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Julie Shifman

Chicago Women and Careers Examiner

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Julie Shifman is president and founder of Act Three, a company designed specifically for women returning to work after raising children. She is also principal of Shifman & Associates, which helps people reach their full potential. She has created a leadership development program for nonprofit executives, which has won numerous awards, including the Program Excellence Award from the American Society for Public Administration. Julie is a certified coach, licensed attorney, and mother of four sons.

Take a good hard look at your appearance

July 17, 7:55 AM

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It can be intimidating for a woman in her 40's or 50's to go back to work and appearance is one of the top reasons women give for feeling intimidated. Knowing that many of the other employees (and perhaps even the boss) is at least ten years younger can make women uncomfortable particularly if they aren't feeling very good about the way they look.

So the first place to start is with the hairdo. Jill Haney of JH Image consultants www.jhimage.net was recently asked by a 59 year old woman how to best address her haircut to benefit her career. Haney wrote, "Women as young as in their 50s can be described as elderly when not carefully managing their image...Women often appear elderly because of their hairdo". Haney recommends having a stylish cut that makes you feel powerful and confident.

Makeup is also a critical component of a professional appearance. Go to the makeup counter and have a personal makeover done. It's free (yes, they want you to buy what they used on you, but you can pick and choose those items that you feel you really need). Make sure that the sales person understands that this is makeup for the office (which should mean understated makeup that accentuates your positive attributes). Skin care, including sunscreen and a really good moisturizer is critical for women in their 40s and 50s.

Finally, we come to clothes. We have all heard... dress for the job you want, not the job you have. This is most true when the job you have is soccer coach or carpool mom. Some advice on dressing for today's workforce.

- Wear clothes that fit you. don't wear anything too small. If pants bunch around the crotch or

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your shirt gapes at the front, the item is too small.

- Keep it modest. no short skirts or plunging necklines
- Always keep a blazer with you to throw on when you need to
- Make sure your shoes are in good condition, polish as needed and have scuffs and heels repaired
- According to fashion experts, in summer, hose are no longer a requirement in the office unless you are working in a conservative environment such as banking or law.
- Scarves always add a nice professional touch provided the colors don't clash with your outfit
- Jewelry must be understated. no big dangling earrings or lots of bangle bracelets.
- if you have a tattoo, you must keep it covered at all times

For more info: www.actthree.com

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Julie Shifman is an Examiner from Chicago. You can see Julie's articles on [Julie's Home Page](#).

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