

The Sexualization of Girls

“You have to be pretty and have a body to be popular. If you’re too smart, you’re called a nerd” —says one fifth-grade girl who participated in a Girls Inc. survey.

“It’s hard to be a girl today.”



WHAT GIRLS CAN DO

You may feel overwhelmed by messages in the media—TV, magazines, songs and videos, online, and in stores—that say what matters most is how “hot” you look. It’s a powerful message. But *you* are even more powerful.

With your friends, teachers, and parents, you can make changes in your school, community, and the media. Most important, you can learn to value yourself more for who you are than for how you look.



AMERICAN
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TUNE IN AND TALK

Ask questions when you watch TV and movies, surf the Web, or go to the mall. “Why is there so much pressure on girls to look a certain way?” “What qualities do I admire in girls other than the way they look or dress?” “What are qualities I admire in adults I look up to?” “Do I see any of those qualities in myself?” “What do I most respect about myself?”

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Clothes that require lots of checking and adjusting might distract you from school work, friends, and other activities. **Choose clothes that make you feel comfortable. Then you can be your most confident self.**

SPEAK UP

If you see something that makes you or other girls feel uncomfortable, use your voice. For example, if clothing companies, advertisers, TV, and movie producers are encouraging girls to focus too much on looking “hot,” you can write a letter to express your opinion. **They listen!**

CHANGE THE RULES

It’s natural to want to fit in when you’re growing up. But it’s never worth giving up who you are just to be accepted by someone else. Try to focus more on what makes you a good and caring person. Recognize your talents and accomplishments and those of the people around you. **You can help to redefine “hot” as being someone who’s confident and caring.**

GET INVOLVED

Explore your interests. As you try different activities, you’ll find out what you like to do and what makes you happy—and you’ll meet other girls who share your interests. As you develop your skills, talents, and abilities, you’ll feel proud of your accomplishments.

LEARN TO BE YOU

You’re unique and special. You have a whole world inside you. **Explore what you think, feel, and value—and talk about it with your friends.** Develop a habit of setting goals and a plan to reach them. Remember to take time to celebrate your successes!