



Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem

Commissioned: June 2008

Key Findings:

Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem, commissioned by the Dove® Self-Esteem Fund, reveals that there is a self-esteem crisis in this country that pervades every aspect of a girl's life including her looks, performance in school and relationships with friends and family members

- **Seven in ten girls believe they are not good enough or do not measure up in some way, including their looks, performance in school and relationships with friends and family members**
 - 62% of all girls feel insecure or not sure of themselves
 - 57% of all girls have a mother who criticizes her own looks
 - More than half (57%) of all girls say they don't always tell their parents certain things about them because they don't want them to think badly of them
 - The top wish among all girls is for their **parents to communicate better** with them which includes more frequent and more open conversations as well as discussions about what is happening in their own lives
- **Reality vs. Perception: Low self-esteem significantly impacts girls' overall feelings about their own beauty**
 - 71% of girls with low self-esteem feel their appearance does not measure up, including not feeling pretty enough, thin enough or stylish or trendy enough (compared to 29% of girls with high self-esteem)
 - 78% of girls with low self-esteem admit that it is hard to feel good in school when you do not feel good about how you look (compared to 54% of girls with high self-esteem)
 - A girl's self-esteem is more strongly **related to how she views her own body shape** and body weight, than how much she *actually* weighs
- **Girls with low self-esteem are significantly more likely to engage in negative behaviors:**
 - 75% of girls with low self-esteem reported engaging in negative activities, such as disordered eating, cutting, bullying, smoking, or drinking, when feeling badly about themselves (Compared to 25% of girls with high self-esteem)

- 61% of teen girls with low self-esteem admit to talking badly about themselves (Compared to 15% of girls with high self-esteem)
 - 25% of teen girls with low self-esteem resort to **injuring themselves** on purpose or **cutting** when feeling badly about themselves (Compared to 4% of girls with high self-esteem)
 - 25% of teen girls with low self-esteem practice **disordered eating**, such as starving themselves, refusing to eat, or over eating and throwing up, when feeling badly about themselves(Compared to 7% of girls with high self-esteem)
- **The self-esteem tipping point happens when the transition to teenage years results in loss of trust and communication with adults:**
 - 67% of girls ages 13 – 17 turn to their mother as a resource when feeling badly about themselves compared to 91% of girls ages 8 – 12
 - Only 27% of girls ages 13 – 17 will turn to their father for help when feeling badly about themselves compared to the 54% of girls ages 8-12. At 16, girls become more likely to seek support from male peers than from their own dads
 - 65% of girls ages 13 – 17 refrain from telling their parents certain things about themselves to prevent parents from thinking badly about them, compared to the 49% of girls ages 8 – 12
- **Parents' words and actions play a pivotal role fostering positive self-esteem in girls:**
 - Girls with low self-esteem are less likely to receive praise from either parent and more likely to receive criticism than girls with high self-esteem
 - More than one-third (34%) of girls with low self-esteem believe that they are not a good enough daughter (Compared to 9% of girls with high self-esteem)
 - 93% of girls with low self-esteem want their parents to change their behavior towards them in at least one way (Compared to 73% for girls with high self-esteem) including wishing their parents understood them better (Low: 60%, High: 14%) listened to them more (Low: 52%, High: 18%), and spending more time with them (Low: 43%, High: 15%)

Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self Esteem, commissioned by the Dove Self-Esteem Fund, was conducted online among 1,029 girls 8 – 17, and is representative of the U.S. based on census indicators (region, ethnicity and parental education.) An additional 3,344 girls 8 – 17 were surveyed in a targeted study that was conducted in 20 major U.S. cities representative of each DMA based on ethnicity and parental education. The research was conducted by StrategyOne, an applied research consulting firm, in collaboration with Ann Kearney-Cooke, PhD.

Methodology: Interviews averaged 15 minutes and were conducted between May 6 and May 28, 2008 using the online field services of ResearchNow.

About the Dove Self-Esteem Awareness Measurement

The Dove Self-Esteem Awareness Measurement was developed to provide an indicator of self-esteem encompassing an overall sense of self-acceptance, confidence and emotional orientation among American girls. Each girl surveyed was assigned a score based on how she rated herself in each of these areas. Based on their individual scores, girls were classified into three groups: high, average and low self-esteem. The high self-esteem group was comprised of girls whose scores fell within the top third of the distribution, the average self-esteem group included girls whose scores fell within the middle third of the distribution and the low self-esteem group included girls whose scores fell within the bottom third of the distribution.

About Dove

The Dove mission is to make women feel more beautiful every day by challenging today's stereotypical view of beauty and inspiring women to take great care of themselves. Dove, manufactured by Unilever, is the No. 1 personal wash brand nationwide. One in every three households uses a Dove product,¹ which includes beauty bars, body washes, face care, anti-perspirant/deodorants, body mists, hair care and styling aids. Dove is available nationwide in food, drug and mass outlet stores.

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¹ AC Nielsen (2004)