

Working with *Mother Nature...*



MK Pulse's image consultant, *Nancy Stevens*, set up Altered Image seven years ago. One of the reasons for doing so was that she suffered from body dysmorphia and had extremely low self esteem and did not want others to go through the heartache of looking in the mirror and not liking what they saw.

Welcome to my bi-monthly column, I'm Nancy Stevens and I have been running Altered Image since 2003. I basically do what that Gok bloke does on the telly, except I'm very girly and not at all camp. I demonstrate how some **Colours** can make you look like you have been to St Tropez and those which make you look like you have been to Bognor! **Wardrobe Magic**, firstly assessing your shape and working with what Mother Nature gave you and then learning to mix and match your clothes, how to accessorize, and if necessary, a **Wardrobe Weed. Personal Shopping** to take the pain out of shopping where you will have your clothes pre-selected to be tried on in the privacy of your own fitting room and lastly a **skincare and makeup lesson**. Have a peek at my website for more info.

www.alteredimagemk.co.uk

My clients are all shapes and sizes ranging from size 6-26 and like most women all have some sort of body issues. My curvier ladies always say to me when booking an appointment, "I really want to wear nice clothes but want to lose weight first." I then stop them in their tracks by saying, "It is not about size, it is about acceptance of yourself and once you have had your colours done, been shown which styles suit your body shape, it will be so much easier." Like Gok, I don't tell my clients to go on a diet but we work with what is already there, making the best of the good bits and hiding the bad bits! Don't wait for that supposed magical day when you think you are going to be the perfect size 8,

enjoy life NOW, and let's get some new and wonderful clothes. Which leads nicely onto my next subject: THE SALES!!!

What is it about 'Sales' that we have some sort of rationale bypass? We have all bought clothes for the wrong reasons: it was a bargain, a nice colour, I will get into it one day, it might go with an item of clothing that has been lurking so far back in your wardrobe it's like Narnia in there. All except the fact that it may actually suit you and you will get maximum usage out of it, it is only a bargain, if you are going to get lots of wear out of it! Before embarking on a trip to the sales, go through your wardrobe with a fine toothcomb (or give me a call to help you), have a cathartic clear out, throw anything away that has not been worn for the last year, then decide what is missing and needs to be replaced, then write a list and go prepared. Don a comfortable pair of shoes, leave your coat behind (it will just be an encumbrance), take a sensible amount of cash with you – so that you are not in danger of overspending and spend wisely. See you in the Spring! □

Nancy xx



Beyond Retro
Perfect pink
vintage 2-piece
1940s suit with
velvet collar £45,
from a selection

Ask Nancy

"I am a 40 something woman who has just gone back to work after having a baby later on in life and have discovered that my shape has changed drastically and I have lost an awful lot of confidence. Secondly, what do people wear to the office now? I really don't know where to begin." *Kate M in Loughton*

Firstly, let me say welcome back to the land of the working woman and you will be glad to know that there IS life after babies and rest assured your brain has not turned to mush. Office etiquette has indeed evolved over the past decade as one would have expected and the rules have relaxed. No longer is it acceptable/appropriate to don the boring black suit from NEXT with the white shirt which only serves to make you look like a waitress. Colour IS acceptable now and the perception that it is not professional is no longer the case. People respond in a very positive way to colour and this will serve to make you feel better and really does have a knock-on effect. It is worth investing in buying a suit which encompasses a dress, skirt, trousers, waistcoat and jacket, this way you really can mix and match. Warehouse was doing some fabulous 1940s inspired suits with nipped in waists. Different ways to wear said suit: dress with long sleeved T-shirt underneath, with a patent belt and boots, skirt with crisp wrap around shirt and killer courts, trousers with waistcoat, pussy bow blouse to feminise it. A cashmere mix coat and leather boots will finish off your winter work wardrobe. Have a makeup lesson, not only will it update your look, make you feel better but women that wear makeup to work are 35% more likely to be promoted than those who don't.

Your shape – please, please, please accept that your shape will have changed and it is only celebrities and WAGS who manage to spring back into shape after giving birth in a suspiciously short space of time. Ascertain where your 'problem' area is and buy the appropriate underwear. Firstly, be measured for a bra and if you think you are over a C Cup, then pop into Bravissimo and this will transform your shape instantly. Eighty percent of women are wearing the wrong bra and nothing will get you more compliments than the "have you lost weight?" comments you will receive when you are wearing the right bra. If you are no longer sporting a six pack (and who wants to look like Madonna anyway (so ageing, darling?), magic knickers are the only way forward. The worst thing you can do is to put yourself under extreme pressure and not enjoy those first few precious years of being a mother.

I do hope that this has helped, Kate, and I look forward to an update in six months time!

If you have any fashion conundrums or issues you would like some help with, please email me at nancy.stevens@alteredimagemk.co.uk or visit my website www.alteredimagemk.co.uk