

Katie Stephens

'Today's Beauty Standards'

Over the past few weeks, I have really struggled to find a meaningful topic to base my speech on. I wanted it to be something I was passionate about but also something that my audience could also enjoy and relate to. This posed a dilemma for me as my interests are not commonly shared with most people my age. However, while on a popular social media app that I do not think I need to name, I saw a video of a woman who spoke about her struggles with self-image and beauty standards. She stated that she knew she was not 'naturally beautiful' and that she wished she could be noticed for her looks alone, but that she had also learnt to live with this. And this got me thinking, who said she is not naturally beautiful? Who dictates what beauty is?

The truth is, no one.

Attraction is an instinctual thing that helps us to determine the best candidate to continue the species with. For example, most women tend to prefer more physically apt males over smaller intelligent ones as they are likely to be more successful at survival and better at providing for future offspring. Men tend to be programmed to find women with body frames that are best suited for caring for the next generation. However, our current society has taken 'attraction' to a new extreme. In our current society, people's physical aesthetics are scrutinised more than ever because not only are we attempting to impress potential partners, but also those within our social circles. According to the Mental Health Foundation UK, in Great Britain alone one in fifteen people have attempted suicide at some point in their lives. And although it is women who have stronger tendencies to depression or anxiety disorder – according to the Mental Health Foundation UK, "In England, women are more likely than men to have a common mental health problem and are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with anxiety disorders." However, shockingly 75% of suicides in the United Kingdom are committed by men. The pressure of beauty standards affects both men and women, but surprisingly it is only the women's problems that are openly acknowledged.

Today's beauty standards are completely unrealistic, and we have lost appreciation of the human body's various natural forms in both men and women. True beauty should not be measured on how perfectly someone fits the mould of our expectations, but rather on how their individual features and differences make them unique. I know that I do not fit society's criteria for beauty. However, that does not mean that I am not beautiful. I do not get much attention for how I look and not many people find me attractive, but I am secure in the knowledge that there is far more to me than meets the eye.

If you take anything away from my speech today, let it be that it does not matter what you look like. Whether you are short or tall, curvy or slim, if you have a big nose or thin lips your features are what define you as unique and you should never have to change that.

Thank you.