

I was reading an article about Barbie. A recent study out of Canada resulted in the finding that 99% of girls (age 3 to 10 years old) had a Barbie doll. That is not really remarkable except for the fact that these young girls want to look like their Barbie. It isn't the same as boys wanting to be like GI Joe. Little boys think if they have a dart gun or fatigues they look like GI Joe. If they are screaming and shooting a toy gun they become him. Little girls really want to be Barbie to the extent that it is frightening. They want the hair, the shoes, the tops, but mostly they want the body. Barbies' proportions, for example, found that her back would be too weak to support the weight of her upper body and her lower body would be too narrow to contain more than half a liver and only a few centimeters of bowel. A real woman who was built that way would suffer from chronic diarrhea and eventually die. Eating disorders affect almost half of all teenage girls in some capacity. Who is responsible—media, TV, girlfriends, boyfriends, genetics, web sites, parents? It's all of us. We all have ways of judging people and in this society we usually judge what we see first.

Men are more visual and I use to think if we change men's thinking or educated them about the importance of the way they talk to women and about women we could turn this body image epidemic around. Although men could be educated more in regards to women's bodies and what they experience in relation to hormones and body fat, they are not really the problem. Most men marry a woman that is average height 5'4", and weight twenty to forty pounds over their desired weight. Men talk about beautiful women, but they go deeper than our look when they are talking about love or marriage (how deep is up to negotiation). I think women are the real problem. We hold ourselves up to impossible standards. Men are sick of hearing about our thighs, our wrinkles, and our hair.

It is women who have to make the change. We have to understand that the concept of beauty is driven by an advertisement industry. This industry is all about making money. We women fall for it hook, line and sinker. We buy products to boost us up, hold us in, cover our age spots, and define our waists. We don't only judge ourselves, but we judge our daughters and we judge our daughters' friends. We make foolish mistakes by trying to make our daughters the most beautiful in the class so they (or is it us?) can be popular. How do we get out of this mess?

1. Before you buy anything look at it carefully. What is the advertiser trying to convince you of? If they are trying to sell you something that is going to make you more beautiful do you really believe this is going to change your life? Wouldn't everyone buy it if it were so powerful?

2. If your man really wanted a "Barbie Doll" could he get one? If he could why is he with you? If you aren't sure, maybe you should ask him.

3. What would improve in your life if you were as thin as Barbie? Would you have more confidence? Would you feel more accomplished? Maybe your looks are not the problem. Maybe it is deeper and the fact that you have a flaw (a little overweight) makes it easier to not deal with the real issue.

4. When your daughter does something special reward her with your time, not by buying her something that "will make her look more beautiful". She is beautiful enough and so are you.

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