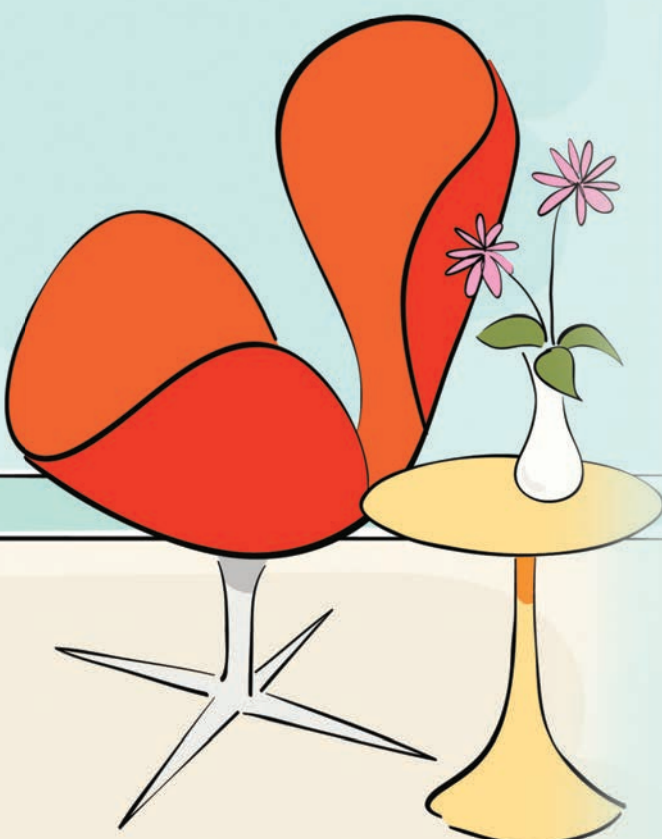
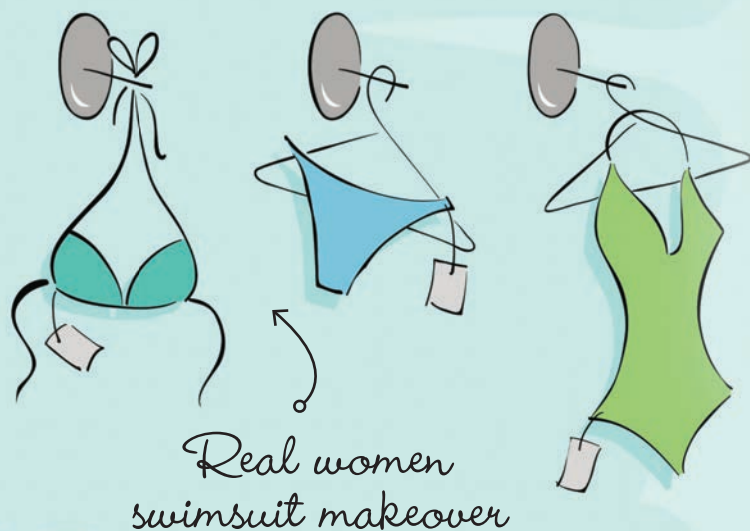
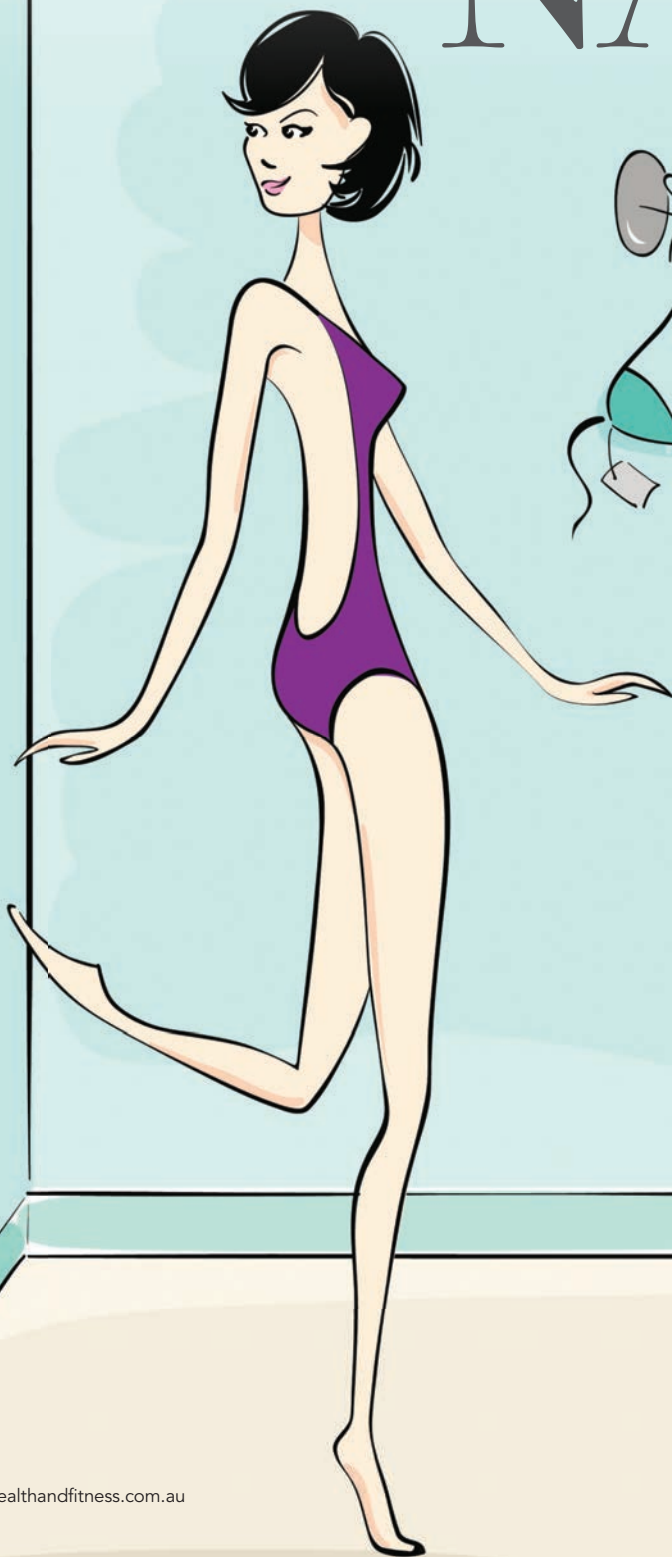
