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Handbook for Women with Visual Impairment - 10.

GROOMING AND MAKE UP: EMBARKING ON BEAUTIFICATION JOURNEY

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Proper grooming and judicious make-up skills play a significant part in mainstreaming visually impaired girls/women. To actually be able to present a capable image and to project your true qualities to the seeing world, sound education and good etiquette must be coupled with acceptable and appropriate appearance. A person is largely judged by appearance. A pleasant and appealing appearance makes others look at you twice in appreciation and your other qualities get due attention too. Here are some useful tips. By paying attention to these you would be able to enhance your appearance and be a more confident and pleasing person. You would be more acceptable and gain many friends.

Appearance Makes an Impression:

A person with many talents but with simple looks 'plain Jane' can become more confident and popular among friends and relatives if she pays equal attention to her outer appearance that is her clothes, make up and personal hygiene. Outer appearance is equally important for a person to succeed.

Most blind girls/ women have within themselves ample substance to come at par with their sighted counterparts. They also strive hard to acquire all possible qualifications and skills yet when it is a question of a job or marriage, the preference usually goes in favour of sighted ladies. What is then the reason for their getting left behind and not being able to glide into the mainstream with ease? Where lies the gap?

Knowledge is Empowerment:

Being a reasonably successful visually impaired woman myself, I have tried to identify the skills needed to bridge the existing gap. A pleasing personality coupled with suitable qualifications will enable visually impaired women take their rightful place in mainstream society. Hence, the need for acquiring knowledge and information in this vital area, which would lead, ultimately, to effective empowerment.

Fashion is one thing and grooming plus make-up is altogether another. It is no use to go dressed in the height of fashion when you have unkempt hands with nail polish peeling off and a hair style that does not suit you.

Imagine going out with a red saree and a pink blouse with a maroon lipstick and a purple handbag? And to top it all you get behind yellow rimmed goggles! Nothing matches; it would be an utter chaos. So, observe fashion in the right proportion and to a desired extent only.

Personal Hygiene:

If you have unpleasant body odor and bad breath due to some reason, no amount of spraying deodorant or perfume can rid you of the same! I know there is a lot of advertisement about simply attaining freshness just by applying certain products, but there is more to this, we would be talking about in detail later. It is important to note that when unpleasant body odors mingle with cosmetics, it becomes even worse.

It is absolutely essential to follow basic rules of personal hygiene. A daily bath using soap is a must. Do not forget to scrub neck, feet, elbows and behind ears. The soap need not be an expensive one at all; ordinary bath soap will do just perfectly. Application of a deodorant or an antiperspirant / talc to keep foul smells at bay is advisable. For maximum effect, please apply these on the bare skin of your under arms and not on top of your clothes. I repeat: It is important to apply these deodorants only after washing the area (or properly bathing) with soap and water.

To successfully keep bad breath away, you must brush your teeth twice a day with a good toothbrush and regular toothpaste. The first thing in the morning should be brushing your teeth and the last thing before going to bed. And, in case it is possible, during the day, rinse your mouth with water after you have eaten or had any cold or hot drink. You must do this as many times as possible as it will keep the foul smelling bacteria away and keep your breath fresh and teeth healthy. You can also keep a mint chewing gum or some elaichi (green cardamom), handy to keep your mouth clean and breath smelling fresh.

There is nothing better than foul smells to put off any another human being. Wearing unwashed clothes or repeatedly wearing the same clothes for a few days continuously would exude repulsive stench.

Hair Care:

Hair needs to be kept clean and shining all the time. To achieve this, you need to cultivate a regular hair care regimen consisting of oiling, shampooing and combing/brushing. To derive the best results, oil your scalp and hair with the oil of your choice at least 30 minutes before washing and thereafter, use a mild shampoo to wash off the oil and dirt. While you are waiting to allow your hair soak in the oil, you can wrap a damp towel soaked in hot water around your head to help the oil to reach the roots of the hair for proper nourishment. You may use a good conditioner to give that extra bounce and shine to the hair.

It is a good idea to henna (mehendi) your hair regularly. In case henna suits you, it can take care of conditioning as well as protecting your hair. If henna is what you decide to use, you would need to soak it overnight in tea water with a teaspoon of fenugreek (methi) powder for better results. Monthly application of henna will do very well, with great results. If you have dandruff in your hair, you can try adding lemon juice or vinegar to the hair oil and use this to massage the scalp before washing it off with shampoo.

As the trends go today, hair colour is something that may sound most appealing to you. Well, it just may be the thing on your mind and you may fancy to either streak your hair with colour or you may even wish to change the colour of your hair altogether. Now, you would need to be careful with this one! Here it would be best if you could take the help and advice of your family /friends to locate the colour that will go best for your hair type and skin tone. You may also think of taking professional advice on this one. But, a word of caution;

consult more than one person for getting an honest feedback on the colour suitability for you. If you do decide to go for hair colour, you must follow the instructions mentioned on the label of the hair colour package and do the testing for reactions before going ahead.

