

“Am I pretty, mummy?” Building the Core-self of Female Children

I remember, as a child, hearing my mother sing this song: *“I asked my mother what will I be...? Will I be pretty? Will I be rich? Here’s what she said to me....(now I was really listening because I thought the song would offer me the answer – and I really, really wanted to know!).... Que sera, sera whatever will be, will be....”*

How disappointing! How unsatisfying!

Girls begin to worry about being pretty at a very young age. Female children are dieting and exhibiting disordered eating patterns as young as 7 years old. Pretty = thin. Pretty = white.

“I’m so tired of being told, “you’re pretty...*for a black girl.*” – Aisha Curry – 17 year old girl on u-tube.

As parents, how do we answer this question: Am I pretty?

The key is to, “*deflect and reflect*” – *deflect* the question and *reflect* the inside quality of your girls.

Example: This is a real-life conversation between a mother and her 12 year old daughter:

Mummy...do you like my hair? Is it pretty?

Did you do that yourself?

Yes...but do you like it?

Didn’t your arms get tired doing all those braids?”

No...but do you like it?

Is anyone else wearing their hair like that at school?

No....

Wow, you are so brave!

I know I am! Bye!

Pretty is like the wrapping on the birthday present. It's nice to look at but after a very short period of time, it gets boring and we all want to know..."What's inside?!?" . If we unwrap the gift and there's something meaningless, broken, or just not what we like or can relate to....or what if it's empty? How important is that pretty paper and shiny bow now?

It's the same for girls and women. Boys and men too but they don't tend to wrap their gifts all fancy the way females do. Males tend to go for what's inside and be way more interested in how it works and what it can do.

Females are given the message at a very young age that what they look like, what they wear, their hair, eyes and shape and size of their bodies are the most important things about them. That is what is noticed and commented on. Or not noticed and not commented on.

The results of this over/under-focus on appearance can be devastating to the core self of the girl child. Regardless of whether she is "pretty" or not. If she is used to getting the comments, she will notice when they aren't there and she will feel invisible (invisible is the worst kind of "ugly"). If a female is not attractive in the media represented way, she will hear other girls getting that kind of attention and she will feel erased, wiped out...invisible. *The worst kind of ugly.*

Remember: *Deflect* and *Reflect* – *deflect* the question and *reflect* the inside quality of your girls...shine the light on their *essence*.

Am I pretty?

You are way more than pretty..you are radiant! You are smart and brave and funny and creative and original. I could never fit you into a word as small as "pretty".

Am I pretty?

You are beautiful to me in every way.

Am I pretty?

What do you think? Is it important? What does being pretty mean? Why do you think girls all want to be pretty? Would you rather be pretty like a Barbie doll or unique, creative and powerful like, PINK or LADY GA-GA or ADELE?

Am I pretty?

Yes you have been born with good looks by our western world media standards. This will always provide you with certain opportunities but maybe not the ones you really want. Your appearance can also create many challenges. Let's look at what they might be....

- The wrong doors can open too easily,
- too much attention on our looks can make us feel unseen for who we are,
- We can become addicted to the (temporary) “hit” that compliments give us and we can become addicted to that kind of attention.
- We can feel that we have nothing else to offer,

- Other girls can be jealous and be really mean calling us sluts etc.. Other girls can feel threatened or that they can’t compete when they see how much male attention we get, they will see you as competition instead of a friend,
- We can feel powerful when we get this attention and start to think we are better than other girls
- We can also use that power to hurt boys who want to be with us.
- It can be really lonely to be the prettiest girl in school...or we can have so many friends who want to be around us so they can feed off the attention we get.
- Feeling popular and getting so much attention can make us feel that we don’t have to do well in anything else.
- Getting this kind of attention constantly can feel uncomfortable because we know we didn’t do anything to earn being pretty.
- We can feel violated by all the boys and older men looking at us and making comments.
- Pretty girls often never feel pretty enough and there is a lot of pressure to compete with an endless number of other girls who are pretty – and there are always other girls who we feel are prettier than we are. (models have low self esteem, don’t feel pretty and often develop eating disorders because we all know that skinny = pretty). Pretty girls can be attracted to plastic surgery to improve on their looks...it’s like we are under our own microscope and we see all these invisible flaws and feel compelled to fix them.
- As we get older, aging can be devastating to females who have learned that what they look like is who they are.

Am I pretty?

(add your own ideas)

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Inspired by: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6wJI37N9C0>