



PARENTS **PARKids** CHRONICLE

Growing in Grace at Grandview Park

BODY WARS

BY KATHLEEN P. ATWELL

According to a recent poll in United Kingdom—based teen magazine *Bliss*, only one-tenth of the girls polled were happy with their bodies, and 40 percent have considered plastic surgery. The magazine's editor, Chantelle Horton, considers the poll results a "21st-century tragedy."

The pressure to have a perfect body is strong. Photographers touch up photos of celebrities and models, leading us to believe that body perfection is attainable. Television reality shows like *Extreme Makeover* and MTV's *I Want a Famous Face* encourage teens to pursue cosmetic surgery to look like their favorite movie stars or trade their "imperfections" for flawless features.

But it's all in good fun, right? Think again. The underlying message boldly sent through media is strong: Your body is not good enough.

What's a parent to do? Breaking through cultural lies is one of the toughest parenting jobs. How can you convince your teen she is a beautiful child of God when society tells her she doesn't measure up? Don't despair. You can make a difference.

1. Be informed.

Pretending the problem doesn't exist won't protect your child...The American Society of Plastic Surgeons reports that the most popular cosmetic surgery among teens is rhinoplasty—in casual terms, "a nose job." Liposuction and breast augmentation were also high on the list. According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, the number of females 18 and younger receiving breast implants nearly tripled from 2002 to 2003. [The FDA has since banned minors from receiving saline breast implants.] The teens cited pressure from boys who expect their girlfriends to look like celebrities and a desire to be liked and accepted as reasons for having

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receiving breast implants nearly tripled from 2002 to 2003. [The FDA has since banned minors from receiving saline breast implants.] The teens cited pressure from boys who expect their girlfriends to look like celebrities and a desire to be liked and accepted as reasons for having

surgery. Cosmetic surgery is rapidly becoming an acceptable method of improving image.

Since the '60s, when teenage super-skinny, super-model Twiggy graced our homes through print media and brought a whole new concept of "thin is in," female body-image obsession has increased significantly. It's now reached epidemic proportions and affects girls at younger ages every year. Without an awareness of this poisonous trend of distorted body images, parents can't help their daughters overcome the lies.

2. Examine Your Heart.

What do you see when you look into a full-length mirror? A beautiful woman created in the image of God? Are you comfortable with your body? A mother's impact is powerful. *Bliss* magazine states that more than half of the girls polled said their mothers "worried and moaned" about their own weight.

"When teenage girls look to their moms for reassurance and guidance, they see an older generation of women who are also haunted by their imperfect body shape and size," said Ms. Horton. "The endless parade of thin yet curvy surgically enhanced celebrities has made young girls obsessed with their own normal, lumpy, bumpy bodies."

Our conversations reveal our insecurities. When you are with friends, how often does talk focus on appearance or weight? What comments come from your mouth when you try on clothes or sit down to eat supper? Eliminate body obsession from your heart. If you're unhappy with your appearance, you fuel the fire of dissatisfaction in your home. Your daughter needs to see that you're content with the body God gave you.

3. Pray.

Cover your daughter with blankets of prayer. Pray Scriptures for her. The Bible is full of verses pertaining to our body and the way we should view ourselves. My favorite is found in Proverbs 31:30:

"Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."

Do a topical study with your daughter on the subject of body image. Stormie Omartian's book *The Power of a Praying Parent* is a great resource. The scriptural prayers will help your children find their identity in the Lord.

4. Build Strong Foundations.

"Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."

Dissatisfaction with appearance is the driving force behind cosmetic procedures. There are situations when plastic surgery is medically necessary, but many are done for vanity reasons. When a young girl dines at the table of empty reality

shows and music videos featuring young celebrities with Barbie-doll figures, her self-image becomes warped. As parents we are responsible to help shape our daughters into the women God designed.

Give her a steady diet of unconditional love and acceptance. Dads should be vocal about their love and approval for their daughters. She needs to feel pretty, feminine, and protected. It sounds old-fashioned, but it's a timeless parenting principle. Help her find her worth in all areas of her life: spiritual, emotional, and physical. Teach her to be balanced.

Instill in her the truth found in Proverbs 31: A woman's beauty does not come from outward appearance. True beauty is inside of us. When we live a life of love and service to others, our very being radiates a divine and resplendent presence.

Teach your daughter to respect and care for her body. It is the vessel God has created to carry out kingdom work. Exercise, healthy meals, and being clean and neat should be a regular part of life.

