

Women's Community Counsellor
Inspiring and Empowering You To Become Even More Fabulous
Published by Esther Kane, MSW (<http://www.estherkane.com>)

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Welcome
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Well, spring has definitely sprung and the air smells like lilacs (at least where I live). It's time to focus on fun and outdoor activities. I hope you are doing just that! This month's featured article should make you feel better about putting on your bathing suit this season. I say show off your beautiful fab self and luxuriate in being a woman. Read more to find out how...

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Featured Article: Resisting Media Hype
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Who would have thought that there would come a day when my mother and me would meet as two strong, healthy, and brilliant women; delighting in each other's company and challenging and supporting each other in the quest to make our individual and collective dreams come true?

Certainly not me. There was a time (not so long ago) that I was in the throes of a life threatening eating disorder- a time when the chasm between mother and daughter seemed insurmountable. She wanted desperately to help but didn't know how. I needed help but didn't have a clue about how to ask for it.

Fast-forward fifteen years to the present. Today I am a successful psychotherapist who empowers women who feel stuck to rid themselves of the chains that bind them into self-destructive behavior patterns- mostly in the form of eating disorders. At the age of 36, I am in awe of the life I have now and am blown away by how far I've come on my journey to health and well being. Free of an eating disorder which once consumed me for many of my young years, the hell that used to be my life way back when, seems now like a distant memory. Now I help others who are where I used to be...I never in my wildest dreams would have imagined the life I have now back then...

It's a sunny, muggy Ontario spring morning as I step into the airporter bus from my mother's driveway, choking back tears. I have just spent

the past five days with a woman I find increasingly wise and fascinating, who also happened to give me the gift of life.

We have both come so far and enjoy celebrating our successes as women. It seems fitting to me that I have just spent such a pleasant and healing time with my mother directly after attending a conference in Toronto put on by NEDIC (National Eating Disorder Information Centre). The conference title was, "Shades of Grey: Body Image and Self-Esteem" and was the first of its kind in Canada.

While the topic of disordered eating is vast, I will limit myself to one facet for the purposes of this article. I plan on elaborating on many others in future so stay tuned...

One issue that always pops up in my therapy work with clients experiencing disordered eating is how the media makes them feel bad about themselves by projecting an ideal beauty standard that is impossible for us to attain. To help women increase feelings of self-worth, I encourage clients to become 'media savvy', so that they can become critical of the messages they are being sent which are aimed to sell products, not to help women feel good about themselves.

On this note, I will highlight one of the keynote presentations from the NEDIC conference entitled, "Re-shaping Reality: Media Impact on Body Image and Self-Esteem" by Shari Graydon. Shari was the President of Mediawatch for many years; an invaluable resource which empowers Canadian citizens to speak up and out against harmful advertising. She has written two fabulous books in this vein, which I urge you to check out on her website: www.sharigraydon.com

Here is a summary of the presentation she gave at the conference:

1. Media messages don't cause eating disorders (or we'd all be suffering), but they fuel insecurities and nurture vulnerable mindsets.
2. It's natural to want to be attractive, but despite the impression created by commercial media, there's no single definition of beauty.
3. The beauty industry wants us to feel lousy about the way we look; they benefit when we believe we're in need of a makeover or constant improvement.
4. The emphasis on thin ideals for women, and muscular physiques for men reflects fundamental power issues, reinforcing on a subtle level the notion that women should take up as little space as possible.
5. The media ideals we're surrounded by are physically unattainable; they've been so significantly art directed and Photo-shopped that not even the models featured can achieve the degree of perfection represented.
6. Suffering is optional. We can choose not to buy into appearance myths; instead of doing battle with our own bodies, we can fight destructive media practices.
7. The less time we spend immersed in commercial media, the less exposure we have to messages designed to undermine us, and the less likely we are to consciously or unconsciously judge

ourselves inadequate for failing to measure up to unattainable ideals.

8. We have the power to decline to consume products that in any way promote irresponsible attitudes and behavior, to encourage our friends and colleagues and communities to do the same. We can make media producers responsible for the toxic material they are disseminating through the power of complaint; we can communicate our decisions not to embrace media, products and services that do physical, psychological, emotional or environmental damage.
9. We can cultivate the assets that really count: focus on what we can do and how we can contribute, as opposed to how we appear.