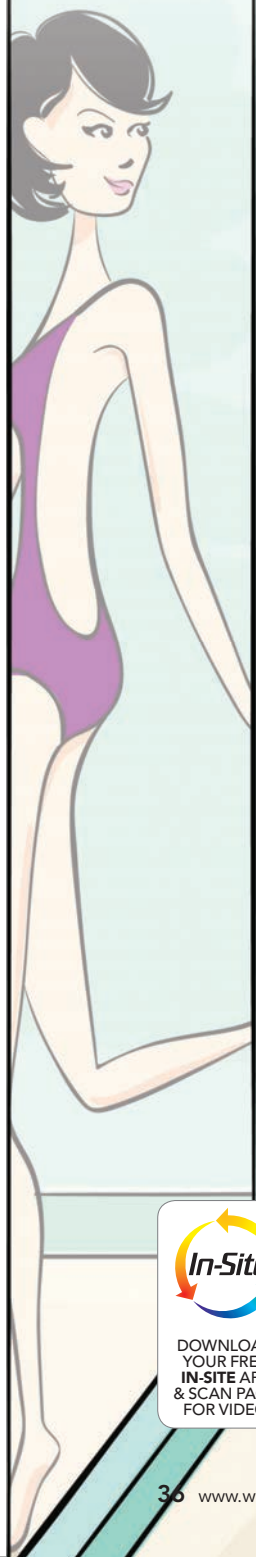
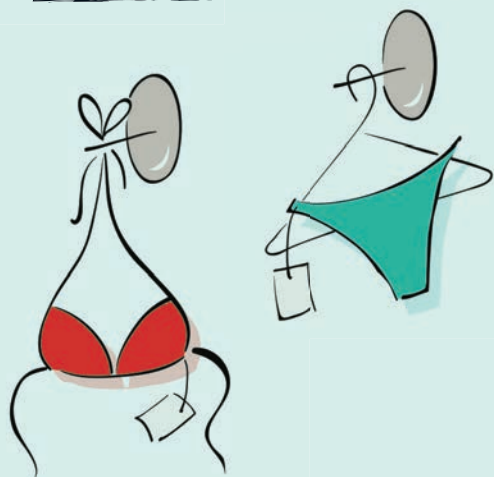


