

# Your Inner and Outer Image!

## Dawn Brown

It's often said you can't judge a book by its cover. And it's true; until you start reading that book, you're not really sure if the content matches the promise of the cover. However that has not stopped us from judging a book by its cover! We do.

When my book, *That Perception Thing!* was published, people kept telling me how much they loved the cover. One woman wrote to tell me she had bought the book and had it on her shelf where she could see it as the cover had such a calming effect on her. When she later admitted that she hadn't read the book yet, I assured her that the content was every bit as good as the cover! Actually the message of that book cover is that you think you know what you're seeing but only when you go inside do you actually realize what you're seeing. And since the book is about perception, the inner and outer images match.

We need to do the same with ourselves...create congruence between our outer and inner images. If we take time to create a welcoming exterior and inside our messages to ourselves are negative, our inner thoughts are judgemental – it will soon show on the outside for all to see. We know people who are wonderfully dressed and made up and who lack self-confidence or are very critical of others.

And we all know people who are easy-going and caring; yet their outer image gives the message that others are more important than they are. They seem to say that any old outfit will do as they're not deserving of time and attention. Unfortunately we communicate to others about how we want to be treated by how we treat ourselves.

If we don't take care of our outer image, we may be setting ourselves up for misperceptions, and the judgement of others. Remember we *do* judge a book by its cover! In the animal world, animals know which animal is an easy prey, vulnerable – by the condition of its coat. A shabby fur says the animal is not taking care of its self – it may be sick, injured or starving. Therefore, it will not be able to protect or defend itself. It's the same way in our world. What is the message you want to give others about you?

Now sometimes an animal can pretend to be wounded to lull its attacker into a false sense of security. For instance, the Kyra Sedgwick character in the TV show, *The Closer*, emphasizes her soft, southern, genteel manner; downplays her exterior by wearing little make-up and plain clothes. The person she's speaking with then relaxes believing her to be insignificant. That is when she zooms in for the kill!

My work is about creating a healthy inner life so that we can come from a position of strength. However that strength is not at the expense of our external message. The inner and outer are connected through me. When I'm feeling down, I'll take extra care with my external image because it gives me a boost. I believe it's all right to fake it till you make it. However if you find you're just not making it, it is important to then get support. That support can come in the form of a book, a retreat, a therapist, making time for you.

We all know what we need to do but sometimes we need to hear it differently and from different sources to remind ourselves of what we know. Years ago I studied image consulting with Emily Cho. However I still benefit from the advice of image consultants. And as a therapist, I have benefited from the advice of therapists. No one knows everything! The key is to remain open to messages that come along to remind us that self-care is about our physical, emotional, and spiritual self – the whole person; our inner and outer life.

Dawn Brown is a psychotherapist, international speaker, and author (*That Perception Thing!* and *Expert Women Who Speak...Speak Out!*). Her new book: *Been There, Done That... Now What?* is available in bookstores and at [www.perceptionshift.com](http://www.perceptionshift.com).