

# Beauty pageants may not be safe

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In countries all around the world, beauty pageants are held as a long-standing tradition. Often, young women participate in these pageants. While pageants are said to present a sense of self-esteem and value for the participants, these competitions often cause damaging emotional issues for an already trying adolescent life. One young participant anonymously said, "I used to think I was pretty, but once I got on stage and didn't hear my name called the world came to an end and from then on, I've called myself ugly everyday" (Anonymous, 2010). When a girl feels as if she is being valued solely on her looks, she may change her personality and dietary habits to an unsafe level to continuously garner attention. The beauty pageant process is far from the safe harmonious competition it attempts to promote. As the rest of this essay suggest, damaging emotional scars often remain after the competitions are long gone, and pageants themselves harbor predatory dangers to young naïve girls. The first kind of emotional damage young girls face is an overemphasis on physical appearance and a willingness to maintain beauty at any cost. When a female participates in a beauty pageant, she is taught to win by looking attractive. These young girls are conditioned to believe that the only way to look pretty is to starve themselves so that they can achieve a 'perfect figure'. Although there are many different types of eating disorders in the world, the biggest one of all for beauty pageants is anorexia. Anorexia is the third most common chronic illness among adolescents (Mirasol). Outside of eating disorders, anxiety and stress are common for participants. In a 2009 interview on Good Morning America, Brooke Breedwell, a pageant queen at the age of five, now twenty, explained there was a price to pay, "Pageants have put a lot of stress and

anxiety on my life I feel the need to be perfect at everything, and I know that's not realistic. You can't be perfect at everything." Brooke Breedwell also claimed her mother "pushed her too hard." When a mother enters her daughter in a pageant she expects her to win. Most girls receive the 'no other girl is your friend here' speech, which cause them to be untruthful by offering fake smiles and false hugs around other participants. It also creates a distant form of interaction causing the females to be shallow, hyper-competitive adults who are never satisfied. The second kind of emotional damage young girls face is an uncharacteristically elevated ego for a teenage or even pre-teenage girl. When a female wins a pageant, she may conclude that she is better than everyone all of her peers. While some might believe it to be healthy to compete in pageants because it creates confidence and it builds character, it's not. Pageants teach young girls that self worth is in physical beauty only. Parents encourage their daughters to compete in these competitions and do whatever it takes to win. In some cases, mothers try to live vicariously through their daughter, by entering their daughter in such competitions. This confuses many girls because they don't know if their mother is their coach or their parent. With young girls participating in televised beauty it is hard to keep pedophiles away. Some pedophiles are driven out to live their fantasies and with young girls on air exploiting themselves it's easy too. When girls participate they put on clothing that is meant to look 'sexy' and 'inviting'. Girls prance along a stage in alluring clothing welcoming anyone to watch. Girls in pageants have yet to develop their own sense of self and are conditioned to be more pleasing to adults for attention and rewards. An entire television show is

dedicated to young girl's beauty pageants. Each week, viewers are able to watch little girls dress up in bikinis, mini dresses, and other revealing clothing that their mothers choose for them to wear. In conclusion, beauty pageants cause self-hatred and uncertainty of a female's own body, which could create shallow adults who are never satisfied. Carleton Kendrick, a family therapist says, "...the hard fact remains they are called beauty pageants and they have been and always will be based on using arbitrary standards of ' beauty' to make one contestant better than all the rest" (Kendrick). Beauty pageants can cause eating disorders and unrealistic expectations of a female's own body. Beauty pageants can also cause a female to self-hate if she doesn't win, or enlarge an ego to an unhealthy level. Unfortunately, if a child participates in beauty pageants that may air on television, anyone can watch including pedophiles. Females should love their own bodies and not care how others judge them upon their appearance.