Hair Style:

Before we move on, it is important we stop a moment and talk about hairstyle. Again there are fashionable haircuts, and please do not just go in for the one everyone is having done! You have to take into consideration various details before you discover the best style for your hair. The texture, thickness, colour, and the shape of your face and your height must be taken into account before you take a decision on the hairstyle you are going to wear. At times, the place where you are going to must be well thought-out, as different situations require you to present different looks. For example: it is not a good idea to wear flashy hair clips and ribbons in a professional setting. Here, you may like to tie your hair in a neat bun or use a very sober style. And, if you are going for a party, you may treat yourself with fancy clutches/clips, ribbons and glitter in your hair! It would be a better idea to take the advice of a hair stylist or even some friends and family members to choose the hairstyle that looks good on you.

Skin Care:

Let us begin with the skin of your face. Rule number one: without mention, the skin of your face must be kept clean. You can use plain soap, a packaged face wash or something out of your kitchen like gram flour / wheat flour mixed with a little milk / curd to wash your face. Before you decide on what you will use to wash your face with, spend some time and discover your skin type. Do you have an oily or a dry skin? Or is it that you have a normal skin type? Here is a tip on how you can test your skin type: the best time to test it would be the time when you wake up in the morning. Do not use any cream / moisturizer before you take this test, not even on the previous night and make sure you wash your face properly with soap / face wash before having gone to bed. Run your fingers over your face starting from the forehead (Please ensure your hands are washed and clean and your face has not yet been washed). Begin by running your fingers along the forehead and then down your cheeks. Then slide your fingers over your nose and chin. Notice the amount of oiliness you feel in each area. In case you find the entire face oily, you are a person with a highly oily skin type. And if the greasiness is only in the center of your face, (forehead, nose and chin), you have a fairly normal skin type. If you find no grease on your face, and your skin feels tight and dry, you are a person with a dry skin type. I repeat, please do not cream or oil your face the night previous to conducting this test on yourself, or else may not have a true picture.

Once you have determined your skin type, you will be in a good position to choose cosmetics and other skin care products for yourself. For people with dry skin, use a good skin cream and moisturizer for your face as often as you feel the dryness. Fresh cream from milk, olive oil or just plain home-made butter may be used at night to lavishly soften your skin. Remember, even though you have a dry skin, cleaning it is as important as it is for anyone else. You can use a soft moisturizing soap or gram flour (besan) mixed with milk to wash your face at least twice a day. You can use the same for bathing too.

If you have an oily skin, you need to be extra alert with your cleaning routine. Oily skin generally causes pimples to erupt on the face. You would need to wash your face many times a day using again a good soft soap or gram flour but you need not mix it with milk. Instead, just use plain water to make a paste out of the gram flour and gently scrub your skin with the mixture before rinsing it off. It is important to nourish the skin even if it is oily type. For this give yourself a face pack twice a week. Here is what you can do out of the kitchen: Mix together juice of one lemon, cucumber and some sandalwood powder along with a pinch of multani mitti. Mix well and apply on face and neck avoiding the area of eyes and lips. Leave to dry for 15 minutes and then rinse off with water. This will make your face look clean and help close the open pores. You can also use a face scrub once or twice a week to avoid pimples and blackheads.

A normal skin type also requires care: Again, washing and nourishing must be carried out regularly, two to three times a day. You can use a face wash or soft soap with moisturizer or gram flour and curd for the washing regimen. A normal face pack would be good for you. Mix together besan, mashed banana, pinch of sandal wood powder and rosewater. Apply the mixture over the face and neck avoiding the area around the eyes and lips and leave for 15 minutes before washing off with water. In summer you may like to give yourself a good ice treatment: simply rub an ice cube on the skin of your face for a minute or so and see the results.

There are many home recipes that can be used for improving the skin of your face. You can try different combinations and discover the one that suits your skin type best. But to have a glowing skin at all times, it is mandatory to drink at least 2 liters of water every day, at least 10 to 12 glasses without fail!

Using Make Up:

Now that you have learnt all about caring for your skin, I am sure you are eager to know how to get make up on. Well, just a moment, at all times remember a light touch of colour is all that you need if you have a naturally glowing complexion. It is not a good idea to paint your face with all the foundations and make up liquids available in the market. Judicious use of creams and lotions available in the market for the purpose is important. All that you may like to use is a sunscreen lotion to protect your naturally shining skin. You may like to keep a small compact powder case with you to wipe out the unnecessary oil during the day where it is not possible to wash it instead. But before you go out and buy your powder compact or foundation, (if you insist) it is mandatory to match it with the colour of your skin. You may ask the shop assistant to match the colour with the skin colour of the inside of your wrist. And, last but not the least; please use the foundation/powder evenly on your face and neck right down to the neckline of your dress. Stay away from using blusher in the day time altogether. But for an evening party you can dab on a little bit. Use this before the powder and here is a tip-- while applying the blush on, the rouge, bring your lips to a smile, just lightly dab the colour on the part of the cheeks which form the high point softly moving the brush in upward movements going about an inch or so. Thereafter, just lightly apply the face powder over the whole face for a good subtle look.

