Women Have Too Much Pressure to Have the Perfect Bodies.

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Abstract

According to a study Dove did, only 2% of women describes themselves as beautiful. “Women have too much pressure to have the perfect bodies” explores the way women view themselves and argues that we should advertise all body types so that everyone can begin to feel comfortable in their own skin. Research and statistics cited include information from Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty and also their Movement of Self-Esteem.

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Every day we see TV advertisements, hear them on the radio, or even see billboards driving down the interstate about the newest clothing trends or the best diet pills. We even see celebrities on the front page of a magazine with the caption “Lose 35 Pounds in Just a Few Weeks!” while waiting in line at the grocery store. Its things like these that put so much pressure on women and young girls to have what people consider a “perfect” body when in reality, that “perfect” body is unrealistic. Even kids TV shows (like on Disney Channel) put into the minds of young children that you must act or look a certain way to be accepted which is false and unnecessary. “42% of 1st-3rd grade girls want to be thinner and 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat.” (3) Why should we carry this pressure when it brings us no good?

“In a study conducted on mass media it was revealed that women’s magazines had about 10.5 times more weight loss advertisements than men’s.” (1) Self-esteem is a big problem in today’s society, especially with women. With how big of an influence celebrities are becoming on today’s youth, things such as having a slim but curvy body, clear skin, and thin thighs are changing the way they want to see themselves. According to Anad.org, 69% of girls in 5th-12th grade reported that they got the idea of the perfect body from a picture in a magazine. “Among high school students, 44% of girls and 15% of guys are attempting to lose weight.” (2) Girls shouldn’t compare themselves to what they see on TV or in a magazine, simply because the fact
that the “perfect” body doesn’t really exist because these images that they see are photo-shopped and airbrushed. “The body type portrayed in advertising as the ideal is possessed naturally by only 5% of American females.” (3) Instead of using the original images, companies want the women who are advertising for them to look perfect so that we, the consumers, will buy the product that they are selling because we want to look the way they do whether it’s clothes, makeup, or diet pills.

As women strive and push themselves to have the perfect, thin body, some will push themselves too far by trying crazy diets or not even eating at all. Anorexia is the third most common chronic illness in young adults and eating disorders in general are the top mental illness in Americans. “Up to 30 million people of all ages and genders suffer from an eating disorder (anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder) in the U.S.” (3)

The celebrities that we look up to also face the same pressures that we do to look perfect. Almost every actor/actress is told that they need to look a certain way for a film they’re going to be in, whether it’s losing/gaining weight, or growing/cutting their hair. Actress Jennifer Lawrence has talked about this in many interviews, stating that she refuses to change her body and the way she looks for a part in a movie. She likes that she looks “different” and she wants to stand as a role model for her fans by staying true to who she is and not giving into the pressures of changing her physical appearance.

Demi’s struggle with eating disorders

As most people know, Demi Lovato struggled with self-harm and eating disorders, but she recently came back and in stronger than ever after she made the strong decision to go to rehab. When Demi was just eight years old, she struggled with eating excessively and her parents
wanted to get her help. At age 12, she began getting bullied by the kids at her school because she was “fat,” which caused her to almost stop eating completely. “It's a common misconception that eating disorders are just about food. But they're actually about so much more than that,” states Demi in an article she wrote for Seventeen Magazine. (4) She also writes in Seventeen Magazine how she believes that eating disorders come from low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, or being bullied about weight, and also feeling the pressure to meet the impossible standards today to have the perfect body. Demi now has a partnership in a campaign called “Love is Louder Than Words,” where they encourage people to love who they are and to embrace their “flaws” that make us all who we are today.

The Pressure to be Perfect

Not only do these unrealistic images that we see every day bring us down, but so does the pressure to impress others and to make the boy of your dreams like you. Boys see the same images we do and they see Victoria’s Secret models and they look at those girls with the thought that that’s what “sexy” is and that’s what girls should look like. For young girls who haven’t fully gone through puberty, it’s impossible to compare to those types of girls who model bras and underwear.

Famous viner Nash Grier recently posted a YouTube video he and a friend made discussing what a girl should and shouldn’t do. This video got a lot of attention because of how they were contradicting girls saying that they should wear makeup, but not too much. Girls should act “innocent,” then act “freaky” when they’re alone together, but they can’t forget to be themselves also. Its small things like this that make it impossible for young girls to feel comfortable in their own skin and to want to be themselves. We shouldn’t feel like we have to act a certain way to get the attention of a guy that we like. For example, some guys think it’s cute
when a girl acts stupid. Women shouldn’t have to dumb their selves down for a guy to think we’re funny or cute. Being told we’re the wrong height, weight, have the wrong hair color, eye color, etc. keeps us from feeling happy and having confidence in ourselves.

