

Real body confidence has little to do with shape or grooming

By Carol Westmorland



HAVING two identical sisters gives me an unfair advantage. It allows me to have an honest view of myself.

I can see that unlike my sister Joanne I am not particularly groomed, however hard I try.

I simply acknowledge that I choose to spend a lot of time outdoors which plays havoc with my hair. I can, when I want to, brush up okay.

I can also see that unlike my sister Gillian, and indeed Joanne for that matter, I will never be as curvaceous. We are all guilty of looking around and thinking in one of two ways. We either throw a negative spin on it or, as I do, think 'good for them' and acknowledge that everyone has something special to offer.

Real body confidence has little to do with shape or grooming. Take a look around you, notice who catches your eye.

The chances are that the person has an inner confidence that manifests in the way they hold themselves.

Changing the way you hold yourself can instantly change the way people see you. Stooped shoulders and slumped posture speaks volumes. It can't help but be a sign that your self image is in need of improvement.

Simply by holding yourself better you can deliver a massive confidence boost and create a good impression at the same time. Your body is a clever machine.

By practising simple awareness techniques you can soon train your body into good habits.

It is also recognised that you can look 10lbs lighter just by standing up straight and drawing in your abdominals. If that's not



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an incentive then what is?

Being guilty of wearing high heels or sitting with your legs crossed can misalign your spine and pelvis. Having a lift in your step and a swing from your hips requires ease.

I can't bear wearing shoes that don't allow me to walk with a purpose. I'm rubbish at sauntering and much prefer being able to move when the urge takes me.

Why invest in fabulous clothes and not on how you wear them?

Years of Pilates have trained my body to perform with only good posture.

Pilates focuses on the deepest abdominal muscles, strengthening you from the inside out, creating

an inner strength that says 'no' to bad posture.

Wonder whether you have an active middle?

A simple rock from side to side, whilst lying down, can test your balance and is more difficult than it sounds.

You will try to stabilise from your shoulders, which lifts your head and invariably locks your jaw!

Working on your posture can also help you avoid back pain: an estimated 75 per cent of the UK population suffer from back problems at some point, often caused by bad posture.

A new study by the American College of Sports Medicine says that two key Pilates moves – the

Hundred and the Double-Leg Stretch – are highly effective at working the deep abdominal muscles which support the spine.

To create positive posture stretch up to your full height, bring your shoulders back and down, arch your back slightly and make sure your weight is evenly divided on both feet.

I teach clients to stick headlights on their hipbones (not literally, of course!) don't allow them to dip or dazzle just keep them evenly ahead. It works.

We all have a duty to work with our body. We must not force our body or restrict our lives around it.

What we should do is embrace what we have and improve upon

it. At 5ft 5 inches I have a low body fat of around 16 per cent but my resting weight is approximately 130 pounds. I carry a lot of muscle. I also have an almighty appetite. I will never count calories. I simply stay active.

There is an enormous industry out there hanging on our insecurity.

Most people do one of two things – watch their food intake carefully and neglect to exercise regularly, or else they go to the gym consistently but fail to follow a healthy diet.

The two things should never be exclusive.

You will not be able to enjoy exercising if you are running on empty and equally an undernourished and weak body is not attractive.

Finding the happy medium is the answer.

To be able to enjoy exercising you need enough fuel to energise and being strong and in good shape makes you glow with health.

It's a fact that the average 35 year old loses half a pound of muscle every year.

Performing Pilates encourages the body to lift its own weight therefore strengthening the muscles supporting the joints.

Pilates is not about taking the easy option. It is not easy to lift your own body weight. Practice makes perfect and frequency leads to skill.

A toned body runs at its fat-burning best even when at rest. What's more, if you swap 3lb of body fat for 3lbs of muscle you can afford to eat an extra 300 kcals a day without gaining weight and I can't help but think that you would have to be fairly foolish not to take advantage of that.

Further information from www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk

Camping on the wild side differs to the campsite

SINCE I wrote about wild camping in last month's Active Cumbria, several people have asked me how it differs from pitching your tent on a campsite.

It would be easier to list the similarities - you use basically the same equipment; and both activities enable you to sleep outdoors. But even these are only half-true. When you're carrying all your gear on your back, you can forget those little luxuries you normally throw in the back of the car when you pack for a camping trip - gone are the foldaway chairs and the huge, inflatable mattress; it's down to the basics now.

And the 'outdoors' of a

Guidebook writer **VIVIENNE CROW** shares her love of the great outdoors



campsite with snoring neighbours and the occasional passing car is a world away from the 'outdoors' you'll experience on the fells, with nothing but the sound of the breeze to disturb you and no light pollution to spoil your view of the stars.

After our first wild camp of the year back in May, my partner and I managed another one when the weather started warming up again in July.

With our homes on our backs,

we set off at about 5pm, just as most walkers were heading home for the evening.

A few people asked if we had far to go and were surprised to hear we weren't heading for a campsite. To most walkers, the concept of pitching in the wilds is totally alien, something they'd never even considered; but you can see their eyes light up when you tell them where you're hoping to spend night.

The most important consideration for a wild camper is to find a water source. After three hours of slow ridge climbing in sultry, overcast conditions, we reached the pools we'd spotted on the map. 'Pools' is maybe

pushing it; they turned out to be no more than bog - no good for drinking.

Tired and hungry and with the light beginning to fade, we went in search of water and eventually found a tiny beck - emerging crystal clear from the mossy ground.

After some more reconnoitring, we pitched our flysheet on a flat, grassy ledge, boiled some water and then tucked into rehydrated curry while, across the next valley, red deer stags made that eerie noise they make - like a cross between a cow and a motorbike, if you can imagine that.

The sky was grey and miserable - there was no sign of the rosy

sunset I'd been hoping for - but the peace and solitude more than made up for the weather.

The next day we woke to a brilliant dawn - the sun bringing out the very best colours in the landscape. I like to think I know the fells pretty well - and I've experienced them in all sorts of conditions - but I literally saw them in a new light that morning.

Packing up our gear and making sure we'd left no trace of our night's stay, we were up and away before most walkers were even having their breakfasts down in the valleys. It meant we had the tops to ourselves for several hours - a rare treat on a sunny July day.