

You Look Like?

perceive in ourselves (the self-concept) may have only partial correspondence with what other people perceive in us. Yet we behave in accordance with our own perceptions."

THE GAP between what we *think* we look like and what we actually do can be an eye-opener in many ways. So much so, that psychologists have evolved a "body image test," now in use in many hospitals, schools, marriage clinics, and businesses. Here's how the test works:

You are given a pencil and blank slips of paper and told to draw yourself (a) as you are and (b) as you would like to look. The psychologist analyzes both drawings and makes a private judgment of you.

Heavy lines may tell him that you're a strong-willed individual; light ones, a timid type. If you complete the drawings quickly, it generally indicates you're a decisive, impulsive person. Should you linger unduly over them, you're probably a painstaking perfectionist. If you sketch profiles, it may show you're evasive. Should you draw exceptionally long arms, perhaps you're ambitious or acquisitive.

An insecure wife married to a domineering husband drew pinpoints for feet. Why? Because all her life she could never stand on her own two feet!

Your occupation often affects your drawings, too. Public speakers pay particular attention to the lips; pianists to the hands; dancers to the legs; scientists and writers to the head.

Well-adjusted people usually draw themselves pretty much as they are the first time. But in the second wish-fulfillment drawings, they engage in healthy Walter Mitty day-dreaming. Short women make themselves tall; fat ones, thin. Unattractive ones portray themselves as queens. Women with straggly hair draw themselves with lovely tresses.

Emotionally ill persons reveal the most in their drawings. One disturbed woman, asked to draw herself as she saw herself, sketched a ghost. "Why do you want to commit suicide?" the psychiatrist asked.

Thanks to the woman's illuminating self-portrait, the psychiatrist was able to take the first steps in helping her back to a healthy state of mind.

In tests conducted by Dr. Karen Machover of Kings County Hospital (Brooklyn, N. Y.), a

group of mental patients were asked to draw a man and later a woman. Emotionally infantile males frequently made the female image larger and more dominant. Asthmatics omitted the mouth.

Other psychologists report that women generally observe men's features more closely than vice versa. Frequently, the most a man can remember about the girl he loves is the color of her hair or eyes! Women admit that what they notice first about men are their faces, figures, voices, whether they need a deodorant, and their clothes.

But clothes don't make the man or woman. Take it from Mark Twain, who was once bawled out by his wife for not being properly dressed when calling on a Connecticut neighbor. After listening to his wife's complaints, the humorist wrapped a neat package which he had a messenger deliver to the neighbor with this note: "A little while ago I visited you minus my collar and tie. The missing articles are enclosed. Will you kindly gaze at them and return them to me?"

VANITY often prevents us from seeing ourselves with other people's eyes. Recently in the home of a distinguished, much-photographed elder statesman who was quite handsome as a young man, I observed a flattering portrait of him and remarked on it.

"Oh, it doesn't catch the *real* me," he protested seriously. "Haven't I got better features than that?"

In the long run, neither handicaps nor good looks mean much. Real beauty stems from *within*. Outer good looks can never cover a warped and ugly soul. While they may mean everything to superficial people, warm inner qualities are far more important to most of us.

So make the most of what God gave you—then forget about it. Beauty, after all, is relative. Our great stage actresses—Helen Hayes, Lynn Fontanne, Katharine Cornell—were never outwardly beautiful. They all have an inner beauty and spirit which is far more important.

Lincoln's political opponents campaigned against his "ugliness." One day when a little girl was taken to the White House to visit President Lincoln, her father warned her about Old Abe's homeliness. But after Lincoln placed her on his knees and playfully joked with her, the little girl exclaimed to her father, "Daddy, he isn't ugly at all. He's just *beautiful!*"

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