Another very important source of pressure for kids to strive to be perfect actually comes from their own home. Shows like Dance Moms or Toddlers in Tiaras show perfect examples. The young girls in these shows are put under the pressure to keep a slim figure and are forced to a spray tan when it comes time to their competition. These moms criticize their daughters and compare them to the other girls their age about how they look act. Even though these are TV shows and not every family is like that, young girls who are overweight deal with their parents telling them they need to eat less or to “lay off the sweets.” Even though they might think they’re just protecting their child, its things like this that make them feel self-conscious and unhappy with themselves. Home is supposed to be our safe place, and young children shouldn’t be told they need to diet.

Instead of extreme diets, taking dieting pills, or eating less, TV advertisements and magazines should promote health. Eating healthy and being into fitness should be more of a go-to than unhealthy diet plans. Women should have more self-knowledge about what average weight is healthy for their height, instead of the “ideal weight” of 115-120 pounds which can be very harmful for girls of certain heights.

According to debate.org, the opposing viewpoints on this topic are the fact that there is no true definition of “perfect,” only people’s own opinions. In advertisements they want to make people look good, so of course they’re going to put their best looking people on their ads, but not everyone holds these standards up to average women. It’s your own choice if you’re going to make things like this bother you, but what some people don’t understand is not everyone can
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help it. When the thought of being “perfect” gets into a young person’s mind, they want to try and succeed to look as good as those models. Just because America has put this image of the ideal body into every women’s head, it’s still our choice to be strong enough to overcome that and to be comfortable in our own skin.

Debate.org also includes that companies such as Victoria’s Secret is including plus sized models and that society is putting pressure on girls to be healthy, which is false. Yes, there are ads from companies like Weight Watchers and products related to it that promote eating healthier. The truth is though, they show more commercials and you see in the magazines and billboards more advertisements from fashion companies like Victoria’s Secret and Abercrombie and Fitch that promote lingerie and bras all on models with that people consider the ideal body. Where are the plus sized models here?

Abercrombie and Fitch Causes Issues

According to nymag.com, “Abercrombie and Fitch was created, Jeffries has said, for the “attractive all-American kid with a great attitude and a lot of friends. A lot of people don’t belong [in our clothes], and they can’t belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely.” They started selling thongs that were marketed to girls as young as 10 years old and has an issue of A&F Quarterly that had a manual on “having oral sex in a movie theater.” (6) Their stores only hired people who had the “model” look that they had trending to go along with the pictures on shirtless men all over the store. Recently, everyone’s heard about them selling t-shirts that quote things advertising eating disorders and slim bodies, which is part of the reason why they’re in trouble now. Stores all over the place have been closing down since 2009 because of these issues and also issues of rising prices. Their obvious advertisements to a certain crowd has raised some eyebrows and led to some serious phone calls and e-mails from angry customers, causing issues
to their business. They have said that they’re going to release a plus sized clothing line, but it might just be too late to try to make it up now.

**Dove’s Campaign**

As recently seen on TV, Dove now has advertisements saying “be your beautiful self.” Its things like this we need more of, with a variety of women all different colors and body types. This commercial shows that it’s okay to be different and that everyone should feel beautiful in their own skin. In 2004 Dove started a campaign for “real beauty.” According to a study they did, they found that “only 2% of women around the world would describe themselves as beautiful.” (7) In 2010, they wanted to put forward an effort to make beauty “a source of confidence” by the Dove Movement of Self-Esteem. The purpose behind this is to lower the anxiety people have about their bodies and to make everyone feel beautiful. “In a study of over 1,200 10-to-17-year-olds, a majority of girls, 72%, said they felt tremendous pressure to be beautiful. The study also found that only 11% of girls around the world feel comfortable using the word beautiful to describe their looks, showing that there is a universal increase in beauty pressure and a decrease in girls' confidence as they grow older.” (7) The thought and the message behind these movements are truly beautiful and more of what we need in this world. Everyone should feel beautiful in their own skin and shouldn’t have to change for anyone.
Works Cited


