

What you wear can change your brain

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Clothing affects our mental processes and perceptions which can change our minds and the way we think, according to research by Professor Karen Pine from the University of Hertfordshire.

When Professor Pine asked [students](#) to put on a Superman t-shirt there was a scientific reason behind the request. She wanted to know if the heroic clothing would change the students' thinking. She found it boosted their impression of themselves and made them feel physically stronger. This, and other discoveries of how clothing can change our minds, is the topic of her new book called *Mind What You Wear: The Psychology of Fashion*.

Professor Karen Pine, from the department of Psychology at the

University of Hertfordshire, explained: "When wearing a Superman t-shirt the students rated themselves as more likeable and superior to other students. When asked to estimate how much they could physically lift, those in a Superman t-shirt thought they were stronger than students in a plain t-shirt, or in their own clothing."

This research, and other clothing research described in the book, shows how people's [mental processes](#) and perceptions can be primed by [clothing](#), as they internalise the symbolic meaning of their outer layers.

In *Mind What You Wear*, Professor Pine describes how [women](#) who were given a maths test performed worse when wearing a swimsuit than when wearing a sweater. She describes how putting on a [white coat](#) improved people's mental agility, as their brain was primed to take on the mental capacities they associated with being a doctor.

Professor Pine's book gives fascinating insights into the cognitive, social and emotional consequences of what we wear. Her previous research discovered that women are more likely to wear jeans when they are depressed. In this book she reveals that when women are stressed they wear less of their wardrobe, neglecting 90% of it, and the main reason women dress up is not to look attractive but to feel confident.

Professor Pine added: "As well as scientific research, my book also contains tips on how to feel happier and more confident with the right clothes, explaining not only that we are what we wear, but that we become what we wear."

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

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