

## You Have Real Beauty

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My most appreciated women and wellness presentation is *Merry Lovemaking: How to inject joy in a long term intimate relationship*. Women participants have confirmed that the main deterrent for them embracing an enjoyable sex life is poor body image. Numerous women have said that their body loathing was destructive to their primary relationship. These women tend to have a limited view of their beauty. Fortunately, there is a movement afoot that is taking on stereo-typical mass media images and messages to redefine beauty.

In April 2004, the Dove® soap company released the *Dove® Report: Challenging Beauty*. The report discovered that women typically feel frustrated with the media's distorted images of beauty. In September 2004, Dove®, along with Harvard professor, Dr. Nancy Etcoff, author of "Survival of the Prettiest," and Dr. Susie Orbach, author of "Fat is a Feminist Issue," developed *The Real Truth About Beauty: a Global Report*.

Perhaps you have seen the Real Beauty campaign billboards. They feature the same women for whom you can place a vote on the Dove® website. You can vote on the photo of a young woman--Oversized or Outstanding; of a freckled woman-- Ugly Spots or Beauty Spots; or an older woman-- Gray or Gorgeous. Go to <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com>

Women, 3,200 of them, from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom, and the United States were interviewed. Only two percent from these ten countries considered themselves beautiful. In Canada it was one percent. The researchers concluded that women are looking for a broader definition of beauty.

Two-thirds of the women strongly agree that physical attractiveness is about appearance, whereas *real* beauty includes happiness, a positive attitude, confidence, dignity and humor. The more traditional attributes of physical appearance, body weight and shape have been confining. Eighty-two percent of women agree that "If I had a daughter, I would want her to feel beautiful, even if she is not physically attractive."

Of course Dove® has a vested interest in this program but doesn't it make good sense to stop all the craziness of tucking in, cutting off and injecting into our bodies? Even super models have their waists air brushed to the ideal pencil width before publication.

One of my favourite quotes in the *Discern Beauty* chapter of my book *She Said: A Tapestry of Women's Quotes* is by Eileen Ford, "The beautiful woman is the one who really knows herself and makes the most of everything she's got."

Along those lines, The Dove® Real Beauty campaign offers women eight ways to begin to define their own beauty and feel attractive. Here's a summary:

1. Find ways to celebrate yourself.
2. Surround yourself with positive and upbeat people.
3. Try new activities and challenges. Learn something new.
4. Be good to your body. Exercise and eat well.
5. Find and express the real you.
6. Have a positive attitude. It will make you attractive.
7. Learn from your experiences. You will become wise.
8. Develop an eye and ear for humour.

Let me add:

9. Smile. A smiling face is by definition a beautiful one.

Define, enjoy and celebrate your way of being a beautiful woman.

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