

"Perception of Beauty" (April 18)

Beauty in America has become an impossible pursuit. Plastic surgery and dangerous diet pills have become the norm for all - women, men, and children. Our country has become so obsessed with this "arbitrary" image of beauty. What is beauty? Who determined that skinny waists, large breasts, and other generic qualities were deemed beautiful? What may bother me even more than the "image of beauty" is the incessant need to acquire these attributes but only through the path of least resistance. Americans all strive for the same image, but we do it through pills, gimmicks, and plastic surgery. We need to start emphasizing health instead of beauty in America. Having seen many of my relatives suffer from illnesses, I get so sick of hearing people taking aggressive "medications" that have serious side effects. My "secret" method to losing weight and feeling incredible are EATING RIGHT and EXERCISING.

For the past 3 years, I have exercised a total of five times. I've put on 20 pounds from eating late night and filling my mouth with junk food. For the past month, I've been running 3-4 days a week (1-2 miles) and making a conscious effort to eat more fruits and vegetables (swapping out a breakfast sandwich for a late night snack or breakfast with bananas and apples), and I feel the best I have in the past 3 years. I think we often confuse "beauty" with "confidence." They are two entirely different goals. Too many people think, "If I could only get this to look better, my life would be perfect." That's almost never the case. In my opinion, feeling beautiful means feeling incredible- having great digestion, being in great shape, and feeling like the best you possible. We need to change our definition of beauty. Originally, we defined beauty as a series of random characteristics that the media has deemed important (skinny waist, big breasts, huge biceps, etc ...). Instead, we need to refocus that definition on being healthy.

Honestly, I feel that people aren't willing to change their lifestyle because there aren't clear "benefits" to the change. When we take medication or get surgery, we see immediate results, which fools our minds into thinking that "modern medicine" as the most efficient form of change. Like I said before, my family has had a number of illnesses, particularly my mother. My mother has always complained about gaining too much weight after giving birth to my sister and myself. For years, she was never able to exercise because she never had any energy after working and taking care of the children. For the past 2 years or so, she has changed the way she ate (only organic fruits, vegetables, and chicken), and she found that she had so much more energy than before. Not only has she put off 20 pounds, but also she has repeatedly stated that she hasn't felt better about herself in 20 years. She feels more energetic, more confident (now that she's working out and shedding her own weight), and has gotten rid of her primary illness. My family now views health as beauty. Having had terrible allergies and a horribly weak immune system, I myself have come to realize this as well. There's no reason to look great, if you're going to feel miserable.

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