

# The Windsor Star

## It's all about attitude; Is there really such a thing as age-appropriate dressing?

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Page: F5

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Illustrations: Colour Photo: Alessandro Abbonzio, AFP/Getty Images / MATERIAL GIRL: Madonna has always been a fashion icon no matter what her age. Nowadays the Material Girl's style is less revealing, more sophisticated yet still provocative offstage. But onstage she's still not afraid to show skin.

Colour Photo: Getty Images / STYLIN': If you want to be innovative and edgy take a cue from Diane Keaton.

Colour Photo: Getty Images / STYLIN': Sharon Stone comes to mind as a woman who can certainly pull off more daring looks.

In a world of botox and age-defying cosmetics, where 40 is the new 30 and so on... is there really such a thing as age appropriate dressing? There was a time when the rules were strict and rigidly observed: Women over a certain age simply didn't show cleavage or wear mini-skirts.

But these days, we are bombarded with images of celebrities, who at 40 or 50, look better than some of us did in our 20's. And with the appropriate diet, fitness and beauty regimens, more and more women are in a position to flaunt it past 40. Question is, should they?

So, what are the rules and who gets to break them? Simply put, there are two schools of thought when it comes to age-appropriate dressing: Those who think if you've got it, go ahead and flaunt it and those who prefer to scale back the sass and instead opt for something a little less brazen.

**IF YOU'VE GOT IT, FLAUNT IT** Even Madonna, who we all know is fabulously fit, has toned down her style in recent years choosing for a wardrobe that sometimes looks like she borrowed clothes from Camilla Parker Bowles. However, the Material Girl still exhibits her youthful leanings in her stage wardrobe. Always cutting edge in each extreme, Madonna is an extreme example of a more commonplace trend.

My local Starbucks is even frequented by such women. One particular middle-aged woman is usually dressed in the most cutting-edge of designer trends: Skinny jeans, Dior moon-boots and midriff-baring tops. Although she's got the body to pull off these looks there is a palpable debate in the air when she comes in. I can see some people thinking "fair play to her" for maintaining her body and having the gumption to choose such youthful attire.

Nobody wants to see a micro-mini on a lady with sagging skin and varicose veins. But, equally important, a woman of a certain age must have a certain je-ne-c'est-quoi to pull off a youthful wardrobe. Kim Cattrall and Sharon Stone come to mind as women who can certainly pull off more daring looks at any age, and that's mostly because they have the right attitude to do it and still look amazing.

**AGE-APPROPRIATE STYLE** At the end of the day,

what women of all ages want is to look fabulous. None of us want to look like a wannabe 20-something in a 40-something body (ahem, hi Cher). There is something about looking more elegant and poised in the autumn of your life; relegating those cheap, whimsical purchases to the past and going for a more mature, polished look.

In reality, few of us have the genes (or nip/tuck budget) to look like Demi Moore when we reach our 40's. So it's more common to let some of our more youthful accoutrements pass down to the next generation and instead adopt a more mature wardrobe. This is definitely the "safe" approach to aging. Of course there are degrees here. You can adopt a mature wardrobe that is still edgy and innovative, like Diane Keaton or you can set new standards in refinement like Helen Mirren.

So how do you ease your wardrobe into a more mature and elegant look without becoming an old frump? Well, the first step is to eliminate any items that reveal too much leg, cleavage or midriff and also any items that are garishly bright. Bright colours can look cheap and can age a tired face. Instead, opt for more earth tones and neutrals. If you use colours, choose block colours (i.e. solids rather than bright patterns) and be careful not to put colours that are draining too close to your face.

**INTEGRITY AT ANY AGE** Whether you're 20 or 70, you should work on finding a style that reflects your personality. Clothes are a social tool -- we have no need to dress up when we're alone. Clothing is a way of portraying yourself in the world and the biggest mistake you can make is miscommunicating who you are or simply not doing yourself justice.