

The half-naked truth

Columnist attempts to resolve the burning just-a-shirt vs. just-socks debate



Being naked is uncomfortable. It sounds weird, but it's true. Even though being naked is about the most natural and honest attire a person can don, or un-don I guess, it's still weird, even if you're alone.

I think it's worse for guys than girls. I don't exactly know why, I just think it's more natural for a girl to be naked. For guys it's always, "Oh man, my legs seem way too long and skinny for my torso," or "Oh man, my torso is too long for my legs; I wonder if I have some dwarf blood somewhere in my lineage." Or even just, "Man, check out that gut."

Anyway you look at a naked guy, it's either funny or disturbing. Of course, there are those chiseled dudes you see in magazines, but they don't count. I'm talking about real people.

(Guys that look good naked don't put their pants on one leg at a time, like us. They put on attention-getting stretch denim pants with one motion and then lace up the sides to place further emphasis on the region just south of the border.)

I'm talking about guys like us who sometimes find themselves in an even more awkward position than being totally naked. Those positions being:

1. Wearing just a shirt.
2. Wearing just socks.

There is nothing on this planet that can possibly feel more weird than either wearing just a shirt or wearing just socks.

But the question remains, which is worse?

Personally, I've never felt as ridiculous as when I'm wearing just a shirt. Wearing just socks is kiddie stuff. Wearing just a shirt is full-on grown-up dysfunction. But I think it's a healthy dysfunction, at least for guys.

For a girl, wearing just a shirt is no big deal; it's like a nightgown. It's been in movies forever. The girl gets a little action, and the next morning she's

wearing just a shirt and making some coffee.

You never see a guy get some action and then wake and cook pancakes wearing just a shirt. That would not only be disgusting, but dangerous.

Wearing just a shirt feels weird not only for the dweeb who is wearing just a shirt, but also for anyone around — loved one or otherwise. The weirdness stems, for the most part, from a certain appendage that extends out and down, usually just below the fault line. For the sake of journalistic integrity, I tried wearing just a shirt the other evening to find out where the weirdness came from.

Was it that the shirt stops short of protecting the wang, or was there something else, something evil, something unstable?

There was.

Maybe I'm overanalyzing this a little bit, but I think a lot of the weirdness came from the draft around the backside and in that spot below the bum but above the knees — no man's land, the taint spot.

All the while you don't feel that air around your chest and back, and that means something is exposed, the arch is open and there's a new focus in your mind. You can't shake it. All you can think is, "Man, why am I wearing just a shirt?"

So I took off the shirt and put on some socks. No problem.

Then it was like "Woo hoo, I'm naked," fun time, jump on the couch stuff.

I noticed the socks, but it didn't cause me to focus on one certain part of my nakedness, but rather my nakedness as a whole.

I was left with basically the same uncomfortable feeling as I would if I were totally naked, just a little worse.

Granted, I had on white socks. If they were dress socks or knee-high, striped, sport socks it could have changed things, but I doubt the difference would have been that substantial.

So you have to ask yourself, "If I were standing in front of a group of people, and I had to choose one, would I rather be wearing just a shirt, or just socks?"

My friend Sam says he'd go for wearing just a shirt — says he can live in the gray area.

My friend Walter also says he'd opt

for wearing just a shirt, not because he'd feel less weird, but because he claims to "embrace the weirdness."

My buddy Justin said, "I'd see if they'd let me get by wearing just a leather jacket. That'd be cool."

There are people who'll pay you for that, buddy.

For me, I'd go with wearing just socks. Then it's like "I'm here, I'm naked, check me out. Oh yeah, I've got socks on but, booyah, most of me is naked." Not, "I'm here, I'm wearing just a shirt, why are you looking at me like that? I understand, you're afraid, I know. I wish I were wearing just socks, too."

But who am I to say? It's up to us, America, to find out what's worse — wearing just a shirt, just socks or whatever.

It's a question that forces us to analyze ourselves at our most vulnerable.

Maybe when we can understand why we feel so strange when we are wearing just a shirt, we will be more understanding of each other as well.

So here's the challenge:

Sometime tonight, or today or anytime soon, try wearing just a shirt and then try wearing just socks, and report your findings to me.

If you have some friends you trust, try walking into the room wearing just a shirt. Don't do it if the people will be seriously offended, but if they'll give you an honest response, give it a go.

Some of you should try the same thing wearing just socks, and we'll see if people are being treated differently when they're sporting the "just-a-shirt" look or the "just-socks" look.

I've set up an e-mail account to collect your findings at crudenudes@hotmail.com.

