

Is beauty dressing haute couture? Just being fit and healthy? Desperately trying to cling to your youth in the twilight of your life? From the time a little girl stretches on her tiptoes to get a peek in the mirror, she desires to be beautiful. As the girl moves into the teen years, she experiments with makeup, delves into fashion, and attempts various hairstyles. Soon it's on to makeover ideas in magazines and on talk shows. Pick any magazine catering to teenagers or the men and women of the world, you will find pages and pages selling them clothes, shoes, bags, cosmetics, jewelry all giving a subtle message that you are not beautiful enough without them. Moreover, we have been brainwashed by the media, and the salesmen of the 'beauty industry', that shallow, naturally impossible surface beauty created by surgery, lighting and air brushing of photographs is the beauty which we should strive for, but the fact remains that this surface beauty is an illusion, it is not real.

They say 'beauty is skin deep', but the reality is 'Beauty' is something that lasts forever, it comes from within us. The heart is the centre of our being. It is what is within our heart and soul, which radiates from us and is projected to the world. People are always drawn to those who are beautiful, their inner beauty radiating through the warmth in their eyes and the brilliance of their smile. Here are a few suggestions guaranteed to a beautiful 'you'.

- ***Inculcate a positive attitude and be grateful***

A positive attitude helps cope with the daily affairs of life. One is able to see the bright side of life and expect the best to happen. It brings optimism; helps make constructive life changes, resulting in more happiness and success. It is certainly a state of mind that is well worth developing and strengthening. Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, confusion to order, perplexity to clarity. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. Gratitude is healing soothing and exhilarating.

- ***Be authentic and real.***

Authentic people know their roots, their heritage, and their history. They remember where they came from; retain that knowledge and those values. Being real or being you are important on all occasions. It takes a lot of courage and audacity to be authentic. Sometimes we get so engrossed in our pretenses and deceit that we forget who the real ‘self’ is. This is a dangerous web which we spin and get tangled in. When there is no veil between your true nature and the perception of it and you are the same on the outside as well as inside, it’s liberating and empowering. Living outside of your own authenticity is never pretty.

- ***Smile***

Nothing is more attractive than a genuine charming smile. It creates a lasting impression and helps people remember you. Smiling helps prevent from looking tired, worn down, and overwhelmed. While smiling the muscles we use lifts the face, giving it a youthful appearance. It helps the immune system to work better as you are more relaxed. Studies have shown that smiling releases endorphins, natural pain killers, and serotonin. Together these three act as a natural feel good drug. Moreover smiling is contagious. It is the language of love spoken around the world. A smile is a window to your soul.

- ***Release judgments and criticism***

Keep your heart open, look beyond masks and faces people wear and see the spark of the spirit that resides in each human being. No one is perfect. Realize that each person has their set of weakness and faults, just as they have their skills and strengths. This combination is what makes each human being unique. Acknowledge that all of us are doing the best we can, imperfect though our actions may be. Forgive yourself and others for their mistakes – be compassionate and understanding. Accept the fact that people will have opinions about you, which could change with times, so don’t be flattered or get stressed about any verdicts concerning you. Speak with kindness and communicate from the heart and soul. This will create a beautiful balance of calmness and serenity which will glow from within.

- ***Pamper your body and tend to your spirit.***

Nourish your body with good healthy food, fresh fruits, vegetables and plenty of water. Exercise in any form that is comfortable and gives you pleasure. Surprise and pamper yourself with an occasional massage, hair treatment or pedicure. If you feel confident about your appearance you radiate confidence in all your interactions on all occasions. Tend to your spirit by connecting to the divine spiritually. Meditate, pray, breathe, just be 'quite' and connect to the divinity within you. Along with your money, donate your time and knowledge to those who are not blessed with the good things you have in life. This helps illuminate the bright shiny light within you.

- ***Learn to manage your relationships***

Subconsciously, we are so used to relating in ways designed to get attention that we are unaware that most of our relationships have reduced to mere transactions. Do not indulge in "blame games" when it comes to addressing problems in your relationships. Be honest about the things that you have said or done that harmed the relationship. Own up to your own failures. Focus on changing your defeating patterns rather than expecting changes from the other person. Give every relationship more than your 100 % but also recognize that not all relationships are meant to last forever. Sometimes, the most responsible thing you can do is to offer love and compassion to the person as you release the relationship. Our emotional clutter defeats our life purpose, depriving us from connecting with our inner self. The deftness lies in building awareness to confront those elements, sort out and retain what is important and let go of the rest. If you can learn to make this separation in your life and love unconditionally, you will begin to notice a new calmness as you go through your days.

- ***Affirm your inner beauty and respect yourself***

Make positive statements of affirmation to yourself. Look in the mirror every day and say, "I approve of myself. I am valuable. I am beautiful. I am loving and lovable. I am abundant." Say them. BELIEVE them. Curb your desire for the social acceptance and spending. The common myth of equating money with social acceptance and happiness can deteriorate into an ostensible desire to amass material junk to keep up with the others. Happiness is your 'right' therefore do not place any conditions on being happy. Learn to be frugal, take pride in who you are and not in

what you wear or possess. Engage in work and hobbies that you are passionate about, this will contentment and a peaceful symbiosis in life.

We spend most of our existence like a caterpillar, struggling to survive, thinking of our instant needs and gratification. When we live with our souls, we are like a butterfly, gliding above the ground and enjoying the reality of the world. Metamorphosis of the soul is never an easy thing. It involves letting go of self, allowing disintegration, reassessment, refocusing, re-establishing, and finally embracing ourselves in the process. True beauty is not superficial or skin deep, it has substance, is eternal and illuminates from within.

Dr. Farida Virani

Faculty, Consultant & Corporate Trainer - HRM and Education