



WOULD YOU BE HAPPY
TO LEAVE THE HOUSE
WITHOUT MAKE-UP?



Welcome to Make-up Free Mondays, a new movement that encourages women to show the world what they really look like.

Sarah Fleming, a 22-year-old account manager, applies make-up before she goes to the gym. When she was travelling through the UK last year, she broke down crying in a shopping centre because she'd lost her cosmetic bag and was so stressed about being barefaced. "I never leave the house without make-up," she firmly states. She's not the only one. According to a study, one in three women never go outside unpainted.

Alexis Wolfer, editor of *thebeautybean.com*, thinks it's crazy. However, she's as cosmetically dependent as anyone. "Last year, I found myself apologising profusely to a male colleague at the start of a meeting because I wasn't wearing make-up," she says. "It was ridiculous. It's not like I'd done anything wrong! He just said he wouldn't have noticed anyway."

Following this episode, Alexis decided to spearhead Make-up Free Mondays, a social campaign designed to get women feeling confident in their own skin. "I want girls to stop feeling bad about not wearing make-up," she says. "It's about feeling comfortable without the mask. It's about real beauty."

facing the fear

We challenged Sarah to a month of Make-up Free Mondays and asked her to rate her confidence (see the rating system below). Naturally, she panicked. Louise Adams, a clinical psychologist specialising in body image, later told us that facing your most feared situation is



Make-up addict Sarah accepted our challenge to go four straight Mondays without a drop of cosmetics (right).

what psychologists call flooding. "You flood the brain with new information to get the person to change their behaviour." So, if you're terrified of spiders, the therapist will get you to hold spiders. "It often brings about radical change, but it takes a brave person to do it," adds Adams. Sarah's fear? She's scared people will react negatively to her when she's not fully made up. Let the spider-holding begin.

MAKE-UP FREE MONDAY #1

confidence ●●●●●

When Sarah woke up, her thoughts immediately turned to how she'd style her hair and make-up for that day. Then she remembered. "I was like, 'Oh, my God, I can't wear make-up!'" she says

emphatically. She commuted to work with her head down, not making eye contact with anyone. "I just wanted to hide," she says. At work, Sarah explained why she wasn't made up over and over. "I was also quieter than normal," she says. "I felt like I wasn't myself."

Adams says many young women become addicted to cosmetics and feel their made-up faces are normal, and that their natural faces are weird. "That's why Make-up Free Mondays are psychologically healthy," she says. "They normalise the idea that our natural selves are okay, that we're acceptable without the mask. This is a really positive task."

MAKE-UP FREE MONDAY #2

confidence (work) ●●●●●●●●●●
confidence (date) ●●●●●●●●●●

Sarah had meetings with new clients and was apprehensive about going in clean-faced. However, she thinks it may have worked in her favour. "Today, because I wasn't wearing make-up, I felt much older and more serious."

But she fell off the wagon that evening. "A guy I've started seeing was coming over to have dinner and watch TV ... so I put on a bit of foundation, mascara and blush." Oddly, when he arrived, she then apologised for not wearing any make-up and explained the CLEO experiment again, even though her face was made up. "Yeah, I lied, ▶

confidence rating system

- 1** No confidence in your appearance, you think you're ugly, and have negative self-talk.
- 10** Healthy confidence (not arrogance) in your appearance, you feel like you could chat to anyone.

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hoping that he wouldn’t notice I had a bit on,” she says. “Make-up is like my armour, especially with guys.”

MAKE-UP FREE MONDAY #3

confidence ●●●●●●●●●●

This was the toughest day of the experiment. “The new guy I was talking about arranged dinner in a restaurant

with his friends. In a brutal twist of fate, I ended up sitting opposite his ex, who’s the most stunning girl I’ve ever seen. She had a perfect dress, perfect hair, perfect tan and, of course, perfect make-up. It was torture.”

Adams has nothing but praise for Sarah for sticking to the make-up free plan on this night. “In the hierarchy of feared situations, this is up there! Notice that at the end of the night, he left the restaurant with Sarah, which challenges the idea that men think beauty is in make-up, which it’s not.”

MAKE-UP FREE MONDAY #4

confidence ●●●●●●●●●●

The boss had been away for a month and Sarah was jittery about facing her on Monday paint-free. “But she didn’t even notice!” laughs Sarah. For the first time,

Sarah didn’t feel the need to apologise and explain the experiment. “I wasn’t self-conscious at all today,” she adds. She even found herself thinking she looked nice when she walked past a mirror. “I’m appreciating different things about myself now,” she says. “Rather than noticing my blush or eyeshadow, I’ll think, ‘My eyes look bright’ or ‘My skin looks clear.’”

Sarah also began to question double standards. “I was watching *The Bachelorette* last night and found myself asking, ‘Why do girls have to put so much effort into their appearance, and guys don’t?’”

the verdict

“I was scared that people would react negatively to seeing me without make-up, but people treated me exactly the same,” says Sarah. She has effectively performed behavioural therapy on herself, according to Adams. “Sarah’s been brave enough to break a pattern, observe the effects, and she’s smartly picked up on the fact that there’s no difference in people’s reactions.” Even better, notes Adams, she’s gone beyond just modifying her behaviour and is actually changing how she’s thinking, querying double standards in society.

The big question now is will Sarah continue with Make-up Free Mondays? “Yes,” she enthuses, “I’m used to seeing myself without make-up now!” □

BAREFACED CHIC: STARS WITHOUT MAKE-UP



IT'S YOUR TURN

Having heart palpitations at the thought of rocking up to work on Monday without a dollop of concealer? Adams suggests having a trial run on the weekend with your flatmates or family, or you can also gradually reduce the amount of make-up you wear. “Start by leaving off lipstick, then try less mascara, and work from there,” says Adams. “The goal is to get away from this idea that there are things we can’t do without make-up.”