So let me know what you think.

If the findings are substantial

enough, I'll elaborate on this subject in a later column.

And if you feel like wearing just a shirt or wearing just socks is too lowbrow for you, try just wearing a nice hat — that's actually pretty classy.



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This is living

Off-campus residency takes some adjusting, but is still worth it



This morning I woke ready to hit the community shower and eat my pre-prepared breakfast alongside all my buddies, but I found that something was amiss. Something felt odd, out-of-whack.

I knew that this was not going to be a typical day in the residence hall.

And then I remembered that I didn't live in a hall, and breathed a nice hefty sigh of relief.

Yes, kiddos, after only four years of life at this school, I now live off campus, where the only foot fungus I can catch in the shower is my own. (Or the ferrets', I suppose. Wait, why are there ferrets in my shower again? Darn little rats.)

Ever since I was dishonorably discharged from my SA position (Oh,

wait, they're RAs now. Nice to see that UNL finally caught up.), I've had a distinct feeling that it was time for a change of residence.

Maybe it was the idea that I was no longer master of my domain (no, not in the "Seinfeld" sense, thank you) that awakened the urge in me to stake out on my own. Or maybe I didn't feel that the hall environment was providing me with the personal growth that I needed anymore.

OK, who am I trying to kid? It was the fact that I just had entirely too much crap. I had no other choice than to move to a space bigger than an 11-by-12 box. (Anyone who's tried to fit a bed, a couch and a book into those Cather-Pound rooms knows just what I'm talking about.)

So, I found my roommates and started to look around. Actually, to their credit, they did most of the looking. My self-appointed job in the process was saying, "Yeah, let's check that out" over the phone.

We got lucky and found a pretty killer deal in your average Lincoln ghetto. Initially, I protested against the location, but when I found out that I'd get to slob out in my very own bathroom, I was nothing but thumbs up.

Plus, the landlord's Australian. Tell me, does it get any better than that?

Oh, it does. It definitely does.

I moved in and was overjoyed to finally have my own place. What I did not have, however, was any of my own furniture. I became really good at the whole makeshift bed and dresser deal. (If you need to employ my services, you just let me know.)

What I also did not have were human neighbors. My roommates and I figured out that the people in the apartment next door were actually mutant Satanic aliens.

My bedroom is near their door, and they loved to make my life hell by sitting on the stoop, making their mutant alien noises until 4 in the morning. (Oh, did I mention that I had to work at 6 a.m.?) Joy.)

So there I was, sleeping on the floor and living next to Satan. And I was miserable.

I even considered moving back into Cather. I mean, sure I couldn't have a beer, or light a candle or decide when I was going to eat in Cather, but it wasn't all bad. In fact, sometimes it was a pretty good time.

No, it wasn't all bad, but I realized that it certainly wasn't for me anymore.

When I was an SA it was fine, and when I was a freshman it was even better, but the truth is that I had simply outgrown it. And now I needed to deal with the situation that I was in and make the best of the place that I had decided to call home.

Eventually, I found enough money for a bed, and (this is the kicker) got the neighbors kicked out.

I did! No kidding!

(Well, I like to think that it was mostly because of me that they had to leave, but I have a feeling that I wasn't the only one who complained about them.)

With spankin' new neighbors and a nearly complete set of furniture, it's a pretty nice situation.

But the university housing department won't tell you that off-campus living can be a nice situation. They never want you to move out, and they give you some pretty convincing arguments come end-of-the-year time.

If you're not ready to completely take responsibility for yourself and your place of residence, then believe me, the halls are a great thing.

Sure, I have to make my own meals and clean up after myself, but I can park 10 feet from my door and put nail

holes in my wall if I want to. I can drink a glass of wine with dinner, and I won't be sent to the principal's office if I screw up.

Oh sure, there's plenty of room in an apartment to screw up, and I'll be the first to admit that it was a little scary letting go of that residential safety blanket that I'd gotten so used to.

But part of maturing into that mythical creature known as the adult is learning how to fix your mistakes on your own. Believe me, fixing mine has been quite a momentous task in the last few months, and I can't say that I've done it all by myself.

But I'm getting there. Slowly but surely, I will reach complete adult independence! Hoo-ah!

For now, I'm getting used to having to vacuum and dust periodically, and slowly but surely adjusting to life off campus. An apartment is a strange thing for a 4-year dormie to get used to, but I wouldn't trade it for another day of communal living. My own personal space has just become way too precious to share with 20 other chicks.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go home and run around my place naked. I'm just hoping the ferrets won't mind.

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