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5. Diffuse Cultural Lies.

The media continues to define success in terms of a perfect body. Fashion magazines confirm this falsehood with page after page of ultra-thin models. Hollywood glorifies actresses who fit the cultural ideal of a woman's body.

You can diffuse these damaging lies as you teach your daughter discernment. Watch a few episodes of reality television together. Discuss what is really happening. Point out real beauty that is constantly overlooked. Talk about how the people in the show must be feeling. What are they hoping for? Will they find it in their appearances?

Read old classics and biographies together in which the heroine's looks are not what determine her happiness or success. Robin Jones Gunn's book, *Gentle Passages: Guiding Your Daughter into Womanhood* is an excellent book to share.

Raising children can feel scary at times, but the words in 1 John 4:18 remind us that "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear." With God as your guide, you can instill confidence and contentment into your daughter's life. It's never too early to begin.

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RESOURCES FOR PARENTS OF GIRLS

- * *Girl Talk: Mother-Daughter Conversations on Biblical Womanhood* by Carolyn Mahaney & Nicole Mahaney Whitacre (Crossway, 2005). Read a book review at www.challies.com/book-reviews/feminine-appeal. See www.girltalkhome.com for lots of great stuff including suggestions on modesty.
- * For advice on finding modest, trendy clothing, see www.purefashion.com. Note: *Pure Fashion* is associated with an organization of the Roman Catholic Church. I recommend it only as a web resource; use discernment.
- * *The Look: Does God Really Care What I Wear?* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss (Revive Our Hearts, 2003). You can read a transcript from a radio program discussing this topic at www.reviveourhearts.com/radio/roh/today.php?pid=971.
- * *Girls Gone Mild: Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It's Not Bad to Be Good* by Wendy Shalit (Random House, 2007). Read a book review at www.challies.com/book-reviews/book-review-girls-gone-mild.

Summer Family Activities

- Fri., May 28 Family Bike Ride & Ice Cream
Come celebrate the end of school!
- Sun., June 6 Kids Bible Club begins
- June 14-19 Junior Boys Camp
- June 21-26 Junior Girls Camp
- June 25-26 Father-Son Campout at
Lake Ahquabi State Park
- Sat., July 10 Father-Daughter Horseback Riding
- Fri., Aug. 6 Iowa Cubs game

READ MY QUIPS

- "I can shoot with my left hand, and I can shoot with my right hand. I must be amphibious." -- *Charles Shackleford, North Carolina State basketball player, explaining to reporters his ability to drive to the basket*
- "If I had not lost, I would have won." -- *tennis star Serena Williams, after failing to win the French Open*
- "Where's the football field?" -- *tennis star Jennifer Capriati, while being shown Notre Dame cathedral in Paris*
- "Yes, we'll be able to hang our heads high in the off-season." -- *quarterback Warren Moon, after leading the AFC to a Pro Bowl victory*
- "We've got our backs to the driver's seat." -- *Denver Broncos halfback Otis Armstrong, on his team's future*
- "I want to rush for 1,000 or 1,500 yards, whichever comes first." -- *New Orleans Saints running back George Rogers, when asked about the upcoming season*
- "Definitely. I mean I'm not so arrogant that I can't forgive." -- *New York Knicks forward Latrell Sprewell when asked if he would consider meeting with his former coach, P.J.*

DUMB SPORTS QUOTES

- *Carlesimo, whom he had tried to strangle two years earlier*
- "Football is an incredible game. Sometimes it's so incredible, it's unbelievable." -- *Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry*
- "It's a no-win, no-lose situation." -- *Pittsburgh Steelers coach Bill Cowher*
- "I'm not allowed to comment on lousy officiating." -- *Jim Finks, New Orleans Saints general manager, when asked after a loss what he thought of the referees*
- "Even Napoleon had his Watergate." -- *Danny Ozark, Philadelphia Phillies manager, commenting on a ten-game losing streak*
- "When it rains, it snows." -- *Florida State football coach Bobby Bowden, on learning that one of his players had had another brush with the law*
- "It's the kind of book that you can never pick up once you put it down." -- *Pat Williams, Philadelphia 76ers general manager, on Charles Barkley's autobiography*

From *The Bride of Anguished English* by Richard Lederer (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 40-41.

GRANDVIEW PARK BAPTIST CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES