

Topic One

Teens feel a lot of pressure to look “beautiful”. Some of them are eager to get “likes” for the photos they post on social networking sites like *Instagram*. Some of them even think about having plastic surgery.

Write a letter to the editor of the *South China Morning Post* expressing your views on the following:

- How body image and appearance affect young people;
- The value of inner beauty; and
- How to live a happy and confident life

Sign your name, *Chris Wong*.

Dear Editor,

Re: How Image and Appearance Affect Young People and What We Can Do to Live a Confident Life

I am currently residing in Tsuen Wan and studying at CNEC Christian College. As a concerned student and teenager, I am writing to express my concern and worry of how body image and appearance affect young people. I also want to talk about the value of inner beauty and how to live a happy and confident life.

Firstly, I would like to talk about how body image and appearance affect teenagers. Nowadays, teenagers suffer a lot of pressure to look physically ‘beautiful’ and ‘pleasing’. Some just hope to get a few ‘likes’ and applause from an online community, whereas some think that having a better appearance can get them more acceptance in their school and they will not become a social outcast. Therefore, teenagers constantly examine themselves to see what their ‘flaws’ are and seek to ‘correct’ them as soon as possible. This leads to a situation in which young people are searching for more and more extreme measures to improve their appearance, such as weird creams, lotions and even plastic surgery!

Secondly, I hope that more people can understand the value of inner beauty. Most of the ‘beauty’ that teenagers seek is on a physical level. However, physical beauty can only get you so far, it would not matter if we look amazing and pretty if we have a rotten and corrupted heart. Inner beauty can make yourselves and other people around you happy, but outer beauty only benefits you in particular. We can be more socially and morally accepted if we have a kind and caring attitude towards others. On the contrary, if we have a mean and unlikable heart, no matter how many layers of makeup we put on, people still would not like or appreciate us.

Lastly, a happy and confident life is incredibly important to our mental well-being, so these are some suggestions we can adopt if we want to have a better life. For starter, we should reassure ourselves that our appearance looks just as stunning as everyone else, everyone’s appearance is a unique feature that belongs to them, so we should stop trying to look perfect. Instead, we should practise our morals in public and daily life. It could be as simple as offering someone in need a seat on a bus.

Furthermore, we need to understand that everyone's opinion about 'beauty' is different, but I am sure we all appreciate one thing in common, an honest heart. Even if we don't have great skin or glossy hair, as long as we possess a generous and honest heart, there will always be someone who thinks we are beautiful.

In conclusion, I believe that body image and good appearance are unnecessary for people to live a happy and confident life, but inner beauty most definitely is. So, we should stop and consider, 'What can I do to be more mentally pleasing?'

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong