

# Who will define the terms of *your* daughter's life?

**Your worth is inextricably tied to your appearance.** If you are a girl, these are the terms, set by merchandisers and marketers and promoted incessantly by the mass media.

**Sure, you can** play sports and achieve academically. You can follow the rules and follow your dreams. You can be a tomboy or a girly girl. You can develop unique talents and serve in meaningful ways. You can lead and inspire, create and discover. You can love math or English, or both. But if you're not "**HOT**," nothing else you do, and nothing else you are, will ever really matter.

**The propaganda** aimed at girls has one purpose: Undermine self-confidence. Convince girls that they will never be good enough. Then, you can offer a solution. Hold up an image of the ideal girl. (It must be completely fabricated and totally unachievable.) Attach it to a promise of power, happiness and self-worth. And there you have the perfect formula for selling billions of dollars worth of products.

**Girl culture** in America is not about girls and all their amazing potential. Girl culture as we know it is about making money by trivializing girls' lives.

**The message is ubiquitous.** And while it doesn't get to every girl, it seems to get to most. "*It's out of style to admit it, but it is more important to be hot than smart.*" This is a quote from a so-called Alpha Girl, one of our nation's best and brightest, a future leader of our society. This girl scored a perfect 2400 on her SAT. Her friends concurred with her assessment, and elaborated it was even better if you could make *hot* look effortless.

**Girls' true gifts** are sabotaged as they grow up in a culture that reduces female worth to physical appearance. Most parents, teachers, religious and civic leaders agree that, before someone starts marketing padded bras to our preschoolers, something must be done. But what?

**How can parents compete** with the seemingly unlimited resources of Madison Avenue? Fortunately, parents have one advantage that even the most clever, aggressive marketers will never have: We are the ones who are always there. We tuck them into bed, drive them to practice, pack their lunches, and plan their birthday parties. It's true we lack the glamour and glitz of E-TV and Teen Vogue, but there are private moments between us and our daughters that no marketer can ever penetrate.

**We cannot always shield them** from the images; but we can stand beside them and help them to understand what they are seeing. We can also -- we **MUST** also -- give them the knowledge and tools they will need to safeguard their unique and wonderful selves.

**Every community** has classes for girls who want to learn dance, t-ball, karate, piano, baton, swimming, and a host of other skills. We understand these abilities develop over time so we invest in them.

**What we do not have** is any systematic way for girls to learn how to grow up healthy and whole in a girl-hurting world. Until now.

*myTERMS* Summer Camp for Girls. Check it out at [www.myerms.org](http://www.myerms.org).

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