

How do I Look?



According to the media

Once upon a time, a tall, muscular prince set out to rescue a beautiful, thin princess...and they lived happily ever after. Stereotypes that focus on male and female

body image continue to flood TV and movie screens, even in programming targeted at young children. (A stereotype is defined as a simplified image portraying an idea that many people think about a group that is either untrue or partially true.) Research shows that stereotyping is prominent in media today, especially in television and movies.

Think about the TV shows and movies that you have watched in the past 6-12 months. Work with a partner to respond to the following:

1. List the top three BEST LOOKING male and female characters in TV/movies:

Female	Male

2. In your opinion, what specific physical attributes (qualities) make them “best looking?”

3. List two TV or movie characters you have wanted to look like. What physical qualities of these characters were most appealing to you?

4. Have you ever changed something about your appearance to be more like a TV/movie character? Explain.

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According to the clothing manufacturers:

Television and movies are not the only influences of body image. Have you ever thought about why a medium shirt in one store fits differently than a medium shirt in another store?

Read the excerpt on the following page from USA TODAY, *When a size 10 isn't a size 10* by Sophie Terbush, to find out how and why clothes manufacturers define sizes differently. As you read, think about how you will complete the following sentences:

1. Today, I found myself most interested in...
2. The most surprising thing I read or heard today is...
3. This article relates to me because...
4. One thing I still want to know is...

Television, movies and even manufacturers can influence how people view themselves. They all can reinforce negative stereotypes for young girls and boys today. In order to overcome these messages, students must begin to acknowledge that they all portray false images about what is normal physical appearance for males and females.

According to Me

One way to draw a line between the body image stereotypes portrayed in the media and the real world is to acknowledge the great, authentic qualities YOU possess. Think about the qualities that make you great and complete each line below as you create a poem titled, "According to Me..." Feel free to add lines as you create your poem. Block out the messages of the media and define your own image. Be prepared to share your poem.

According to Me....

I AM:

I AM:

I AM:

I AM:

I AM:

And that's according to me.

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What size are you?

You hesitate. Look in your closet, and if you're like most [people], you'll have a variety of sizes that fit you, more or less. That's because a size 8 in one brand may not be the same as a size 8 in another. Many [people] have closets full of clothing in a range of sizes, from different stores or brands.

And the trend is toward bigger sizes being labeled with smaller numbers as clothing designers especially of more expensive brands add inches to the traditional sizes, experts say.

It's known as "vanity sizing, when the price increases and [sizes] decrease," says Tammy Kinley, associate professor at the University of North Texas School of Merchandising and Hospitality Management. There's really no such thing as a brand that runs "true-to-size."

"Any manufacturer can pick whatever measurements they want and attach a number to it," she says...Kinley says there is a competitive edge to the shape and size of a garment, and that edge is how their customers feel when wearing it.

"If you associate a positive feeling with trying on clothes, you'll spend more money to buy them," says Joan Chrisler, a professor of psychology at Connecticut College.

"The woman who needs a 12 but finds out she can fit into an 8 is going to get a self-esteem boost, even if she knows it's a gimmick," Chrisler says.

A self-esteem boost like that might be welcome after watching rail-thin models and celebrities on fashion runways and TV while the size of the average woman has been slowly increasing.

The average U.S. woman today wears a size 14, says the Department of Health and Human Services. In Calvin Klein's sizing chart, that would be a 42-inch bust, a 34-inch waist and 44-inch hips. Meanwhile, at Kmart, a size 14 has a 40-inch bust, a 33-inch waist and 43-inch hips.

Though vanity sizing may be one factor, obesity rates also play a part. In the USA, 34% of adults are overweight, and an additional 40% are obese or extremely obese, according to 2007-08 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 1960, 31% of adults were overweight, 13% were obese and less than 1% were extremely obese, the CDC says.

In response, plus sizes and designers such as Torrid and Lane Bryant, which cater to women over size 12, have become more prevalent. Marketers have also tried to raise awareness about body image and accepting who you are, Kinley says.

Many women, however, still aren't happy with the number on the label, Chrisler says.

"Wearing larger sizes can have an effect on women's self-esteem and even their behavior," says Deborah Tolman, professor of social welfare and psychology at City University of New York's Hunter College School of Social Work. She says women need to eat right and exercise in a healthy way, with the goal of feeling good, without either over-eating or dieting obsessively.

"If we focus on our health, our bodies will be what our bodies should be."

Source: *When a size 10 isn't a size 10*, June 22, 2011. USA TODAY

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Extend Your Learning

Want to find out more about building your body image and overcoming media messages? Check out the following websites:

- ▶ Find out more about the Girls Scouts' *Healthy MEdia Commission*, which brought together the first national dialogue about healthy images of women and girls in the media:
www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/advocacy/watchwhatyouwatch/healthymedia.asp
- ▶ Do you like to write? Find out more about WriteGirl, a nonprofit organization for high school girls centered on the craft of creative writing and empowerment through self-expression:
www.writegirl.org
- ▶ Find out more about the film *Miss Representation*, which exposes how American youth are being sold the concept that women and girls' value lies in their youth, beauty and sexuality:
www.missrepresentation.org/about-us