A lipstick is a very good cosmetic for you. Once again please take care as to the colour. Choose according to your skin colour, colour of your dress and time of day. In case you would like to use a lip liner, please use the exact colour of the lipstick you are going to use. Different colour of lip liner and lipstick look real bad.

A bindi is a lovely spot to wear but again, please only wear the bindi with Indian dresses. Keep it away if you are dressing in Western clothes. Also, choose the colours and sizes according to the shape that suit you and the clothes you are wearing.

Eye make up is not a very good idea for visually impaired girls/women as it will only attract undue attention to your weak point. Only, keep your eyebrows well shaped by regular visits to your beauty parlor. Also a word of caution here, some of you may face undue amount of facial hair. If this is the case get your beauty expert to help you with it.

Taking Care of Nails:

Nails are always in full view of people. Most of the times you are judged by the condition of your nails. You must not ignore them. In case you are not in the favour of growing your nails, they must be cut once a week. If you fancy long nails, you need to clean them many times a day as dirt collects under them constantly. Long nails must be well shaped always: pointed nails are not what look good; the entire nail must be oval in shape.

By all means, you can paint your nails but please make sure nails are well kept and the polish is not peeling off.

The nails on your feet, toe nails, are just as important. Follow the same care instructions for toe nails as well. You may like to go in for a manicure and a pedicure once in a month. This will take care of all the dead skin and stubborn dirt clinging on to your hands and feet. To do the same at home, you can soak both hands and feet in warm water for 10 minutes, (add a cap full of shampoo to the warm water) for good results. Thereafter clean both hands and feet with a soft brush and cut the nails. Give them a massage with a good cream for the next 10 minutes. You will really enjoy soft and clean hands and feet with shining nails!

It is a good idea to remove nail polish every alternate day using a good quality nail polish remover and then repaint them. Toe nails can be repolished weekly. Stick to the same colour on both hands and feet. To keep on the safe side, choose colours, which would match your skin tone and also match most colours you may wear. It would be advisable to get sighted family / friends to help select colours for you. Normally it is a good idea to wear natural transparent nail polish.

The Right Dress:

Once you have the above basics taken care of, you need to focus on your dress. While doing so, a number of aspects need to be considered. You need to visualize the place you would be going to and the occasion you would be attending. The time of day and season needs to be kept in mind. For example, a mini skirt with a spaghetti top may not be the suitable gear for a cold winter morning. It is important to select the colours and styles that enhance your looks. That is, if you have very slender shoulders, a few gathers on your sleeves may do magic but if you have broad shoulders, gathered sleeves may be a disaster. Thus, it is crucial to know your body structure and skin colour. If you have any doubts of what may look good on you, please don't hesitate to take professional help. You can also get your family / friends to advise you on the same. Keep your ears open to compliments and try to keep to clothes, which get you the maximum heartfelt applause. Please ensure your garments are clean and well- ironed. It is a must to wash every garment before reusing it.

Good Posture and Exercise:

Now, to let your hard work come through and have the desired effect, it is an absolute must to look at your posture/body language. A bent head with drooping shoulders and a slouching back topped with a sloppy walk will dilute all your efforts to make the impression you wish to make.

You can improve your posture by standing with your head, heels, shoulders and back touching the wall. Pull your stomach in and stay in this position for at least 10 minutes every day. Practice walking with heavy books balanced on your head, without supporting them by hands, for at least 15 minutes every day. Sit in a straight-back chair with the lower back in contact with the base of the backrest of the chair for a smart and in-command look (this is also good for your health). Slowly your body will adapt to being upright which will make you look smart and also keep you away from health hazards (backache)caused by wrong posture.

Last but not the least; make physical exercise a part of your daily routine. This will keep you in good health and shape adding to your self-esteem and confidence.

Social Skills:

All this done and you still have your social skills to watch. Do not dig your nose or ears in public; you may not know who is watching you. Refrain from scratching yourself all over. Look towards the person you are talking with and remember your manners. Please do not shake your head, legs or shoulders unnecessarily. This looks very awkward.

Conclusion:

A person's appearance tells a great deal about him/her. Pleasing personality, appropriate dress, suitable make-up and correct posture are added assets for all and visually impaired women are no exception. You would find a sea change in the attitude of people towards you, if you are well-groomed. You will have greater social acceptance as also enhanced possibilities for a job and a life-companion of your choice. You would thus be able to join the mainstream of society as a pleasant and amiable partner and contributor. Your disability will, then, take a backseat allowing confidence to get behind the wheel to drive you on the road to success!

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