How to **LOOK GOOD** (almost) **NAKED**



For the average woman, buying a swimsuit is up there with pap smears and tax returns. But there are ways to rock a pair of togs this summer no matter what your age, shape or style. *WH&F* paired two regular women with BodyMap image experts Nadine and Donna Cameron for a crash course in feeling fab in swimmers (no diet or crazy workout



“Swimsuit shopping is a unique form of torture,” says Nadine Cameron, co-founder of wellbeing and image solution consultancy Body Map (bodymap.com.au). In fact, a study by body image expert Marika Tiggemann from Flinders University found that just imagining donning togs in a changeroom activated bad moods in women – more so than thoughts of actually wearing cossies in public. Cameron traces the effect to representations of the female form peddled by the media, which would have us believe that stretch marks, cellulite and thighs that actually touch in the middle (quelle horreur) are anomalies. But buying (and wearing) a suit doesn't need to be torture. To prove it, BodyMap's body image consultant Nadine and image consultant Donna took two regular women, Elizabeth Stanfield (25) and Julie Dargan (48), to cossie emporium Swimwear Galore (swimweargalore.com.au) for a mind and body makeover. Here's how it went:



Julie

THE SUITS
Baku Havana tie front, \$139.95 (R); Miraclesuit Oceanus in eggplant, \$199.99 (L); all at swimweargalore.com.au



Elizabeth

For tips on how to find the perfect bathers for your shape, turn to page 94.

THE MAKEOVER-EES

JULIE: A mum of two and businesswoman who recently lost 20 kilos, Julie wanted a pair of bathers that veered away from her go-to 'lap swimming' style. She wanted to show off her pins and minimise attention to her tummy.

ELIZABETH: Elizabeth's swimwear history reads like an edition of *Vacuum Cleaners Weekly*: sure, she'd wear a cossie, but only if it was unremarkable (one step away from invisible). The safe options were plain and solid-coloured. But with a Thailand vay-cay on the cards, the 25-year-old wanted to learn to showcase her bust and butt with the right Lycra. Oh, and it had to be functional – nothing like losing your togs mid-snorkel.

Step 1: The Pep Talk

To boost our models' confidence before they hit the changerooms, the Body Map team started with a Gok-style pep talk.

“As with any clothing, we have to consider how our suits feel, how long we need them to last, how well the colours and shapes fit with what we want to emphasise about our bodies,” Donna explained. As for finding the courage to strut down a boardwalk: “Thinking about your body as a vehicle of experience and swimsuits as an accessory to fun experiences can be enormously helpful in this regard,” she suggested.

Another tip was to picture a role model. “Think of a woman you've seen at the pool or beach who appeared utterly unselfconscious, was able to laugh and throw herself into all her environment had to offer,” suggested Nadine. It's a mix of 'fake it 'til you make it' and imagery, which has been shown to be a powerful tool in disarming anxiety and changing thought patterns (your brain

can't discern between what's real and what's not).

Step 2: The Shopping

According to Tiggemann, seeing yourself almost starkers in a changeroom mirror can trigger excessive objectification of one's own body. That is, a split between subject (you) and object (body) and, probably, a scathing judgment. Which is why we sent the coaches. The Body Map team guided the girls towards the swimsuits best suited to their bodies, lifestyles and personal styles. (There was more strategy than in a chess world championship.)

The prize picks for Elizabeth were a bright berry-coloured one-piece, perfect for a few laps in the pool, along with an exotically patterned swimsuit that enhanced her natural features. “The darker areas highlighted her eyes and long dark hair, and the lighter, warmer coloured areas in the pattern complemented her skin tone,” noted Donna. “This created

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YOUR CUT AND KEEP BODY IMAGE REPAIR KIT

STEP ONE: BEFORE YOU LOOK

- Before you look in the mirror, spend a little time bringing to mind your favourite sensations of being at the beach or at a pool. Get in touch with those wonderful things that your body lets you experience when you're in your swimsuit. Your body is more than its surface appearance; it's all those bits that let you experience things, too.
- Think of the diverse range of people you normally encounter on the beach. Chances are you'll recall many different types of bodies. Why would you expect yourself to be the one person on the beach that has a perfect body?
- Identify your role model. Picture somebody you've seen at the beach who falls outside current ideals and looked like she was really enjoying herself. Remember, it's possible to feel good in a swimsuit without looking like a model.

