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Dear Women

My final project will be designing a narrative website directed towards women of all ages. It will essentially be a love letter written for women to learn to love themselves more. After watching the “Barbie” movie last summer, it moved something inside of me. I have been struggling with insecurities for the past twenty years of my life and never fully loved myself. I have just recently been going through that journey of self-acceptance, and I can say that it has changed my perception of a lot of things. The one thing that struck me during that “Barbie” movie was a monologue by America Ferrera, which I think would affect many women out there.

In the monologue, America says: “It is literally impossible to be a woman. You are so beautiful, and so smart, and it kills me that you don't think you're good enough. Like, we have to always be extraordinary, but somehow we're always doing it wrong. You have to be thin, but not too thin. And you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin. You have to have money, but you can't ask for money because that's crass. You have to be a boss, but you can't be mean. You have to lead, but you can't squash other people's ideas. You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. You have to be a career woman but also always be looking out for other people. You have to answer for men's bad behavior, which is insane, but if you point that out, you're accused of complaining. You're supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women because you're supposed to be a part of the sisterhood. But always stand out and always be grateful. But never forget that the system is rigged. So find a

way to acknowledge that but also always be grateful. You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It's too hard! It's too contradictory and nobody gives you a medal or says thank you! And it turns out in fact that not only are you doing everything wrong, but also everything is your fault. I'm just so tired of watching myself and every single other woman tie herself into knots so that people will like us. And if all of that is also true for a doll just representing women, then I don't even know.”

That monologue alone made me tear up at the cinema, thinking that many other women think they are not good enough, pretty enough, or smart enough. We live in a society where social media and men dictate how women should behave, look, and interact with others, and I think the norms nowadays are bringing women down. As someone who has struggled with loving herself in her own body, I think it is important to project that message to other women and help them understand that they are enough. They are beautiful in every way and do not need to change to please others.

For my research, I looked into statistics of women practicing self-love and women who struggle with self-esteem. Especially after COVID-19, there has been a clear shift in how women perceive themselves, and a stronger expectation has been placed on them. Here are some captivating statistics I have found:

- 74% of girls say they are under pressure to please everyone (Girls Inc, The Supergirl Dilemma)
- 98% of girls feel there is immense pressure from external sources to look a certain way (National Report on Self-Esteem)
- 92% of teen girls would like to change their appearance, with body weight ranking the highest. (Dove campaign)

- 90% of eating disorders are found in girls (National Association for Self-Esteem)
- 1 in 4 girls today fall into a clinical diagnosis – depression, eating disorders, cutting, and other mental/emotional disorders. On top of these, many more report being constantly anxious, sleep-deprived, and under significant pressure. (The Triple Bind, Steven Hinshaw)
- By age thirteen, 53% of American girls age 13 are “unhappy with their bodies.” This grows to 78% by the time girls reach seventeen. (National Institute on Media and the Family)

The website will be a series of messages directed towards my younger self, with an interactive aspect, a mirror (camera) that says how beautiful I am and how I am enough. I hope to inspire women visiting my website with that letter written to my younger self. I have been strongly inspired by one of the websites of a previous student, “Dear Mommy.” I have also been inspired by “The Boat,” “Jess and Russ,” and “Kalso.” It will be a very simple, straight-to-the-point website. I will be using my personal experience of going from a girl who was very insecure to someone who is now confident in her own skin to project a message of love to other girls who might be having a tough time accepting themselves.

Works Cited

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