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## Don Draper's no slouch

By Dave McGinn

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*Yes, clothes do make the Mad Man. But it's his perfect posture that keeps us captivated*

You never see Don Draper slouch. Whether he's sitting at his kitchen table sipping an Old Fashioned or at the office delivering another of his seductive pitches to a client, the hero of the hit TV drama *Mad Men* moves through life with perfect posture - back straight, shoulders square, chin up. It draws attention.

Sure, it might be a visual metaphor for the buttoned-up times he lives in, but more likely it's a key to understanding why he can get women as easily as Pall Malls and why the sycophantic underlings he works with are constantly seeking his approval: The guy's posture is body language for "Here is a man entirely confident in whatever he's doing, and if you don't like it, well, you better get the hell out of his way."

Which is nice to see, because there are few more depressing sights than some sad sack of a man trudging down the street with curled shoulders looking like his puppy just died.

Whatever a person is doing or saying or even wearing, it can all be undermined by bad posture.

You could dress a guy in the most exquisitely tailored suit imaginable, for instance, but if his spine looks like the letter C he'll never carry it off.

"Posture plays a very significant role in how we are perceived," says Shannon Smith, president of Premiere Image International in Oakville, Ont. "Erect posture makes us feel and appear more confident, positive, relaxed and physically fit."

It's just as true for women as it is for men. For proof, look no further than the offices of Sterling Cooper, where Draper (Jon Hamm) works. Joan, the Marilyn Monroe-esque bombshell who runs the secretarial pool (and is played by Christina Hendricks), glides through the office with a poise and grace just as commanding as Draper's presence, and you'll never find her stalking around hunched over.

Considering the show's attention to period detail, it's probably no surprise that both characters are exemplars of good posture. They were raised in an era when parents were constantly reminding their kids to sit up straight and girls walked around their bedrooms balancing textbooks on their heads.

"It's not second nature any more," says Mihaela Ciocan, founder and president of ImagePro Image Consulting in Vancouver.

Personally, I blame Kurt Cobain. Look at any picture of the late singer and you'll see a man practically folded into

himself he's so afraid of drawing anyone's attention.

"Posture says a lot about how comfortable a person is inside their skin," says Mary Bond, author of *The New Rules of Posture: How to Sit, Stand and Move in the Modern World*. The 2006 book, says Bond, addresses the movement patterns that lead to unhealthy posture, especially given our desk-bound, sedentary lifestyles.

Admittedly, it feels retrograde to be wagging a finger at bad posture. If you want to walk around looking like the third monkey from the left on that drawing that charts our evolution from apes to Homo sapiens, it's your call. But if so, you're no longer allowed to go gaga over *Mad Men* fashion.

Draper's personal style - the whisky, the skinny ties, the fedora - may have made him a fashion icon, but it all starts with the way the guy carries himself. "It's the little details that can ruin a good impression, and posture is one of them," Ciocan says.

Of course, good posture doesn't mean walking around with your chin so high and your chest jutting out so far out you look like some mook in a wrestling ring.

"You need to make it look natural," Ciocan says. "People can notice when it's not genuine."

Developing good posture takes practice and attention to detail. But so does dressing well.

Do you have the perfect skinny tie? Great. A sleek grey suit and a crisp white shirt? Good for you. Just remember that whatever panache you have starts with your posture. Walk tall.

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