

Written evidence submitted by Leo Brooks (BYC047)

Body image affects everyone. Everyone is, in part, their body image. This must be made perfectly clear before tackling the issue.

Some take pride in their image. Some work hard for their image. Some will even be seduced by their own image. None of these examples infer that another example is enacted.

Someone who takes no pride in their image may work very hard towards bettering themselves in their eyes. They may spend countless hours exercising, under strict dietary regime, to achieve the look they desire.

A professional hairdresser could spend an entire morning tending to their own hair and still not think it sufficient. A schoolchild will spend time in the mirror making sure they've got their uniform looking both smart while retaining a sense of identity. A pubescent teen may spend all their time searching the expression of those they interact with, to find a glimpse of horror or disdain, for the pocks that mark their face.

Body image is an issue for everyone. Some are pleased, many are not. This is an issue of balancing ego, with lifestyle, and love of self.

As someone who has suffered heavily with body image issues, I could extend a comprehensive list of events, perceptions, and patterns that have emerged from such an illness. I shall keep it brief so as to convey the point and not my story.

I spent most of my life obese, from as early as I can remember, to so recently, that I still can't believe I am no longer an overweight individual. So much of my time was spent, wasted, on thinking "what if?". What if I was thin, how would my life be different. How would people perceive me. What if; I liked the way I looked.

Hatred. Self despising, rotting from the inside. Judging every step taken, every morsel eaten, every passing shallow gaze back from a pane of glass. I was, in fact, my worst enemy.

Not that others didn't remind me of my overtly gorged stature. I was bountiful, though that word would imply my body was something to be desired; I guess to a soap maker, my body would be a bounty to rival that of an Egyptian pharaoh's burial chamber.

Others may have made passing remarks, even bullied, but ultimately; it was I, who inflicted most of the pain.

I have since improved my body image. I am now proud of myself. I dress in clothes that flatter my figure. Have a style which is eclectic, eccentric, and sincerely mine. I eat food I love. I do things I enjoy. I do not let the perception of others define who I am.

I CHOOSE to make the decisions that better me. I love myself. I know now, what I didn't then. As with everything else in life, body image must be regarded in a holistic sense. No matter how attractive somebody's genetics are; if suffocated under endless mountains of crap and stifled with idleness, they will be ugly. If you are upset, you will not be attractive.

It isn't about ignoring the issue or hating yourself until it changes. Accept the parts of you which you wish were different. Love yourself into changing who you are, because you want to be different! Not to please the eyes of others, not even to please the eye that looks you up and down in the mirror, to please how it feels to be you!

Body Image is how we project ourselves. Body Image shouldn't be how we elaborately mask our patterns.

I do NOT believe that this issue should be complicated. The human body is a beautiful thing. What we do to it is ugly. Teach people to enjoy being healthy, to enjoy being who they are, to lift themselves up.

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