# A mother’s reflections on raising a daughter amid modern beauty pressures



A UK mother reflects on the challenges of raising her young daughter in a world increasingly dominated by narrow beauty standards and the fashion industry's complex influence. Writing for The Guardian, the mother, a former fashion writer, describes the tension she feels as she navigates the impact of fashion and societal expectations on her seven-year-old child.

The mother's daughter enjoys playing a beauty-themed game on her father's phone, where a doll-like character with a dirty face is cleaned, moisturised and elaborately made up with exaggerated eyelashes, bright makeup, and fanciful hairstyles. The daughter’s declaration that "Now she’s pretty," highlights the early exposure children have to rigid ideals of appearance. This has prompted the mother to question the messages her daughter is absorbing about beauty and self-worth.

Having spent years in the fashion industry, the writer acknowledges the contradictions within that world. She recounts how fashion encourages self-expression while simultaneously promoting trends designed to fuel consumerism, creating internal conflicts about the associated values. She worries about the increasingly obsessive focus on image and perfectionism, especially as technologies and products now allow for constant physical modification, from skincare regimens to cosmetic procedures like Botox and fillers among young adults.

The mother shares a vivid memory of taking her daughter to a fashion show when the child was four, where she witnessed glamorous models in bold outfits, attracting her daughter's fascination with the spectacle and the attention she herself received. This experience, while special, intensified the mother’s concerns about the messages her daughter encounters regarding appearance and social approval.

The release of the recent Barbie film – featuring modern dolls with diverse body types, skin tones, and hair textures – also became a focal point in their discussion about beauty. Despite this diversity, the daughter lamented not having a doll resembling the film’s blonde, porcelain-skinned lead character. The mother’s candid dialogue with her child about real bodies and imperfections, such as cellulite, provided an opportunity to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

Medical and cultural trends further complicate this landscape. The British College of Aesthetic Medicine’s 2024 report revealed 30% of its practitioners receiving requests for aesthetic treatments from minors under 18, highlighting the rise in early cosmetic interventions. Relatedly, the phenomenon dubbed the “Ozempic effect,” where the diabetes drug semaglutide is used off-label for weight loss, reflects pressures on women to conform to a thin ideal perpetuated by the fashion industry.

Educational strategist Chloe Combi, cited in the article, observes that young girls experience intense peer pressure related to appearance, including having manicured nails and expensive skincare products. She notes that social media dramatically increases exposure to idealised images – “now an average 14- or 15-year-old social media user gets hit by 10,000 images a day” – and much of this occurs passively via algorithm-fed content, amplifying insecurities about beauty and body image.

The report by The Future Laboratory forecasting “Gen Alpha beauty” trends highlights how brands are engaging children online, with collaborations such as Roblox and beauty company e.l.f. targeting these young consumers. However, these trends also make beauty a status symbol tied to expensive products, leading to social exclusion for those without financial means.

To counter these pressures, the mother strives to promote body positivity and critical thinking within her family. She, alongside friends with similar concerns, models body confidence in everyday life, rejecting diet culture, and emphasising personal value beyond appearance. Clinical psychologist Jo-Ann Finkelstein stresses the importance of minimising constant commentary on looks to prevent reinforcing the idea that beauty is paramount. Finkelstein also points to the contradictory demands placed on girls today, who are mocked both for failing and succeeding in adhering to beauty standards.

Fashion’s influence extends to children’s clothing, where adultisation and sexualisation of garments like crop tops and cutout dresses are now commonplace even for tweens. Popular fast-fashion brands and marketing influencers on social media contribute to a culture where young girls seek to fit into prescribed ideals at great cost to self-esteem. The mother’s approach includes encouraging her daughter to personalise clothing through upcycling workshops, aiming to foster creative expression over conformist trends.

Despite her concerns, the mother finds moments of solace and joy in her daughter’s playful relationship with toys and fashion. She recounts a bedtime scene where her daughter amusingly plays with a damaged Barbie doll, demonstrating a child’s natural resilience and the potential to find happiness outside rigid ideals.

The Guardian article offers a nuanced perspective on the complex interplay between modern beauty culture, the fashion industry, and parenting in contemporary society. It reveals a mother’s heartfelt efforts to navigate these challenges while supporting her daughter’s development in an image-saturated world.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://retailtimes.co.uk/mothers-of-daughters-beauty-survey-reveals-family-influence-on-skincare/> - This UK study highlights how daughters influence their mothers’ beauty habits and the early introduction of skincare routines, which corroborates the article’s points about societal and familial pressures on young girls and early exposure to beauty ideals.
3. <https://thiscuriouslife.uknica.co.uk/ageing-anxiety-in-young-girls-rethinking-beauty-standards/> - This source discusses the pressure young girls face regarding beauty and ageing, emphasizing simple skincare and wellness over perfectionism, which supports the article's theme of navigating beauty pressures and promoting self-acceptance in children.
4. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10664807221104109> - This scholarly article explores how positive mother-daughter relationships can foster daughters’ body positivity, supporting the mother’s efforts to promote body confidence and critical thinking about beauty standards.
5. <https://www.bcam.ac.uk/news/2024-aesthetic-medicine-trends-minors-cosmetic-treatments> - The British College of Aesthetic Medicine’s 2024 report referenced in the article about rising requests for cosmetic treatments from minors corroborates concerns about early cosmetic interventions among young people.
6. <https://thefuturelaboratory.com/reports/gen-alpha-beauty-trends/> - This report from The Future Laboratory details ‘Gen Alpha beauty’ trends, including brand collaborations targeting children and the rise of beauty as a status symbol, which supports the article’s discussion on how beauty culture targets young consumers and influences social dynamics.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/apr/27/seven-year-old-daughter-loves-fashion-can-i-protect-her-from-a-world-of-impossible-beauty-standards> - Please view link - unable to able to access data