

# Appreciate your beauty

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A month ago, I attended a screening of the comedy film *Knocked Up*, which I liked quite a bit (but you'll need a tiny bit of tolerance for some gross-out humor, if you decide to check it out). However, it wasn't the film or its themes that caught my attention; it was the reaction of the audience to several scenes.

In one scene, the main character, played by writer/actor Seth Rogen, is lying in the bed the morning after having hooked up with the Katherine Heigl character. Seth has what many would call a "chunky" or "teddy bear" body. The sheet is draped across half of his butt, and you see his back as he is sleeping and then awakening. Approximately a dozen or so people yelled out, "Ewwwwwww!"

In another scene, friends of Seth's character are roused from sleep by a fire alarm, and they rush out to stand by the curbside. One of the buddies, played by Jason Segel, is naked, yawning, and covering his genitals. Jason, who also is a cast member of *How I Met Your Mother* on TV, has what I would call an "average" build, reasonably flat belly, and no gym tone. Again, the dirty dozen let out their groan of disapproval: "Ewwwwwww!"

Now, maybe I'm a bit hypersensitive. My tastes in men happen to run away from the Brad Pitt type of man and toward the chunkier men like my husband (in the gay community, we call them "bears"). So, it hurt to have my tastes derided like that.

And I know that women have been facing this issue for a lot longer than men, and it's far more intense for women: what the media sells as beautiful and what is attainable by most regular people are mutually exclusive. Maybe the best way I can describe it is that the experience at the movie theater helped me to relate to what women have been struggling with for many decades.

If we lined up all of men in attendance at that nearly sold out show of *Knocked Up*, what do you want to bet that 90% or more of them (myself included) would have bodies that are "as attractive or worse" than the two characters who

created the negative reactions. How many of those people razzing the men on the screen have those body types or date men who have those types of bodies? Do those women say, “Ewwwwww!” when their partners are laying in bed with a sheet across their butts, getting out of the shower, or are at the beach?

One of the main tools I use in my life consultation with my clients is teaching mindfulness. And, lately, I’m more interested in people understanding the spirit of mindfulness as opposed to doing mindfulness exercises. Among other approaches, the spirit of mindfulness urges us to get ourselves into a place of appreciation for the every day, for the life that is on display right in front of our eyes at any given moment, thoroughly appreciating the present moment.

A boyfriend or husband may have a belly or may lack gym tone, but he has a smile, or perhaps thickly muscled arms, or a nice two-tone color to his hair. (Having dinner with some friends last week, I noticed one of the jet-black-haired guys had developed a slight shock of gray in the front-middle part of his hair. Is that a defect or something special? Is it ugly, interesting, handsome? It is *literally* up to you.)

I hope you respond to this next statement by thinking, “of course!”: there is beauty in all of us. And, as Robert Mapplethorpe used to say, there are “perfect moments” that occur when timing, circumstance, surrounding environment, and subject all align to create beauty (at which point, he tried to capture that perfect moment in one of his stunning photographs). I have this amazing memory of my non-model cousin Georgianne, pausing while working in a deli, glistening with perspiration, and looking upward. Given the lighting, it was as if she stopped being my cousin and morphed into an Edward Hopper painting. In that moment, she was stunningly gorgeous.

So, instead of reinforcing the idea that any male figure “less than” Brad Pitt is gross, why not be open to appreciate the moments of beauty that are present every day in our regular lives (for both men *and* women). When we appreciate the beauty in ordinary, every day people—on screen or in our lives—we celebrate ourselves and validate our own beauty.

What good is loving the image of Brad Pitt if we have to hate ourselves to do it.