

# LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

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*Unpacking the beauty standards  
we have unintentionally inherited.*



It's important to remind ourselves that as we are growing up, so are our mothers. With that said, they are equally affected by toxic beauty standards just as much as we are. It made it easy for these standards to be put on us so young because they were being put on our mothers first. However, the blame is not on them. And because they spent most or all of their lives with certain beauty standards, our generation was bound to be brought into it.

I always think about the scene in *Bring It On All Or Nothing* where Britney (Not me I swear!) threatens to kick a girl off the cheer team for gaining weight over the summer. They admit that nothing is wrong with her skills, they just don't want someone "bigger" on the team for aesthetics. When we are introduced to the girl, Brianna, it is clear she looks completely fit and healthy. Most importantly, the shots of her show her smiling and having a fun time at cheer practice (which is really what should matter). It's scenes like this that practically brainwashed us into thinking that we had to reach these toxic beauty standards or opportunities in life would be taken away from us. In this case, if Briana wasn't able to get down to a size zero like the other girls, she'd be kicked off the cheer team.

For so long, beauty standards only catered to one group of people. It's something our mothers had to deal with all their lives, which resulted in them being brought into our lives as well. With the rise of the supermodel "heroin chic" look in the 90s, fitness and diet culture

went off the deep end. Every other commercial on TV was for some kind of diet supplement or fitness plan and there were aisles upon aisles of "low-calorie"/"low-fat" snacks. There were constant reminders that if you didn't look like Kate Moss walking down the street, you weren't good enough. And don't even get me started if your hair wasn't naturally thin and straight. Everything had to be thin thin thin. Thin eyebrows, thin hair, thin body; there was no embracing our unique features or showing off the things we were born with. Every day there seemed to be a new product creating a new insecurity for us.

It wasn't until we got to high school that things started to shift. Everything we had been told growing up wasn't true anymore, and we had to rewire our brains in a way. Do wide hips and curves look good on me? I can wear my hair naturally curly to school without feeling embarrassed. Low fat doesn't mean it's better for you. The answers are all yes. Our generation may not be perfect when it comes to beauty standards, but I think it's amazing how far we've come. That could be anything from diet and exercise, to beauty treatments, and even fashion choices. When you walk into Sephora now, there's a plethora of shade ranges that would not have existed even ten years ago. Again, there is always room for improvement, however, it's a pretty good start considering what we were born into.

With social media apps like TikTok and Instagram, we can see more and more kinds of women being represented. We've been able to grasp the concept of how differences are beautiful and learn about what matters, which goes beyond just looks. With trends like the "clean-girl" aesthetic, we have been seeing more emphasis on minimalism and natural beauty. Let's not forget that it still is not perfect and some may not see it this way, but there is more of a consensus nowadays that things like body trends are just degrading if anything, and not even possible to try to participate in. Seeing and understanding what we grew up with has certainly given us a high level of awareness and hopefully by the time our kids are growing up, they won't have to deal with even a quarter of what we and our mothers did.