

How to Actually Get Dressed

I believe it's possible to create a daily self-care dressing plan that's accessible.

What's the trick to making it accessible?

The trick is the hidden accordion.

My speaking coach, [KC Baker](#), taught me an amazing trick to rock any speaking gig, no matter how long or short - it's an accordion.

You have the essentials of the speech (the bones) and then sections that can be expanded (accordions).

I move through the bones of the speech and expand the accordions as I feel able. How does this translate into accessible self-care?

Check out my morning self-care tasks:

My Bones: e.g medications, sitting up, food, movement, meditation, personal care: face wipes and mouthwash.

My Accordion: e.g styling hair, washing face, brushing and floss teeth.

If I am in a pain flare, then I may get dressed by putting on an easy slip that's practically a night dress, with a soft scarf thrown on and a fabric rose in my hair.

It's easy but it still makes me feel 'dressed'. Whereas on a more energy-available day I may choose to wear one of my curated outfits and I may be out of bed more.

We make a plan with the basics, (the bones) and then all the optional extras (the accordions) we can expand into if we feel well enough.

Resources

[Already Pretty](#) - learning to love your body by learning to dress it well.

[Thirty-Three Dresses](#) - 33 days of radiation & 33 different dresses.

[Style Statement](#) - a two-word compass that helps you make more confident choices in life - from your wardrobe to your relationships, your living room to your career plans.

Don't forget to check out the bonus interviews and resources at the end of **Beyond the Boundaries: Self-Care Edition**. I've included some exclusive goodies, just for you.

Personal Care: Shine & Polish

"When we take ourselves seriously, we accept the responsibility of knowing and loving our body."

- Marion Woodman

Do you struggle with bathing and being bed bound or house bound? Sometimes getting clean and tidy is just not on the 'to do' list, and surviving is. Plus, when you're stuck at home all day, there's often no real incentive to dress up. Does it matter, you may ask yourself? Isn't it a waste of energy?

That's a viable option to consider. But we also need to consider our psychological health and the physical health of our skin, teeth, hair, nails and so on.

While I agree that in much of our society there is an inflated focus on washing and that many people wash more than they need to or even more than is healthy for their bodies - with people getting their internal vaginal pH out of balance with body washes and synthetic bathing products etc - we still have to stay clean enough to be well.

We need to keep clean enough to prevent sores and infections. Washing is also an (often naked) opportunity to check out the health of our skin - especially if we are sitting or lying a lot, pressure sores are a risk - or to do regular sexual health self-checks, like breast or [genital self-exams](#).

To encourage myself to make the effort of personal care, I turned bathing into a self-care sacred practice.

Like dressing, it's an accordion ritual - some mornings, despite my best efforts I don't take out my overnight vision correction contacts until some time mid morning or clean my teeth until noon.

Some mornings I do a full face wash/exfoliate/toner/ cleanse/moisturise/massage and mini-mani-pedi before starting my day.

It's amazing how different we can feel when we are freshly washed.

If washing is hard for you, consider making it easier by resting and lying in a blanket, towel or towelling dressing gown to dry off afterwards. Investigate your bathing routine to discover what puts you off, what draws you in, what's hardest and how it could be made easier...

The challenges of washing and ways to work around them

If washing is proving a challenge, I encourage you to contact your doctor and occupational therapist to get help and support.

Here are some ideas that might be of use:

Sitting Up: try using a V-shaped pillow or back wedge to support you as you sit up in bed while cleaning face/teeth.

Getting Water: if you can't get to the bathroom, there are other options for staying clean. Consider asking an aide or carer to bring a wet face-cloth in a plastic bag for you to use. Or try wet wipes and dry shampoo.

Multiple Chemical Sensitivities: You may find yourself restricted in the products you can use. There are DIY recipes for wet wipes using organic muslin cloth, and homemade dry shampoo which you could adapt to your specifications.

Energy: If energy is a challenge - and when isn't it? try prioritising your tasks. If you just clean your teeth and let the water run over you in the shower, maybe that's enough. Try flossing a few teeth a day, by the end of the week you will have done them all. It's not ideal, but it's better than not at all.

Washing can be unexpectedly exhausting. It can help to pace it and do it in little bits, so start in the bedroom and get undressed there, then into a dressing gown or just under the covers and rest in bed for a bit. Even a few minutes can help.

Then into the bathroom. You can sit on the floor of the shower if you can get up and down safely and just let the water run over you. Sometimes it's safer than standing if you are wobbly. Or you can get a shower chair or stool. Don't be tempted to put a normal stool in the shower, it's really dangerous. We want to keep you safe.

You can also get useful non-slip bath mats and hand rails. **If accessing the bathroom is a challenge, you need to speak to an occupational therapist. They can keep you safe and have so many good ideas and handy gadgets you may never have known existed.**

Once you are in the shower, if you are not up to washing properly then letting the water run over you is good and it makes you feel cleaner.

After you get out, have a microfibre hair turban, towelling bath robe or towels on your bed. You can get into the bath robe, into bed and then lie there resting until you dry off naturally. After you are dry you will be all rested and hopefully ready to get dressed.

Key Points

- Dressing and washing can feel like an energy drain, but we can shift the experience into a restorative, empowering ritual.
- We can co-opt and adapt clothing to fit our style and our needs.
- Figuring out the Bones and the Accordions mean we can make self-care accessible for our changing symptoms/lives.
- Personal care can take energy but also help our health and wellness.
- Illness, pain and fatigue can stop us feeling good, but wearing a favourite outfit, putting on a hat that makes us smile or wearing body glitter in bed can be a way to shift our mood and our day.

Limits Liberation Plan

You can answer these **Limits Liberation Plan** questions: in your journal, on this worksheet (you can print it out), or in your mind.

Styles I love are _____

Hot Tip: Look at what you've gathered, what do you love about it?

The shape, colour, texture, flow, the history, the meaning, the aesthetic, feeling?

What are the commonalities in what you love?

Are you drawn to contrast, to complimentary colours?

If you could pull what you love together, what would you draw?

What aspects of these ideas do you feel confident incorporating into your everyday life?

My accessibility needs _____

My style manifesto:

My style is _____ and _____
with _____
It makes me feel _____

E.g My style is vintage, jewelled toned clothes with flowing fabrics and loose shapes. It makes me feel artistic, bohemian and free to move.

Hot Tip: Don't over-think this, it's just a place to begin.

What are my 3 favourite outfits? Why do I love them? What items do I already own that meet my aesthetic and practical needs? _____

What alternatives to pyjamas am I excited to try?

What clothing am I going to try co-opting for accessibility? _____

If I start with a piece of clothing that's aesthetic, how can I adapt it to meet my practical needs?

E.g a gorgeous dress that is uncomfortable in the wheelchair - could you cut out the bottom/back, so you aren't sitting on it?

If you start with a piece that's practical, how can you accessorise it to fit your aesthetic?

E.g a pair of trousers that fit your physical needs but you don't like the colour. You could add patches in a colour you love, dye the trousers or wear them under a long dress/tunic in a colour you do like.

What do I need to do to make clothing and dressing accessible for me?

E.g Re-organise your wardrobe, use the [StyleBook app](#) to show carers which clothes you'd like them to pick out or which outfit you'd like to wear. Or make a practice of dressing up once a week and noting how it feels?

Beyond the Boundaries Self-Care journey action stations, darling-one.

Where to start

My dressing and personal care Bones (essentials) are: _____

My Accordion (optional self-care extras) are: _____

I am going to test out my Self-Care dressing and washing routine on _____

*Wow whee, well done trailblazer.
You have explored your aesthetics and created a
personal style and a way to make it happen.
High fives!*