



## Looking Good: Get it all together for the reunion

By Bonnie Atwood

It's not bills that can send a boomer into anxiety when sorting the daily mail. It's the invitation to a big school reunion or holiday party.

A New Year's Eve bash with the entire high school class? How will I squeeze into a suitably slinky party dress?

A Super Bowl night with all the most athletic guys from college? How can I show up with a beer belly?

You don't want to count the years, much less attend. High school was so about being cool, having a mohair sweater and wearing black leather on the smoking court. OK, breathe deeply and remember: All of your classmates are thinking about how they look, not about you. You have time to do a makeover, and you will look and feel great at the event.

How do you start? Scores of local businesses can improve your look, your confidence and your self-esteem. The Internet lists page after page of goods and services of all kinds to help you get ready.

YOU'RE NOT  
THE BIGGEST  
LOSER

Start with the biggest challenge: fitness. Here's your wake-up call. The mirror says you want to lose 20 pounds. Maybe it also says you want to look like Joe Namath or Jane Fonda used to look, but that's not going to happen.

If you don't have time to lose those pounds, make a start, says Tina Tucci, wellness director at PartnerMD. "Just starting to exercise is going to make you feel better, and people tend to reflect that out," she said, her posture straightening as she said the



word “reflect.”

Tucci said an ideal exercise for boomers is walking. Boomers are the generation that started jogging, and those years of pounding pavement are starting to show up as knee and hip pain. Walking is free and easy, especially here in the city with the most beautiful avenue in the world. But, Tucci stresses, the best exercise is whatever you are going to stick with.

Do not overdo, she said. It's not supposed to be a torture session. You're not going to boogaloo if you're suffering from blisters or stiff muscles.

Be wary of fad diets, too. The girls in gym class called them “starvation diets.” Diets can work, said Tucci, but they are a quick fix and hard to stay on long-term. What you really need is long-range nutrition. And enjoy the meatballs at the party buffet.

#### CLOTHES: IT HAS TO BE YOU

Annette Dean, who owns a Carytown dress shop of the same name, has been putting together dazzling outfits for three generations of Richmond women. Your outfit, of course, depends on your body type, she said. Boomers are usually self-conscious about their waistlines, so you might want to mix and match a two-piece outfit and steer away from a highly fitted look. Jewelry will draw everyone's eyes away from that midsection.

“The average customer is not a model,” stressed Dean. So don't feel alone if you're getting a little less Twiggy and a little more Mama Cass. “The woman has to be very comfortable in her clothing,” said Dean. “It has to be you.”

#### ADD SOME SPARKLE

The perfect outfit must be set off by fabulous jewelry, which Marty Dussling can create for you. With her “encore” hobby-turned-business called Southern Sparkle, she uses Swarovski crystals for her one-of-a-kind designs, including necklaces, earrings, bracelets and — the most popular — watches.

Dussling said color can help convey the message you want to send. When you make your statement at the big event, you might emphasize your creativity (dark blue), your harmony (emerald green) or your joy (orange). Her home-based business explores the whole spectrum of color in semiprecious stones, including turquoise, quartz, onyx and larimar (found only in the Dominican Republic). Customers are looking for conventional pieces, but they also ask for ankle bracelets, baby bracelets and custom-designed bridal jewelry. She said people need to feel good about themselves for any special occasion, especially in depressed times.

#### DOES SHE OR DOESN'T SHE?

Boomers can remember when “beauty parlors” went unisex. The past 30 years have seen a revolution in what is done to hair, combined with all the services of the spa: manicures, pedicures, facials, massages, even tanning. Hair coloring, for example, used to be spoken of in whispers (does she or doesn't she?), but that stigma is “definitely over,” said Tonya Ashman, who owns T. Ashman Salon & Spa. She said that about 80 percent of her clients get hair color treatment. That includes men. Only about half are trying to cover gray. Some want to take the gray away completely; others just want to blend it in.

They used to say a woman of boomer age should always wear her hair short. Times change. “With styles today, a woman can maintain some length,” Ashman said, “as long as they have enough volume. ... I think there's nothing more attractive than a one-length bob just below the chin.” Of course, everyone is different. She said her most important question as a stylist to someone getting ready for an event is: What do you not want me to do?

There is a whole new world of weaves, extensions, even the new “clip-in” extensions, which Ashman said are “the most fun I've had in a long time.” She suggests a visit two weeks ahead of time so the extensions, matching your color, can be waiting for you. Eyelashes and eyebrows, too, have come a long way. Ashman's shop does extensions on lashes, using natural hair. She said that on an older client, especially, it “opens the eye up so much. They are beautiful.”

## THINK POSITIVE

It's almost time to go. Get out your old yearbooks to refresh your memory, said Ingrid Schweickert, a life coach with Coach Ingrid. Schweickert said it's best to laugh at your old embarrassments, and think about how far you've come.

"Visualize yourself at the event having a great time," she said. If you feel any jitters, remind yourself: "I am a great person, regardless of my ups and downs over the years."

"Go in with a curious mind," she advised, "to find out about others and what they have done with their lives — how can I learn from others?"

You're part of the baby boom — have a ball!

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*Bonnie Atwood is a Richmond, Virginia freelance writer and boomer.*



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