

Individual Expression Is In the Eye of the Beholder

By Karel Murray

Individual expression should be monitored for taste guidelines. Recently, I've been subjected to an incredible array of outfits, hair styles and personal habits that are staggering in their obvious lack of enhancing positive attributes. Now, I'm not an expert nor am I paid to make these observations... however, I feel compelled to discuss just a few examples of what I perceive to be poor judgment in dress. Do I always dress perfectly... not on your life. In fact, often my husband shutters at the combination of tops and slacks I manage to throw together. Thankfully, he places a kind hand on my shoulder and urges me back to the closet to make a better choice. Bless that man.

I just don't understand the lure of wearing shirts and pants that are obviously two or more sizes too small. Every cellulite dimple, side roll and goose bump patterns the garment like a relief map. Determining what type of underwear the person has chosen that day isn't hard... the label is easy to read! The outfit itself is usually forgettable. What impresses me is how they can even breathe much less bend over without splitting a seam or popping off a button that is bound to rocket across the room endangering everyone in it.

The thought of exposing my non-slim waist to any on-looker absolutely makes me shudder. However, I have had to endure the unpleasant view of substantially overweight women who are wearing cut off tops with low slung pants, leaving their bouncing waistlines exposed. Now I know there are varying levels of attraction in this world in terms of what people like in the human body, but can't it be displayed in the privacy of their own home? This also goes for those women who feel that sexiness is equivalent to extreme levels of undress (4 inch long skirts and deeply exposed cleavage). What happened to the thought that the mind and engaging personality can be sexy? Oh well, it's our culture's loss.

Quite frankly, the trend of body art intrigues me. Young and old are visiting tattoo parlors and having artwork permanently engraved on their bodies. Images of skeletons, rose petals, abstract designs, dragons and angels all have a message that obviously mean something to the wearer.

I worry about a few simple things...like...what if the tattoo artist isn't any good or is having a bad day? What if the tiger you selected turns out looking like a cartoon version instead of the ferocious predator you had in mind? You can't erase it easily... Also, why do so many individuals put their tattoos in places they can't see them without extreme effort – for instance on their shoulders and lower

backs? If I went through that much discomfort, I'd want to enjoy the view without cranking my head around reminiscent of famous scene from "The Exorcist"! Why do older tattoos all look blue? Where did the color go? Do you have to buy clothes that don't clash with the designs on your arms and legs? Is there any etiquette pertaining to that?

I saw a program on A&E a couple of years ago profiling tattoo artists and the work that they do. One woman recovering from a double mastectomy decided that she wanted a halter top with flowing medieval designs across her front, shoulders and back. The result was stunningly beautiful. Her body no longer looked deformed. Instead the design of the tattoo gave the illusion of feminine assets still intact. I marvel at the artistry and the options available to us. We just need to choose carefully. Would I ever get a tattoo? Yes, if I could ever get over the fact of injecting a toxic ink into my skin and having a design become distorted as I gained or lost weight. I just don't think it would be prudent for me.

Frequently, I walk behind and past young men who wear baggy pants that threaten to drop down to their ankles. The hitching type walk is unique to this mode of dress... two steps, a lurch, yank up the pants, and kick out the feet to avoid stepping on the hem. If I put it to music, it might be quite captivating. I especially enjoy watching them while they are talking on their cell phones and adjusting I Pods... hands are occupied and unable to make the modesty adjustments. At some point, I'm going to start taking bets on whether they can actually keep their pants up. It might be profitable. At the very least - entertaining.

I must be turning into too much of a "mother". You know, the type that wants to slick down a cowl lick or wipe a smudge off someone's cheek. Recently I was sitting next to a young male college student with blond hair. That in itself is not really unique. However, his bangs were so long, he had to hold his head sideways in order to talk to me. The sidelong swinging of his head threatened to become a permanent tick. I almost felt compelled to grab anything sharp and shorten the bangs so that he could sit upright.

Just what is fashionable? Last week I walked past several stores that were displaying new blue jeans - except I could have sworn they were used. Shredded hems, holes at the thigh and knees definitely announced that ruined jeans were now "In"! Huh... paying good money for pants we used to throw away.

Life, fashion, and personal expression will always hold wonder for me. I'll just keep watching and noting the trends. But seriously, if you ever feel I've crossed the line in terms of how I dress...please let me know. You would be doing those who have to look at me a favor. And for that, I would be grateful!

Karel Murray, a national motivational humorist and business trainer is the author of Straight Talk: Getting Off the Curb (a book co-authored with KC Lundberg), Think Forward!® (a monthly e-newsletter with over 4,200+ subscribers), The Profitability Blueprint Series: Career Building Concepts for the Real Estate Licensee and numerous articles in local, regional, and national publications. You can contact her at karel@karel.com or call 866-817-2986 or access her web site at <http://www.karel.com>