

A Mom's Introduction to the Mothers & Daughters Activity Guide

# true you!

“Sometimes I Feel Ugly”  
and Other Truths about Growing Up



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| Dove

Dear Mom's,

A mom is one of the most important influences in the life of a daughter. Whether you are a step mom, an auntie, a grandmother, a big sister or just a loving friend, the role of a 'mother' is important and necessary in a girl's development.

Your love and care sets the foundations for your daughter's life. Who you are will profoundly affect who she is and who she will be. How you feel about yourself, your looks, your body, your beauty, acts like a script from which your daughter will make choices about how she should feel about herself. In order to give your daughter the strength and courage she needs to feel beautiful in a world that may challenge her values, you need to take inventory of your own feelings of beauty.

True You! is a workbook to help facilitate conversations, develop foundations and strengthen relationships as your daughter grows. It comes at a challenging time – adolescence – when girls are questioning the world of beauty around them. Moms, your daughters need you more than ever. Rise to the challenge!

Cheers,

Dr. Susie Orbach and Dr. Nancy Etcoff



## Did You Know?

- 51% of all women wish their mothers had talked to them more often about beauty and body image when growing up.
- 79% of all women agree that there is a need to start talking to girls early in life about what real beauty is.
- 72% hope they have not passed on feelings of self-doubt or insecurity to their daughters.
- 67% of all women avoid certain activities due to feeling bad about their looks.

Source: Dove's 'Beyond Stereotypes' Study

## Using True You!

This workbook provides opportunities for moms and daughters to engage in discussions about the changes experienced during adolescence. Your daughter probably has a lot of questions about this time of change. She values you and looks to your help with her confusion. You can play a vital role in helping her to take delight and pride in her body while minimizing the anguish about appearance that plague so many girls and women.

True You! was designed to be a keepsake – a place to record this period of change. Do the activities in partnership with your daughter. Let her take the lead and allow her to set the pace. She might fly through some activities, and not be ready for others. There might even be activities she would like to do alone.





## Understanding Girl World

Before you begin, think back to a time when you were a preteen or teenager. What did you need from your mom? Did you get it? How did that make you feel? What do you plan on doing differently for your daughter?

Enter into girl world to learn what your daughter really faces. Things are more intense for a girl today than when you were her age. Your daughter is bombarded with media images that suggest how she should look and feel. Become aware of the images in her world so you can create counter images and a safe place for her to truly express herself. You can:

- Make time to watch your daughter's favorite TV show. Ask her why she likes it.
- Check out the latest 'teen' magazines. Know who's who on the cover.
- Commit to listening to her radio station once a week. Listen to the lyrics. How might they make your daughter feel?
- Let your daughter take the lead on shopping trips to see the styles that are popular.
- Encourage your daughter's input in the development of the family's menu. Look for signs that may lead to unhealthy eating habits.
- Expressing open-minded curiosity towards your daughter's world will help her feel comfortable seeing you as a resource.

## Self Assess

This isn't always easy! We've grown accustomed to criticizing the way we look without even realizing that we are doing so. When we make negative comments about our own bodies, our daughters learn to be critical with theirs. As you interact with your daughter consider:

- How do you feel about food? Are you a calorie counter or carb obsessed? Consider how your eating habits influence your daughter's.
- Are there any exercise routines in your home? Are you a couch potato or are you constantly on the go? Are there ways to 'get physical' with your daughter beyond playing sports or going to the gym?
- How do you feel about your body? Are you critical or satisfied? How can you turn the negative messages you may be sending out into positive ones?
- How does the media influence you and how you feel about yourself?

Understanding how you feel about yourself will help you support your daughter as she balances on the edge of girlhood and enters into womanhood. Building your strengths will help her celebrate her uniqueness as her body changes.



## Talk About Feelings

Adolescence is confusing and full of emotions. Your daughter may feel ashamed and you may feel uncomfortable too. Help your daughter know that whatever she feels is just that – a feeling. Feelings are not right or wrong. They are not something to feel frightened or ashamed about. Understanding feelings will help your daughter understand herself better. She will feel empowered against the pressures to turn the normal confusions of growing up into negative behaviors such as poor body image or eating habits.

## Celebrate!

Remind your daughter that adolescence is an incredible time. Find ways to celebrate the changes and her beauty.

## About the Academic Advisors:



### **Dr. Susie Orbach**

Susie Orbach is a psychotherapist who has written widely about mothers and daughters and body image issues. She is a visiting Professor at the London School of Economics, is the author of ten books and co-founder of The Women's Therapy Centre in London and The Women's Therapy Centre Institute.



### **Dr. Nancy Etcoff**

Nancy Etcoff is a faculty member of the Harvard Medical School and a practicing psychologist at the Massachusetts General Hospital Department of Psychiatry where she directs the Program in Aesthetics and Well Being. She is the author of *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty* and a forthcoming book on the science of happiness.

Go to [www.campaignforrealbeauty.com](http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com)

for tips on how to help yourself and your daughters to enjoy your own beauty and combat the negative effects of narrow beauty ideals. © 2006 Unilever.

