of ourselves and thought, "That's not possible! That looks more like my mother or my auntie. That can't be me!" And then we hurry home, completely determined to take ourselves in hand.

Caught unawares, we often seem completely shocked by how we look. We don't marry how we feel inside with the stark reality. And, if we feel 45 but actually look 62, inevitably we feel disappointed. So how do

we make sure that our internal vision of ourselves matches approximately the world's view of us? It's a problem definitely worth addressing.

Most of us think, as we always have, that inside feelings don't age but bodies do. We tend to forget this and therefore assume that our feelings, concerns and unstoppable drive for life don't tally with being 50 or 60 and therefore we can't possibly look our age. But that begs the ultimate question – why do most of us mind looking 50 or 60 and is it only OK to

look 20? Of course it's not!

However, it's extremely hard not to be seduced into this type of thinking. We're continually bombarded by glamorous adverts and numerous slick TV shows that happily tell us that we should aim to look 10 or even 20 years younger. This negative way of thinking does none of us any favours. What's wrong with looking your actual age and embracing who you really are?

Recently, someone asked me if today's 50 is the new 30. I replied, "No, it's the new 50!"

We baby boomers are doing it differently from how our parents dealt with their 50s and 60s. Forget trying to look like someone younger; instead, try to celebrate how great you look for the age you are.

It's too easy to look back at our past through rose-tinted glasses and hanker after a time when we imagined we looked effortlessly lovely. Anyway, as you know by looking at old photographs, this is almost certainly not the case. So, forget about the past and concentrate on the world as it is.

Focus on your good points whenever you're having a bad day



Self-help Exercise

A good way to get rid of any of those past fantasies is to indulge in an exercise called Photo Gazing

- Gather together some photographs of yourself at different ages. Ideally, there should be five-year gaps between each.
- Study how you looked at different stages of your life. What did your face look like? Did all the hairstyles honestly suit you? What about your hair colour and your make-up? Now, as dispassionately as possible, ask yourself which styles and colours suit you best.
- Make a list of three good points and



three not-so-special ones for each decade up to the present day. Focus on every feature – your teeth, your long eyelashes, your bright eyes, your fantastic smile, etc.

- Be sure to note that, even in your youth, you had bits you didn't actually like. Now discard the not-so-special list – you don't need it!
- Focus on the list of your good points whenever you're feeling low in confidence or you're having a bad hair day. And don't feel ashamed about keeping the list in your handbag so that you can refer to it at will and remind yourself that you're actually doing OK.
- Accentuating the positive is the only course of action – it won't just make you feel happier, it will also make you healthier.



Enjoy who you really are



5 WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- 1** If you've found things you don't like about the way you look, flick through magazines and begin to create a realistic vision of how you would like to look. Take pictures with you when you next go for a haircut/makeover.
- 2** Clothes are important. Take a look at your wardrobe. Are you still wearing the same style as you did at 25? Try to select outfits that enhance your shape today and your colouring.
- 3** It's essential to keep fit and try to stay at a sensible weight.
- 4** Keep abreast of what's going on and show interest in young and old people.
- 5** Like yourself both internally and externally. I'm proud of my wrinkles – they show that I've lived a bit and loved a lot and that I'm ready for more of the same!



Accentuating the positive is the only course of action



Who's that Woman in the Mirror? The Art Of Ageing Gracefully, Headline Springboard, £14.99. Keren runs a consultancy,

Experience Matters, that specialises in motivating and energising women over 50 to maintain peak performance. They offer free membership and you can visit them at www.experiencematters.org.uk or ☎ 0208 347 6260.