

# SELF

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# SELF

HAPPINESS

## Embrace your face

Beauty really does come from within: Experts agree that your brain has a greater impact on how you feel about your looks than any supposed flaws (e.g., pimples) do. Happily, that means you can learn to adore your appearance simply by tweaking your state of mind. Follow this advice to smile at what you see in the mirror.

By [Sara Eckel](#)  
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**Allure saboteur** Playing the comparing game

**Why it wrecks your self-image** Our tendency to feel average in the presence of a head turner (that Megan Fox look-alike at the office) is called the contrast effect. "Women have been socialized to notice their peers' attractiveness," explains Lora Park, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychology at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

**The feel-fabulous fix** Can't stop unfavorably comparing your body/hair/skin with others'? Find something in common with the person you're measuring yourself against; ID'ing an interest you share, such as a favorite TV show, can reduce competitiveness.

**Allure saboteur** Losing sight of the big picture

**Why it wrecks your self-image** Why is it that one zit has the power to quash a great mood? Blame it on women's perfectionist tendencies—we're apt to fixate on a teeny foible, then conclude it's the only thing others notice about us as well, according to Vivian Diller, Ph.D., a psychologist in New York City who specializes in women's issues.

**The feel-fabulous fix** If you're obsessing over your complexion, ask a friend if she notices anything different about you. Most likely, she'll return your question with a blank stare. "Most of us are much less critical of our friends than we are of ourselves," Diller says.

**Allure saboteur** Recalling a less-than-pretty past

**Why it wrecks your self-image** Perhaps your schoolmates used to make fun of your thick eyebrows or [fill in the blank]. Such negative childhood messages about appearance can

shape our psyche for decades. "Even as adults, women assess themselves based on how they were conditioned as kids to think about beauty," Diller says.

**The feel-fabulous fix** There's no time like the present to challenge outdated notions about your features and realize how absurd they are. So be honest: Do you really believe no one will ever hire you unless you trim and wax your eyebrows? Absolutely not!

**Allure saboteur** Presuming it's all about you

**Why it wrecks your self-image** When that cute barista returns your smile with a smirk, it's easy to link his response to your attractiveness—or lack thereof. "One downside of our being such social creatures is that we often care too much about people's opinions of us or we believe we're somehow responsible for their reactions," Park says.

**The feel-fabulous fix** Before you denigrate yourself for a perceived dis, recall one of your strengths (such as your sense of humor). In a study by Park, people who focused on a cherished quality after brooding over their appearance were able to offset a dip in mood.

