



LIFE
MANAGEMENT
PRINCIPLES

THIS ISSUE

**Strategies to
improve your
body image**

**Ways to resolve
past hurts**

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beyond narrow
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Learning to Love Yourself - Part 1

Last year in the United States, we spent a total of \$5 billion on surgical cosmetic surgery and \$2 billion on non-surgical procedures. Additionally, Americans spend \$8 billion annually on cosmetics. These statistics tell a disturbing story about our high level of dissatisfaction with our God-given bodies and our overwhelming preoccupation with perfection.



We manage to dissect everything related to our appearance - hair texture, eye color, skin tone, nose shape, breast size, weight, height, and body proportions. And through this process we manage to diminish our strengths and magnify our faults. According to a *Psychology Today* Body Image Survey, we are more discontent with the shape of our bodies than ever

before. A staggering 56 percent of women say they are dissatisfied with their overall appearance.

Everywhere we look advertisers are telling us we need to lose weight, get whiter teeth, rid ourselves of wrinkles, color our hair, and reshape our bodies. At the same time, the mass media is churning out unrealistic images of beauty. These images flood the pages of magazines, newspapers, television, the Internet, movies, and billboards. Studies of prime-time television indicate that programs are dominated by people with thin body types and thinness is consistently associated with favorable personality traits.

Millions of people try to conform to these media images - using these images as a "standard" by which beauty is measured and social acceptance is judged. Over a decade ago, the late social critic Christopher Lasch warned us that our culture of mass consumption encourages narcissism, a new kind of self-consciousness or vanity through which people have learned to



judge themselves not merely against others but through others' eyes. The "image" projected by possessions, physical attractiveness, clothes, and personality replace experience, skills, and character as gauges of personal identity, health and happiness. We are thrown into a chronic state of unease, perfect prey for an array of commercial solutions. (Source: *Psychology Today*)

The October and November issues of *Quest* are dedicated to increasing your awareness about how you judge your own physical appearance and how you measure beauty. You will also explore how your "standard of beauty" influences various aspects of your life. Each *Quest* edition will include strategies you can use to evaluate the condition of your own body image and help you establish a framework for maintaining a balanced perspective on physical beauty.



By establishing a healthier body image and realistic standards of beauty, you will:

- find peace and satisfaction living in your own skin
- treat yourself better and with more respect
- enjoy enhanced relationships with others
- radiate confidence and authentic beauty
- be happier and more productive

Here are this month's body image and beauty standard strategies:



Come to terms with your past - As children, we often absorb damaging words into our subconscious and we continue to carry them throughout our lives. Studies suggest that teasing during childhood and adolescence has an indelible effect on women's feelings about their bodies. Women say that the negative fallout can last for decades - no matter what shape they're *currently* in.

Regardless of the type of bad experiences you've had, find a way to let go of your negative feelings. Talk to your doctor, put your feelings and thoughts down on paper through journaling, or pray for a release and renewal of your spirit.

Be mindful of the miracle of creation - Genesis in the Bible tells us that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female - and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Our different and unique bodies represent all the various images reflected in God's image. There is no greater beauty than that of God's image. And no one more capable to create us than God. Singer India.Arie expresses it well in the lyrics of her song *Video*:

Beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder. Unfortunately, we often abandon our rights to decide by accepting societal standards of beauty.

*“When I look in the mirror the only one there is me
Every freckle on my face is where it’s supposed to be
And I know our creator didn’t make no mistakes on me
My feet, my thighs, my lips, my eyes I’m lovin’ what I see”*

Increase your awareness - We are exposed daily to a barrage of body image messages. Think about how these images influence you and your family. Ask yourself if these images



support your values and goals. Consider how these messages make you feel about yourself. You may decide to control the amount of exposure you have to certain images by changing the TV channel or being more selective about reading materials and Internet use.

Create your own definition of beauty - Beauty is truly in the eye of the beholder. Unfortunately, we often abandon our rights to decide by accepting societal standards of beauty. As I rewrite my definition of beauty, I’m learning to see *real* beauty. My once narrow view is giving way to a broader perspective that allows me to appreciate more of life.

Be grateful for all the things your body does for you - Our bodies serve us 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Because of our bodies, we can care for our families, have careers, enjoy hobbies, and be involved in our communities. I’ve been blessed with eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to breathe, hands to work and play, and legs to walk. And beyond my outward appearance, I have a heart, lungs and various other organs working to keep me alive. Be thankful for all the things you can do because of your body. Take care of your body - inside and out. Remember to exercise, eat nutritionally balanced meals, get sufficient rest, and pamper yourself as often as possible.



Next month’s issue of *Quest* will offer additional ways you can strengthen your body image and expand your definition of beauty.



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