

## **Stop Feeling Ugly**

**By: Robert Notter**

If you open most lifestyle magazines, websites, or watch LGBT television, more often than not you'll see shirtless men with perfect abs, white teeth and flawless skin. Even some social service organizations use sexual images to promote themselves. Is this a new concept, or one seen only in the gay community? Certainly not.

As a personal coach, I experience firsthand how many men of all ages and backgrounds struggle either to become this socially acceptable ideal, or to attract men who "appear" to be this ideal. I hear stories of how people abuse alcohol, drugs, sex and even the gym to escape the pain of not feeling good enough and of comparison to others, hoping their life will somehow be better.

Many clients tell me they feel lost, have few close friends and find it difficult to meet people who are interested in more than just looks or superficial encounters. Of course, not everyone is shallow and ego-driven, and the types of places you frequent will determine the types of people you meet.

But there seems to be a pervasive focus in many aspects of the gay community on appearance and status. Whose fault is this -- the media, party promoters, advertisers, websites? Not exclusively, though I do feel they contribute to the problem. Ultimately, no one forces us to think we are not good enough. It's sometimes difficult to escape the trap of the "haves and have-nots." Many men have lost a sense of themselves and their ability to create meaningful connections, and are looking for satisfaction in unbalanced ways.

A 19-year-old reader recently commented he "feels ugly" and even though he "is a nice person, that is not good enough for others to like him." In response, I ask him and all of you to reflect on what really makes you happy. Will struggling to look a certain way really bring you fulfillment?

Often, I believe much of what we think we want is instilled into us by society and social expectations. There is nothing wrong with realistic self-improvement, but you don't want to let your life pass you by because you were too preoccupied trying to become someone else.

If you are not happy with yourself, you'll just keep searching for the next best thing to fill the holes you have inside. No one said it's easy; we all have our struggles and lessons to learn. But if you are looking for a better life, you probably won't find it in a bar or a chat room. You'll find it by working on your self-acceptance, spending time with supportive individuals and taking actions that will bring you lasting results.

I don't mean to sound cliché, but your happiness, in the end, cannot depend on other people or things: It has to first come from within. Some aspects of the gay community are not necessarily going to change; you'll still see the guy with eight-pack abs in club flyers. But you can start to change how you view yourself and how you let all this affect you by being more conscious and making new choices, one step at a time.

**Robert C. Notter, HHC**, is a certified Lifestyle & Health Coach. He works with individual and group clients, and additionally facilitates corporate workshops and educational seminars. The focus of his work is on stress reduction, healthier nutrition, and happier living. He coaches clients on how lifestyle, thought patterns, motivation and food choices affect how they feel and look. His clients learn to identify their specific life and health goals, and receive the tools and support to actually realize these goals.



Additionally, he leads the Marketing Education Program at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition in New York City, and the “Building A Practice” Course at the New York Open Center. He has lectured to over 6000 people nationwide about how to create the life of your dreams.

If you are interested in learning more about life coaching, and how to take steps to improve your life, please contact Robert.

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