



Pixilated to Perfection

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OMG, that woman in the magazine looks amazing. Perfect skin, perfect tan, perfect cheeks – not a flaw about her. Why couldn't you have been born with a body so perfect, so flawless . . .

Sound familiar? If so, then congratulations: In this regard you're just like every other teenager on the planet. It's human nature to compare ourselves to others and see how we measure up. But problems arise when teens get too obsessive in trying to measure themselves against the images they see in magazines or throughout the media, because it's not exactly a level playing field. So before you get too down on yourself about how less-than-perfect you may look in comparison, I have a secret to share: the women in the magazine are cheating, and those perfect images you see are often not what they appear.

The Perfect Person, Pixel by Pixel

If you think photographers just snap a picture of a model and slap it on the cover, think again. In addition to all the hair and makeup work that goes into a photo shoot, the pictures you see in magazines and on advertisements are often extensively altered to make the models look so good. For example, in the March 2008 issue of *US Vogue*, Pascal Dangin, an artistic retoucher for the magazine, changed a total of 144 images in this one issue alone:

- 107 advertisements were altered
- 36 fashion pictures were changed
- The cover model was touched up and altered. *1

That perfect skin? Airbrushed to perfection. The flawless face? Photoshopped to get rid of the pimple the model had that day. That perfect tan? Compliments of a skin-tone filter. Even facial features, breast and hip sizes are sometimes altered to suit the magazine's desires. Like the dinosaurs in the movie *Jurassic Park*, much of what you see throughout the media is merely a result of trick photography. It simply isn't real. Pixel by pixel, these images are often photoshopped to perfection – usually with the aid of special computer software that costs thousands of dollars and exists for the sole purpose of touching up human images. So don't feel so bad if your own skin doesn't look as flawless as the girl on the cover.





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What really matters when it comes to attraction

Nobody is pretending that body image shouldn't matter. Far from it. Your body image is an important part of who you are and has a big influence in your overall psychology. There's absolutely nothing wrong with the desire to be desirable, or to strive to take care of yourself and be physically fit and attractive. Every soul on this earth wants to be desirable. In the real world, looks matter for many things (just not for everything), and it's both delusional and irrational to pretend otherwise.

Just understand that the ideals portrayed throughout the media are usually not real, and more importantly, they hardly represent the tastes of everyone. The reason that cover model looks so flawless is that all her "flaws," however minor, have been airbrushed away. And even calling these unique nuances "flaws" is somewhat deceptive, since not all imperfections are unattractive to others. Quite the contrary. That birthmark on your waist? I know of many men who are turned on by such things. The mole on your shoulder? Some people would find that attractive. In the realm of attraction, psychology plays a big role too, and many people would prefer a body with a little character over one that looks like it were made of a silicone mold.