To start letting go of the power the media has over how you feel about yourself, I'll leave you with five things you can do to take your power back and increase feelings of self-worth:

1. Stop buying fashion and beauty magazines and instead, buy reading material that makes you feel good instead. For instance, I buy spiritually enlightening and socially conscious magazines.
2. Find alternative media that celebrates women instead of demoralizes them. Some magazines I particularly like are BUST and Herizons.
3. Watch less television and Hollywood movies! These mediums of 'entertainment' glorify a very narrow definition of female beauty and success and promote low self-worth to their viewers. Instead, find a relatively obscure foreign film or a low-budget documentary that focuses on who we are inside; not what we look like on the outside.
4. Make one day out of the week a "no make-up day". C'mon- rebel a little against the fascist beauty ideal you're expected to live up to. Bask in the delightfulness of a nude face!
5. Wear something that makes you feel beautiful, confident, and sexy; regardless of whether it follows current fashion dictates. Enjoy being a fully alive, healthy woman in whatever shape and size you happen to come in.

And if all else fails, say this mantra that I learned at the conference over and over again:

I AM MUCH MORE THAN WHAT YOU SEE.

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About Esther Kane, MSW, Registered Clinical Counsellor
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Esther Kane, MSW, Registered Clinical Counsellor, is in full-time private practise as a psychotherapist in Courtenay, B.C. Esther has over a decade of experience counselling women and their loved ones with a multitude of presenting problems. Her main focus is helping women to become free of barriers which keep them stuck so that they can become all that they dream of being.

To book a session or to set up a free 15-minute phone consultation (only if you reside in the Comox Valley or surrounding areas), call

Esther at (250) 338-1800.

To learn more about Esther's services, please visit her website and read glowing testimonials from many satisfied clients,

<http://www.estherkane.com>

Please note: due to the high volume of e-mails received, Esther only replies to potential therapy clients and the media.

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Books by Esther
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"WHAT YOUR MAMA CAN'T OR WON'T TEACH YOU: GROWN WOMEN'S STORIES OF THEIR TEEN YEARS"

"Esther Kane, MSW, RCC, has collected a delightful set of stories in her book, "What Your Mama Can't or Won't Teach You: Grown Women's Stories of Their Teen Years." The voices of 20 women are interweaved with each other to create a conversation-like book of women talking about their early struggles. The issues discussed are diverse and cover so many things that affected the way they grew into adults. Their insight back into what shaped them the most is sometimes funny, other times heartbreaking and often poignant. Esther interviewed these women on topics that she asked her teen clients they would most like to read about. What amassed is wisdom from a generation of women who survived and are willing to share their experiences to the youth of today."

- Lori Henry, Eating Disorders Writer, Suite101.com

To find out more about the book, go to:

<http://www.guidebooktowomanhood.com>

"DUMP THAT CHUMP: A Ten-step plan for ending bad relationships and attracting the fabulous partner you deserve"

"This is a well written and easy to follow guide for all women that struggle to find that perfect match for a lifetime relationship. The information you will gain will help strengthen your understanding in how very important positive self-talk is: it will strengthen your ability to not repeat wrong decisions in regards to relationship choices.

It will also show you how that phrase, "settling", is not and should not be acceptable to you. You will learn that settling for someone or something eventually drowns your own ideas of what you deserve in life as far as a partner is concerned. People choose to settle because it is safer, more predictable, easier to control and a lot less challenging than actually striving for more.

The author uses this very powerful phrase to help you look at the core of your bad decisions, "What You Expect Is What You Get". If you expect

nothing then you will get nothing. DTC will also teach you how to retrain your mind so that you can get to know yourself through positive self-acceptance. To know and understand who you are is a definite key in helping you to make the correct choice in relationships. Lets face it, no one wants to be stuck in a bad relationship.

Womensselfesteem.com highly recommends, "Dump That Chump" as a very good source book in opening your eyes to the many reasons that we end up in failed relationships!"

-Review by Dorothy of Womensselfesteem.com

To find out more about the book, go to:

<http://www.dumpthatchump.com>

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Archives
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