



GENDER AND POWER: YOU LOOK DISGUSTING

Societal and gendered norms influence how we see ourselves and how others see us. But it's essential that you believe in yourself, and never let anyone tell you you're not beautiful—not even yourself.

See

- **What is happening?**
A person chooses to wear makeup, having been criticised by some for having acne and pale skin.
- **Who are the people involved?**
Everyone, and those making comment on social media in particular.
- **Who gains from this situation? Who loses?**
The power and fear of exclusion—teenagers are hyper-sensitive to this, and the judgement that underpins and drives this. All of us are more than our skin, our appearance. All of us lose when gendered and societal norms prevent us from being free to express and present ourselves as we wish.
- **What is the situation doing to people?**
Feelings of a lack of self esteem, of self worth. Nobody has the right to judge another, including based on their physical appearance. Judgement is both the source of, and a driver of, insecurity. The very fact one of the make-up products used is a 'concealer' speaks volumes!
- **Why is it happening? Why does it continue?**
Skin colour and acne say nothing about the quality and beauty of the person. Big business, social and other media, leaders across many fields, advertisers and 'influencers' all play a role in portraying an 'ideal' look, which is fleeting and transient, though powerful... the look is much more than 'skin deep'.

Act

- **What can we do to bridge the gap between what is happening (the reality) and what should be happening (the ideal/what our faith says)?**
Assist my teenager to navigate the ups and downs, the acceptance and rejection that comes with their growing and developing body. Listen to them and offer unconditional love—the love we enjoy in, from and with God. Explore whether there are options to be involved in supportive communities, including Parish youth groups.
- **What action are we going to take?**
As an adult, engage with my teenager to help them better understand the process of physical development. Assist them to reflect on society and media that promote false and unrealistic images of the 'ideal' person. Foster pursuits which affirm the skills and talents of my teenager, in supportive and safe environments. Bring facts and empathy, honesty and humour.
- **Who can we involve in our action?**
Extended family and friends who value my teenager in all their being. Individuals that my teenager admires and/or is inspired by... that appeals to them about this person? Seek out role models and/or mentors for my teenager who are people of character, of integrity, of insight, of substance.

Judge

- **How do you feel about this situation?**
As a parent/adult, I can be both understanding from experience, and concerned when teenagers feel insecure, especially based on their appearance, which is ever changing in life, especially puberty.
- **Have you ever behaved or acted like anyone in the situation? If so, what happened? Why? How did you and/or those involved feel?**
As an adult, I can identify with the behaviour and experience. I have experienced acceptance and rejection from others, and know how difficult this can be. Honesty, including humour, and recounting funny/ recounting funny/awkward experiences can assist to bring balance and realism in conversation with your teenager.
- **What do you think should be happening?**
We create a message, a narrative, a view which values every human being and judges them based on the quality of their character
- **What does our faith say about it?**
'So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1: 27) Every person is created in love, with enormous potential, with a spirit and soul that transcends the physical and material. We are all loved unconditionally.