

Essay on old age, beauty and self image

[Health & Medicine](#), [Beauty](#)



A recent Japanese research reported that beauty begins to fade at age 35. 09, the question what most people have asked is, what's this got to do with attitude and happiness in life? Another study recorded that measuring women's power quotient for women of different ages, scientists concluded that after 35 years and 33 days, women begin to look older and any impact on the skin would be detrimental. Perhaps the question is not when to look ugly, the question is, " how does beauty influence our attitudes to life? Is the pursuit of surreal and plastic beauty helpful for our positive self esteem or degrading to it? I would like to focus on this topic while using Lucy Grealy's " Mirrors" and Katherine Berret's " Old before Her Time"

Gealy' s " Mirrors" is a story of a young girl suffering from cancer. The story is somber and delves into the topics of self image. When the girl suffering from Cancer was growing up, she was denied access to people who are regular or without the disease of cancer until she was ten. She was constantly under chemotherapy of the old order where chemicals had to be passed literally through her veins. In the process of passing the caustic chemicals on her body, her parents always encouraged her to be brave. As the child grew older, she was constantly congratulated for being brave and not actually for being herself. She acquired self-esteem issues resulting into the problems of fearing the mirror and feeling not accepted.

Another element of the story was the recognition of the idea of self worth. In the story, Gealy says that her parents never mentioned anything about herself worth. Gealy begins evaluating herself worth on the accounts of the opinions of other people. The problem here is that the family took the societal standard to gauge the child's understanding of beauty. In her own

evaluation, she never considered herself beautiful. The stigma of indifference took hold of her, denying her the specialty of childhood beauty. In regular American society, girls at ten years run around the neighborhood constantly impatient of being women. After school, the little girls would look for beauty ingredients so that they can meet the societal expectation of a beauty standard. This was totally absent in the mind of Gealy. The little childhood experience was unrealized because of the parent's low self esteem and fear of rebuke from a rather judgmental society. Had Gealy's parents told her that her different did not make her less equal, as a girl, she would not have been tormented by the reflection she saw in the mirror. She would have been comfortable to associate with her peers.

The biggest lesson in this story is the nothingness of the beauty beyond the face. Beauty is inbuilt, and our recognition of true beauty defies the societal understanding of such. It would be pragmatic for the parents to understand that Gealy's cancer did not limit her expression of beauty.

Katherine Barrett's "Old Before Her Time" is an examination of the American society's treatment of the elderly in comparison to the Chinese treatment of the elderly. Barrett uses journals of a 26 year old woman who devotes three years who transforms herself into an eighty five year old woman. In her assessment, she says that American ideas favor youth, energy and productivity. As old age nears, the productivity and the meaning of beauty deteriorate. Perhaps this provides an explanation for the absence of filial love for people of old age. Contrasted with the Confucianism philosophy, the value for old age is ridden on the ideas of courtesy, respect and obedience. Barrett documents that the elderly are ignored in American society. In page

41 she writes that “ Just because I looked different, people either condescended or totally dismissed me”. In another incidence, young professionals ignored an elderly lady Pat Moore at the gerontology conference. While the Chinese hold value to the idea of courtesy, the American society does not have such aspects. Perhaps one of the greatest cultural differences between China and the United States is the importance of the society ahead of the individual. In Chinese culture, the individual needs are subsidiary to the societal needs. In the United States, the individual rights are important and must be honored at all costs.

Understanding this key difference is pivotal for total understanding of how the Americans treat elderly people.

How does this affect our understanding of beauty in old age? Let me start with women. In most occasions when women are going through a hard time in marriage, they find it hard to let go of the sore experience they are undergoing. As a result of internalizing the ordeals, they normally have a hard time healing their emotional and mental trauma, especially if they have a sense of seclusion and mental entrapment; they feel confined.

Furthermore, they may get depressed when they cannot express their feelings to their spouses; or when the spouse dismisses their plea. In most cases, they struggle either to find someone or somehow of relating or unleashing the ordeal. One of the biggest sources of this misunderstanding is often the idea of beauty. As old age approaches, women begin to question whether they are as desirable as they were in their prime age. If question is not handled correctly, it could lead to disaster in marriage.

How about old age and sexuality? Human sexual desire is a mental state that

has three components: the biological, motivational-affective and cognitive. In the case of women desire is a response rather than a spontaneous event; that is a woman may choose to experience sexual activity in order to have intimate relationships needs met. So in women motivational-affective desire can be affected by stressful situations and the psychiatric health of both partners. Women sexuality is a function of many things that include beauty, desirability, feeling of being accepted, and self esteem. The reason of using artificial makeup is often an attempt to realize acceptance by the society and to feel comfortable that their mates still consider them desirable.

Scientists reason that men exhibit aggressive tendencies on sexuality more than women. Men in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships have a greater affinity to sex, sexual products, and videos. On the contrary, women value commitment in relationship as opposed to sexuality. Women sexuality premises on the existence of a relationship, and are more likely to engage in sex on with people that they are in a relationship with compared to men. Women need to feel loved, appreciated and accepted by the society. The pursuit of aesthetic beauty is a reflex action for that desire.

Elders are true nonconformists of contemporary times. The existence of elders in modern society offers proof that adulthood does not last forever. There is always life after adulthood, although exceptionally few people live to see this other side of life. Elders prove that there is life beyond retirement and the regular hustles of life. In a way, elders also remind that happiness in life is not limited to activities such as careers, sports, and intense activity. Elders are reminders of the existence of solitude in lives, and the happiness that can be derived from that solitude. Regardless of the beauty of the

elderly in the society, many elders are away from the society and are denied adequate care and love.

. The challenges that elders face in the world today include gender gap between women and men. Many elders are women, indicating that men die earlier. Elders also face challenges such as behavioral changes, extreme physical challenges, loneliness as well as the lack of attention from family due to fast-paced lifestyle. We have to remind the need to care for the elderly, show them love, and bring happiness in their lives. Elders remind us the beauty of life and the happiness that we receive from living a purposeful life. In some cases, elders see joy seeing generations multiply and the pride of passing on family traditions. The culture of supporting the elderly in the society should be encouraged and not shunned. The elderly are beautiful.

Work Cited

Grealy, Lucy, " The Autobiography of a Face", HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2003.

Barret, Katherine," Old Before Her Time", Cengage, 2004.