Name

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Modern Dilemmas

3 December 2014

Forgetting to Love Ourselves

It is hammered into our brains that adults know best, and children have a lifetime of learning just waiting to take off. In most cases this may be true, but in certain situations, the naivety of a child can actually be positive trait. I believe children can teach the most valuable lessons to adults. Children’s lesson can be exponentially important, as they can ground a person into a new understanding of him or herself and the world around him or her. As we grow up, we are molded by society to learn to hide or amend the parts of ourselves found to be “unattractive”. We all learn, especially young women, to wear clothes that look the best on us, how to wear makeup, murder our hair with flat irons, buy expensive clothing, and the list goes on and on. Although most of these changes are superficial, we slowly evolve into thinking lower of ourselves. We constantly try to fix things that weren't broken and end up hurting ourselves even more. How can we love ourselves when we’ve altered ourselves for others? The more we try to please others by our appearances and mannerisms, the less we value all that is underneath all the glam. As a child we all have the highest opinions of ourselves, I know when I was six I thought I was basically Superman after beating the boys in a running race. Children can teach us how to restore our natural self-esteem just by watching them explore the amazing things human bodies allow us to do.

A few weeks ago I stumbled upon a video online that left a deep impression on me. It was probably one of those cheesy videos from Facebook, but the message was powerful. A group of women, of many ages, were asked to sit in front of a camera and answer one question. They were all asked, “What is one thing you would change about your body?” As you can imagine most of the women quickly answered, “Oh my thighs!” or “Definitely my nose, I wish it wasn't so big,” or “My hair, it is so frizzy and unattractive.” I sat there watching and thought that this video was just another public service message combatting the media’s unattainable expect of beauty. Just as I was about to move along with my internet rambling, a small girl, probably around 5 years old, walked on to the camera. After the interviewer posed the question, she smiled, paused for a minute, and said, “Oh I wish I had wings!” Another little girl came onto the screen and answered, “I wish I had purple eyes!”, and eventually one small girl answered, “Well my body works perfectly fine, theres nothing I need to change!” Alarmingly by the turn in the video, I just sat there for a few moments after it ended. When did we decide we needed to change anything about our perfectly healthy bodies to be seen as “attractive”?

Anna Fitzgerald, a main character in *My Sister’s Keeper* by Jodi Picoult, demonstrates other lessons children are able to teach adults. Sara and Brian Fitzgerald decided to have Anna in order to have a genetic match to donate bone marrow to her older sister Kate, who has a rare case of leukemia. As Anna grows older she recognizes that she has no real say it what or how much she donates to her sister. Finally after many years of donating, it is clear Kate is in incredible pain and death is inevitable. She decides to open a lawsuit up against her parents for medical emancipation. Kate’s sickness has broken apart the family over the years, and the lawsuit adds fuel to the fire. At thirteen, Anna teaches her parents many valuable lessons throughout the novel. Just by seeking medical emancipation she demonstrates that only she should have control over her body. This lesson is important for her parents to learn because although Anna is their daughter and is not an adult, they need to respect her right to have a say in the decisions. Another important lesson Anna eventually teaches her parents is that loving someone also means letting them go. Kate is clearly suffering and Anna is actually helping her in the long run, although Sara cannot see this at first. Brian learns this quickly from Anna, because he had already come to terms with Kate eventually dying. Sara, on the other hand, cannot determine that love may mean letting go. She originally believed that she would not be loving Kate enough if she let her die, but after Anna’s trial, she is forced to re-think her beliefs. Although the lessons Anna teaches her parents are a bit more somber than relearning to appreciate one’s body, the overall message can be that although grown ups may have more experience we should all keep our minds open to the brilliance of youth.