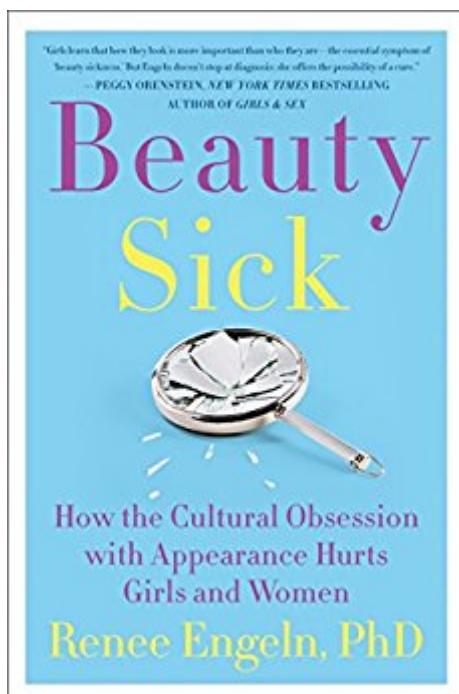


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Beauty Sick: How The Cultural Obsession With Appearance Hurts Girls And Women



Synopsis

An award-winning Northwestern University psychology professor reveals how the cultural obsession with women's appearance is an epidemic that harms women's ability to get ahead and to live happy, meaningful lives, in this powerful, eye-opening work in the vein of Naomi Wolf, Peggy Orenstein, and Sheryl Sandberg. Today, young women face a bewildering set of contradictions when it comes to beauty. They don't want to be Barbie dolls but, like generations of women before them, are told they must look like them. They are angry about the media's treatment of women but hungrily consume the very outlets that belittle them. They mock modern culture's absurd beauty ideal and make videos exposing Photoshopping tricks, but feel pressured to emulate the same images they criticize by posing with a "skinny arm." They understand that what they see isn't real but still download apps to airbrush their selfies. Yet these same young women are fierce fighters for the issues they care about. They are ready to fight back against their beauty-sick culture and create a different world for themselves, but they need a way forward. In *Beauty Sick*, Dr. Renee Engeln, whose TEDx talk on beauty sickness has received more than 250,000 views, reveals the shocking consequences of our obsession with girls' appearance on their emotional and physical health and their wallets and ambitions, including depression, eating disorders, disruptions in cognitive processing, and lost money and time. Combining scientific studies with the voices of real women of all ages, she makes clear that to truly fulfill their potential, we must break free from cultural forces that feed destructive desires, attitudes, and words—from fat-shaming to denigrating commentary about other women. She provides inspiration and workable solutions to help girls and women overcome negative attitudes and embrace their whole selves, to transform their lives, claim the futures they deserve, and, ultimately, change their world.

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Customer Reviews

Great book. Engeln does a good job of explaining her points and using detailed descriptions of her studies/research to back up her claims. This is a topic that needs to be addressed for all of the young women of the world, and I believe she does a good job of getting the conversation started. She gives you a new way of looking at seemingly innocent comments on appearance that we all make to the women in our lives and she starkly highlights the damage the obsession with looks and beauty really does on young girls and women. She describes how it truly is a double standard that women are valued so highly for looks, while men are valued for ability, bravery, etc. Society is starting to shift, but still has a long way to go when we still have employers requiring females to wear things like make up and high heels as part of a "uniform" to work. I liked that she used anecdotal stories along with her qualitative research studies to drive her point home. I truly felt for the women in her book who all underwent various degrees of stress and life dissatisfaction due to these issues (even the ones who WERE beautiful by cultural standards.) Well written and an easy read. She is not an over the top feminist by any means, so if you are slightly conservative this book will still teach you a lot about society and gender roles.

Every woman or anyone raising a girl should read this book. Since I've read the book I've been remembering so many instances when concern about my appearance overshadowed more important ideas. When my parochial school forbade girls from wearing pants so we weren't allowed to hang on the monkey bars or slide down the sledding hill for fear we'd show our underwear and be "unladylike". Or when I hesitated to apply for a corporate job for fear I wouldn't be able to "dress corporate" enough. The impossible standards stare us in the face on every red carpet, on magazine

covers and in anchorwoman chairs on the nightly news. Imagine what we'd attain if we didn't spend all that money and energy attempting to be something different. Dr. Englen's exploration of the topic and true stories make this a very readable book, even an enjoyable one as she provides hope and ideas for doing things differently.

I am not done with this book yet, but I can't put it down. It is so relevant and current! I am going to go through it chapter by chapter with both of my daughters! One is 15, and things are getting out of hand with worry about her face, and body. I see her going through what I still go through.. this book holds a mirror up to women who are struggling with body image/self esteem, and self worth based on their looks, even as we try to reject that, and know its wrong to do so. A wonderful eye opener, to how we view ourselves, and others, even if we don't realize it!

I thought I already understood the concept of being Beauty Sick. After all, I can spot "skinny arm" in a photo a mile away. But what I didn't realize was how deep this issue is in our culture. And, it is much more complex than blaming the media for airbrushed images in magazines. Renee skillfully intertwines research findings, interviews, pop-culture references and personal experience to make this book extremely easy to read, even for the non-psychologist. Best of all, she provides solutions! As a mother with a daughter who is often told how beautiful she is, I need to keep coming back to this book as she gets older. It provides valuable guidance on how to redirect her energy to confidently make her mark on the world instead of making up her face and wondering if it's good enough.

Full disclosure- Renee is a friend and I'm quoted in the book. I started reading *Beauty Sick*, already knowing a lot about Renee's work, and feeling like I had a pretty good handle on our culture's damaging focus on female attractiveness. But, upon reading, I wound up being completely flabbergasted anyway. The gravity and pervasiveness of beauty sickness is conveyed so clearly in this book that readers will truly be disturbed, angry, and motivated. Renee writes about her research in an incredibly accessible way; the reader empathizes with so many of the women profiled in this book. I had tears at several points, knowing the exact same experience that several women in the book describe. This is a book that every human should read, it has implications across race, gender, ability, and age lines.

A very interesting read, intelligently written with lots of research to back up her claims. It's an eye

opening book that should be mandatory reading for everyone!

This book is a must-read for women and parents of girls. Engeln's readable, engaging book tackles the very real pain that women suffer from our culture's obsession with an impossible ideal of female beauty. And, more than that, Engeln shows the real disadvantage that women are at, given how much time, money, and mental energy are put into trying to achieve the unachievable. Though case studies and reviewing experiments, Engeln proves that we must change the way we think and talk about beauty if we are going to change the damaging ways we think about ourselves.

This book is thoroughly researched, well-written, and poignantly honest. Beauty sickness is an epidemic that affects all women. After reading this book, I will no longer compliment other women on how they look (a habit I used to think was very kind).

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