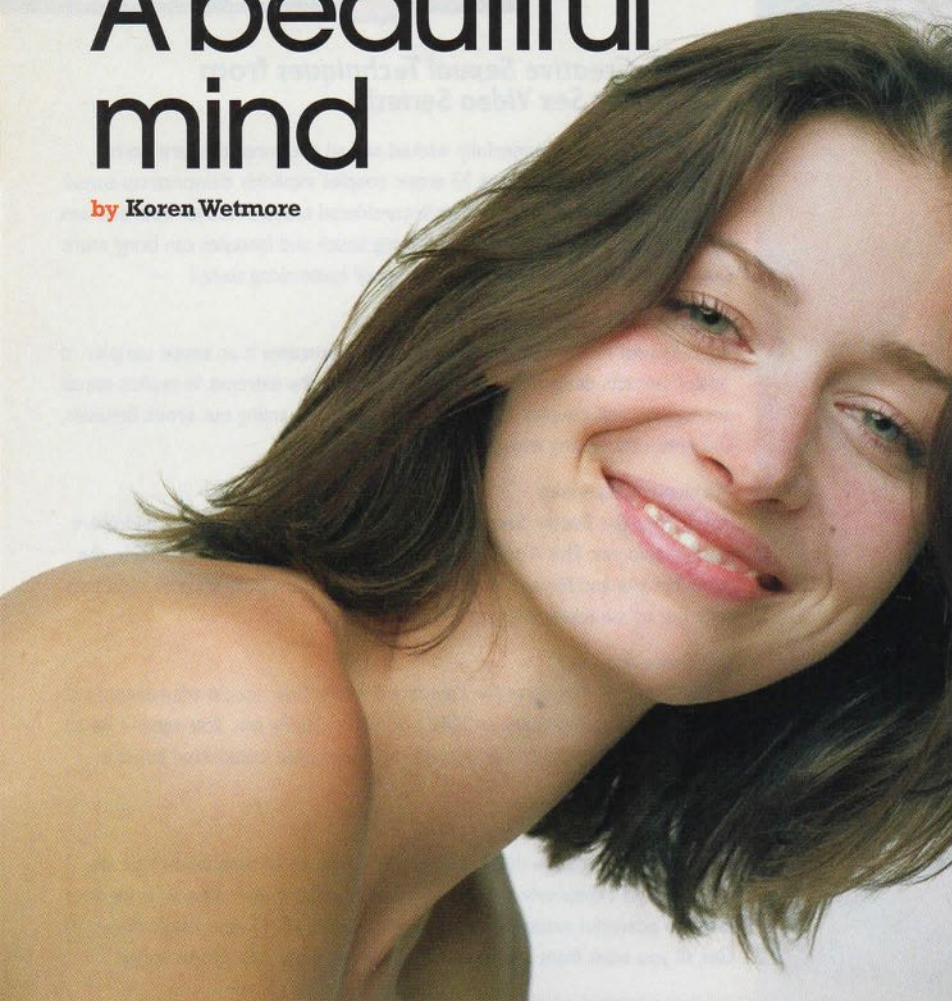


A beautiful mind

by Koren Wetmore



You can be the most breathtaking woman in any room — no makeup required.

You're headed off to work when you notice a blemish on your chin and an unruly crop of hair, and the thought hits: Man, I look bad today. At the office, that flirty fellow in marketing now acts like you don't exist. Even the sandwich guy dashes away.

After work you hit the gym and emerge sweaty and disheveled but feeling strong. Suddenly every male within 10 feet is looking admiringly your way. What's going on?

Just a little mind over matter.

"We tend to think that beauty is fueled by physical appearance, but 99 percent

comes from within a woman," says life coach Victoria Moran, author of *Lit From Within: A Simple Guide to the Art of Inner Beauty*. "When you think you're terrific and on top of things, you stand up tall. If you're feeling unworthy, you'll hunch over, and you'll look heavier, older and even like you have less money."

In fact your thoughts control everything from how you dress and groom to how you talk and act. Release your inner diva today by following these steps to managing your mind.

Affirm Your Value

When you look in the mirror, do you focus on every flaw? Or, do you notice the radiance of your eyes, the warmth of your smile? If all you can see are deficiencies, you'll diminish your perceived value. And a woman who doesn't value herself, doesn't care for herself, Moran says. "When you decide that you're beautiful, you treat yourself differently," Moran says. "It's like finding out those dishes you bought at a garage sale are worth \$10,000. You're going to take better care of them. The same thing happens when you elevate your own worth."