STEP TWO: GETTING READY TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR

- Know what you see in the mirror at any given point in time is affected by both your mood and your context. If you look in the mirror and you're already unhappy, you'll be more critical of what you see.
- One quick way of lifting your mood before you peer at your reflection is to take a few slow breaths with deeper exhalations. This will decrease the speed of your thoughts and prevent your mind from becoming overcrowded with anxious thoughts.
- Stand comfortably with your head held high before you glance at yourself. This will send the message to your brain that you feel more confident.

STEP THREE: LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

- If you have ever felt insecure about your body, your conditioning won't change completely the moment you decide to be kinder to your body.
- Instead, identify whose voice your negative thoughts represent and realise those thoughts do not reflect any objective truth.
- Locate better narratives or voices in your head and turn the volume up. Think of your brain as a radio and tune it to the right station (narrative) for the situation. Sure, the negative voice might still be there somewhere, but you don't need to let it dominate your thoughts.

STEP FOUR: QUESTIONS TO PICK THE PERFECT SWIMSUIT

- COLOUR: Does it do what you want?
- CUT: Is it right for you?
- COMFORT: Are you physically and emotionally comfortable?
- CONFIDENCE: Do you feel good in it?
- CHARACTER: Does it suit your personality?
- COST: Can you afford it?

Courtesy of Body Map, bodymap.com.au



a seamless appearance between Elizabeth's body and the garment."

For Julie, a deep aubergine-coloured swimsuit was her perfect match. "This colour complemented her natural colouring while the diagonal folds in

the fabric de-emphasised the shortness of a waist (something Julie was keen to address) and instead drew attention to its contours," said Donna. With little adjusting needed, it was perfect for Julie's role as a busy mum.

✓ The picks

Elizabeth (patterned swimsuit)

- ✓ Pattern suits her personality/style
- ✓ Comfortable
- ✓ Sits well for swimming laps
- ✓ Flattering to bust
- ✓ Darker areas highlight her eyes and dark hair
- ✓ Lighter and warmer areas complement skin tones
- ✓ Creates a seamless visual transition between body and garment

Julie (aubergine/navyish swimsuit)

- ✓ Colour is practical, suiting Julie's lifestyle requirements
- ✓ Co-ordinates with existing wardrobe
- ✓ Good bust support
- ✓ Sits well for running around with small children
- ✓ Highlights toned curves
- ✓ Shade complements her natural colouring
- ✓ Diagonal folds in the fabric divert attention from a short waist and flatter the waist

✗ The flicks

✗ Donna says:

"Great around the bust and offers good support but the light colours don't harmonise so well with Elizabeth's own, and grid shapes can make a tummy appear even when there's not one."



✗ Donna says:

"Less flattering as this style minimises the bust relative to the hips."

✗ Donna says:

"Almost there, but the bright colour overwhelms Julie's features, meaning your attention is taken away from her face."

Step 3: Rockin' Togs

You'd think being thrust into a well-lit studio and told to strut would be the tricky bit. But the women were pleasantly surprised by their reflections.

"Before today, I just felt like a boy in bathers," said Elizabeth. "I would wear board shorts and long singlets over my bathers; basically, I was covering everything up and hiding it away from everybody." In the space of a few hours Elizabeth was posing in front of a camera and feeling so much more confident. "I learnt so much and I will definitely look for things that accentuate my body better and highlight off my features, match my skin tone, brighten my face and match my hair," she says.

Julie had assumed she needed to hide into the background, but by the time her hang-ups were history. "I've

learnt so much, from what to look for to how to promote my body in a certain way, hide my flaws and highlight my features, and also just how to feel relaxed and confident in my own body," she said. "I'm looking forward to showing off my bathers at the beach this summer."

Elizabeth's Top Tip: "I was surprised to learn that bathers featuring horizontal stripes don't always need to be avoided; just make sure you opt for thinner over thicker stripes as these will actually be really flattering."

Julie's Top Tip: "Choose something that suits you; don't go looking for what looks good on other people for what looks good on you. Be comfortable in your body and choose what you would like, not what you think everybody else would like." ■