



## THE WILDCAT WAY TO WELLNESS

### Looking Great...Feeling Good

Nutritious food and a generous helping of exercise are essential elements to healthy well-being. However, *feeling good* is more than food, exercise, and a healthy body. It's a state of mind. It's a total body experience. It's being both what we want to be and the way we want the world to know us. And, believe it or not, personal appearance has a very important role to play in feeling good. What follows are essential CATSkills to *Looking Great . . . Feeling Good*.

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#### Clothing Communicates

The clothing we wear serves many purposes. It's easy to see how a parka with a drawstring hood can provide warmth on a cold, windy day and a loose-fitting white jersey can be a shield from the blistering summer sun. But have you thought about clothing as a language?

Clothing is a major form of non-verbal communication. The clothes we select and wear each day tell a story about who we are and how we feel. The importance of clothes is why so much attention is given to how politicians dress while campaigning and why other public figures dress carefully for special events. Our clothing choices tell others about us—how we feel about and see ourselves or how we want others to see us. Sometimes the messages we send are accurate; sometimes they are false and misleading.

Clothing is a wonderful tool in many ways. Because it is a tool, we can manipulate multiple apparel items to present our body to best advantage regardless of its size, proportion, or dimension. We can begin by recognizing our physical assets and limitations. Once both assets and limitations are identified, the door is open to explore the many ways clothing can be used to conceal, camouflage, and/or create optical illusions.

And speaking of magic, clothing actually has magical powers! Not only can the right selection of apparel make you *look great* physically, but clothing has a way of making you *feel good*. Think about that special outfit you wore and the compliments you received. Didn't that lift your spirits? Wearing a favorite color or a special clothing item can definitely put a smile on your face and improve your outlook. Clothing *is* a well-established attitude adjuster. It can make your

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entire day look either bright or just ho-hum. Furthermore, the right clothing can help project a winning self.

Through the ages, researchers have continued to verify that clothing is significant to individuals of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. Maybe this is why clothing is often referred to as a second skin. In certain circumstances, clothing may seem to be the only remaining item over which an individual maintains some control or choice—for example, an elderly individual confined to a nursing home or hospital bed could still make choices about what to wear. Regardless of our situation, clothing can help us maintain a sense of dignity and personal pride.

### **Appearance Does Make a Difference**

From the beginning of time, physical attractiveness has scored a lot of points—on and off the field and court. What is *attractive* is set and regulated by both our friends and associates (our social circle) and our environment (our culture). The image or symbol of attractiveness changes from time to time, sometimes from generation to generation. Beauty may be only skin deep, but advertisements historically have told us that having beauty goes a long way toward achieving happiness. Regardless of how you view the importance of attractiveness or beauty, a good physique and a nice-looking body are important cultural symbols to young and old alike in most parts of the world.

Clothing can certainly transform the physical body. However, personal appearance is more than the clothing we wear. It also includes grooming and personal hygiene, cosmetics, hairstyle and color, any body mutilation (tattoos, piercings, etc.), and mannerisms. Managing our appearance is an important part of who we are. It makes a visual statement about how we view ourselves, our lives, and the world we live in.

Our understanding and interpretation of the visual statements we send and receive are molded by our beliefs and customs. These beliefs and customs are frequently passed down from generation to generation within the family or community. Even with verbal communication, we may all hear the same words but receive different messages. Miscommunication can and does take place. Making judgments on limited information can be troublesome. However, being aware that communication takes place through clothing and personal appearance is an important realization.

As with clothing, culture plays an important role in personal appearance. Acceptable practices in some parts of the world are unacceptable or take on different meanings in other places. For example, in some parts of the world “respectable” women do not wear pants. In our culture, it is commonplace for women to wear pants. As international travel and multicultural relationships increase, so does our need to recognize and respect the clothing and personal appearance habits of others.

## Taking Charge of Your Image

There is no time like the present to take control of your personal image! Let's explore some steps to building a personal image profile:

### **Level 1: Become Image Aware**

Begin by becoming more aware of your clothing and personal appearance every day. Your wardrobe and appearance choices are a reflection of who you are or want others to see. Do you know what impressions you are conveying to others?

### **Level 2: Make Necessary Decisions**

Come to grips with who you are. Do you like what you see in the mirror? Do you really know how people view you? Maybe it's time to find out. Decide either to accept what you see and what you are communicating through dress and appearance or decide to make some changes.

If changes are in order, they can be actual (lose 10 pounds) or perceived (use clothing and hair-style to give the illusion of a slimmer body). Keep in mind that some physical body changes are just not possible, such as growing 2 inches in height. However, through the magical power of clothing and appearance tools, nothing is impossible!

### **Level 3: Tackle the Task**

Make up your mind to tackle the task at hand. Seek out information about various clothing lines, designs, colors, and textures from your county Extension agent.

Ask someone you trust and feel comfortable with to help you analyze your wardrobe to determine what your clothing says about you. This wardrobe analysis could be a good activity for you to do with a group of close friends, but maybe you would feel better doing it with someone you don't know very well. You decide!

If your clothing and personal appearance are not saying what you want them to say, discover what you can do to make the necessary changes. Make some adjustments and do a trial run. Some image changes may require behavior modification to correct a mannerism, such as playing with your hair. Others may take a great deal of self-control—for example, forcing yourself to smile and make eye contact with persons to whom you are talking.

### **Level 4: Salute Yourself**

Regardless of what changes or adjustments you make, it may take time to make the changes and become comfortable with the new you. Individuals approach change differently. Some want to move one step at a time; others want to accomplish changes all at once. You decide what is best for you, keeping in mind that these changes are something you are doing for yourself.

Any image changes you make, whether with your wardrobe or your personal appearance, must be adjustments you *feel good* about! These modifications are designed to help you become the person you want to be and to communicate that image to yourself and others through dress and personal appearance.

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  2. Make Necessary Decisions
  3. Tackle the Task
  4. Salute Yourself
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## Scoring Success

Success is becoming all you can be. It's not being rich and famous, having a locker room filled with clothes, or developing the perfect body. It's making the most of who you are and what you have! Image can go a long way toward helping each of us achieve success. If we believe we look good, we feel better about ourselves. We are more self-confident and more in control. As we become more self-confident, we relate more positively to the world around us. As your self-image improves, so does your self-esteem!

## Wildcat Wisdom about Looking Great...and Feeling Good:

- C** stands for
  - Clothing Comfort
  - Creating Your Style
  - Copious Color
- A** stands for
  - Accentuate the Positive
  - Accessorize
  - Accept Yourself
- T** stands for
  - Take Time to Learn
  - Texture Is Timeless
  - Try Something New
- S** stands for
  - Scale to Your Body
  - Shape to Silhouette
  - Smile and Enjoy



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