Try this: Look in a mirror and say to yourself out loud, "I'm beautiful and lovable." Repeat as needed.

State Your Strengths

You could be blessed with great cheekbones and still act and feel dowdy if you fail to connect with your strengths, skills and talents. Remind yourself often of the things you do well. "Become aware of your own desires and abilities rather than scanning your environment for cues about who you think you should be," says body image expert Carolyn Enns, Ph.D., psychology chair at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa. "Acknowledging any kind of strength is a starting point. It's a way of transcending your physical appearance."

Try this: List your accomplishments and tape them to your bathroom mirror. Read them every day. Add to the list when you accomplish something new.

Nix the Negative

Just because you thought it, doesn't mean you have to believe it. When a negative thought like "I'm fat," pops up, say to yourself "cancel" then "clear." Now replace that negative with a positive statement such as "I maintain a healthy weight." Repeat your positive statements often enough, and your mind and your appearance will eventually conform to create that reality.

Try this: Come up with a positive mantra such as "I look great in these jeans!" to repeat to yourself today when a negative body image thought pops in your head.

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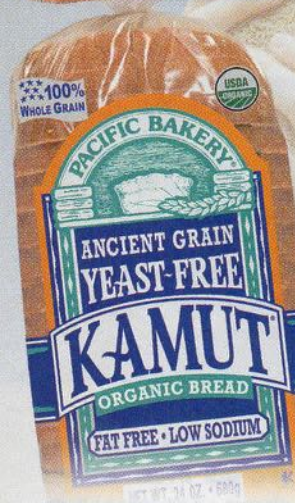
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Tap Your Passion

Do what you love and you'll think, feel and look beautiful. Whether it's playing piano, gardening or riding bareback on your favorite horse, connecting with your passion releases your childlike spirit. You remember her — the girl who doesn't worry about dishes, dollars or deadlines. "Women by nature are creative spirits, but schedules and responsibilities can get in the way," says Debbie Mandel, author of *Turn on Your Inner Light: Fitness for Body, Mind and Soul*. "When a woman taps into her creativity and passion she discovers her true identity before she became a wife, mother or caregiver. Creativity makes us unique."

Try this: Schedule personal time. Block out an hour of "creative time" at least once a week where you can delve into any passion you choose.

Be Real

Stop trying to be Angelina Jolie or the latest cover model. Trying to live up to some outer ideal, especially a non-realistic one, will constantly leave you feeling "less than" and out of touch with your own beauty. "The huge number of images of physically perfect women that exist in our culture can have a very negative effect, especially on people

whose bodies do not naturally conform to those images," says Enns. "Women compare themselves to these images and start to almost live outside of their bodies, thus losing a kind of zest for living." Maintain your sparkle by getting in touch with — and being — the real you.

Try this: Don't keep up with any celebrity gossip for a week. You might be surprised how much free time you have to concentrate on you. (You also might be surprised how conscious you become of how much other people talk about celebrities!)

Stay Balanced

Beauty also requires balance. Overworking, overscheduling and stressing out will drain your self-confidence and vitality. Be sure to get plenty of sleep, reduce stress and keep a balanced schedule. "No matter how much makeup a woman puts on, it will never compensate for good health and energy," says Mandel.

Try this: Say no. If you're supposed to bake cookies for the Girl Scout troop, have two looming deadlines at work and need to clean the house for your in-laws' visit this weekend, it's OK to turn down requests from others. If you don't take on more than you can handle, your stress level will be easier to control.

Appreciation 101

One of the best ways to reclaim true beauty in yourself is to affirm it in those around you. "You'll be paying it forward, and before you know it a trend is set," says Debbie Mandel, author of *Turn on Your Inner Light: Fitness for Body, Mind and Soul*. Use these three steps to start a beauty-building chain reaction in your circle of women:

1 Cultivate Awareness

Choose to alter your perception of beauty. Pay attention to the women you see every day, including those years older, and look past the weight or wrinkles to recognize the kindness in their eyes or the wisdom of their words.

2 Get an Inside View

Forget the physical, and focus on the soul-level of your friends and coworkers. Instead of complimenting your friend on how thin she is, comment on her intelligence, creativity or loyalty.

3 Reinforce the Message

Say your affirming words out loud to help you and the women around you to challenge the cultural images of beauty and develop your own diva definition.