

The secret li(k)e of teenage girls



BY DAHLIA KURTZ ,QMI AGENCY

FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, MAY 14, 2012 02:00 AM EDT | UPDATED: MONDAY, MAY 14, 2012 08:40 AM EDT



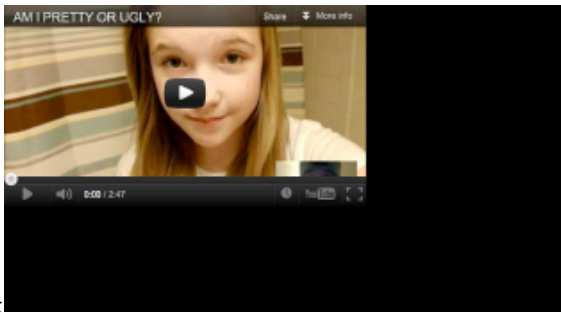
(Shutterstock)

Teenage girls have a secret, and there's nothing to "Like" about it.

Many people assume they're self-absorbed; on the contrary, teen girls are actually others-absorbed. As it turns out, other people's thoughts are often what define them.

A couple months back, the YouTube phenomenon of young girls turning to strangers to judge their appearance came to light.

The "Am I Pretty or Ugly?" video by sgal901 has more than 5.5 million views and 137,000 comments, ranging from "hot" to "kill your self" [sic] to things you wouldn't even want to repeat in an R-rated movie.



While this "Dear Anonymous Commentator, Please judge me" syndrome continues, a far more insidious phenomenon goes unnoticed, despite its ever-growing trend.

The same question asked on YouTube is essentially being asked on Facebook, but in a seemingly innocuous way: Young girls post picture after picture, in hopes that others will click "Like." The button count then determines their prettiness, popularity and self-worth.

No longer social networking, the site has become pathology networking for them.

Mandy is 13 years old. She says, "People don't understand that it's not about the 'Like' button; it's the feeling you get when you know people like you and think you're pretty, and feeling confident about yourself.

"When I don't get 'Likes' it makes me feel kinda like nobody notices me."

A Kaiser Family Foundation survey finds the average 8- to 18-year-old spends about 7.5 hours a day online, packing almost 11 hours of media content into that time.

So between Skype and mobile uploads, a girl must be camera-ready at all times to expose herself to an audience for attention and validation. The home is supposed to be a place where you lop your hair atop your head and let that throbbing pimple breathe makeup-free. But for today's teen it's constant primping, posing and pressure.

To get more "Likes" you have to look good. Looking sexy is equated with looking good. Toothy smiles that show confidence are ne'er to be found. Instead it's the oft-mocked duck face or fish lips - lips puckered, tummies sucked, backs arched.

It's a burden for Mandy to keep up the clicks. "I think you have to look good and have a lot of friends, because if you don't have a lot of friends then what's the point.

"And if you do, that's when people normally wanna look extra good," says the teen, whose profile is littered with comments such as stunning, sooo beautiful, and so prettyyyzzzz.

She explains the "Like" button shows love. "And to girls feeling loved is one of the most important things."

Not only is it important, but it is also demanded. "Almost every single one of my friends tells me to 'Like' their picture even if I don't actually like it, and if I don't press 'Like' then they won't talk to me and be mad at me," says Mandy.

Lesley Lacny is a chartered psychologist in Toronto. She says this goes beyond the pressures of TV and magazines and crosses the line into dangerous territory.

"Now (teens) are vulnerable to feedback from their peers and in particular ones that do not have their best intentions at heart."

Of course the nasty comments can be damaging, but so too can the positive ones. The psychologist says with too much positive feedback on looks girls may learn to overvalue appearance and undervalue other qualities.

"The early years of childhood and adolescence are so influential and lead to patterns of how we think and behave as we continue to develop," she said.

And without experiences to show a healthy perspective, Lacny explains this "how do I look" complex could be further engrained throughout adult development.

Society is too plugged in; we can't unplug this behaviour. Similar pressures have always existed for girls, just never to this extent. But, if we don't diffuse this, we'll have a generation of girls so defined by others that they'll never really "Like" who they are.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are pornographic sites that hijack young girls' suggestive Facebook photos, without them ever even knowing.

SPONSORED LINKS





Dr. Flea's Flea Market

Toronto's Largest Indoor Flea Market

www.drfleas.com

Click now for free Flea \$



BEST DEALS ON AUDIO VIDEO

Marantz-Nad-Monitor

Audio-Quad Canton-

Exposure-Sharp-

Samsung-JVC

Click www.tabangi.com



Insurance Problems?

We can help! Instant

quote hotline! New

drivers, tickets & more!

Click for Free Quote!