

*Cosmetic surgery is a fast-growing industry with the importance society places on looking good. Write a letter to the editor of the Hong Kong Mail to give your opinions on the current fixation with external beauty.*

Dear Editor,

There is an old saying 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. People have different definitions of beauty. Nevertheless, it seems to me that people nowadays are getting more obsessed with physical beauty. Many girls wear heavy make-up, attempting to highlight their features with thicker eyelashes or fuller lips. Worse still, some want permanent changes to their features and opt for cosmetic surgery. Such a desire for stereotyped physical beauty has resulted in not only a waste of money, but also an acquisition of distorted values of beauty, which poses a serious danger to health. I am writing to express my disappointment with the current trend in the community and hope to wake up those with such an attitude towards beauty.

The burden of unattainable beauty has far-reaching implications for economic well-being. Many people, not just women, not only spend much of their money on cosmetic products, but also take increasingly drastic measures to alter their appearance through surgical means. Some people take up part-time jobs to earn extra money to afford cosmetic surgery. To these people, a better appearance, rather than an exceptional academic record, will guarantee them a better future. Such a distorted ideology is, unfortunately, part of the mainstream of society nowadays.

In addition, the values of beauty appear to be taking an ill-advised path. In recent years, with the development of smartphones many of us have developed a hobby of taking pictures with our phones. In particular, a trend of taking self-portraits has been sweeping the city. Some people are so obsessed with taking self-portraits that they spend all their time taking photos of themselves. In this way, they waste their precious time in being absorbed in their outer appearance. Sadly, most of them do not spend much on things like books that can help their inner development. To them, being beautiful and good-looking seems to compensate for all kinds of bad traits. With an excessive focus on outer beauty over inner beauty, a value system which judges people solely on their appearance might be the result, which is totally undesirable.

Most important of all, an obsession with physical beauty can lead to adverse impacts on health. For instance, cosmetic surgery is highly risky. There have been reported accidents in which patients died or experienced irreparable damage to their appearance after cosmetic surgery. Apart from the negative effects of surgery, many people have in fact underestimated the impacts of seemingly trivial acts, such as wearing insanely high heels and wearing colour lenses for more than 15 hours a day. Such a pursuit of outer beauty affects one's health in the long run and it is beyond remedy by the time the effects are noticeable.

Outer beauty fades while inner beauty grows as time goes by. It is miserable that people these days are trying so hard to reverse this reality. I do hope people can rethink our attitude towards physical beauty and avoid making reckless decisions, because we are most beautiful when we are natural.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong