




# TRULY Beautiful YOU

**DIANA TIMMINS**  
explores true beauty  
beyond skin-deep.

A photograph of a person's legs sitting on a dark, textured rock. The person is barefoot, and their legs are crossed at the ankles. The background is a soft-focus view of water and a light sky.

**T**he pursuit for beauty has boomed – big time. According to the Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery, Australians annually consume more than \$350 million worth of wrinkle reduction treatments and approximately \$1 billion overall on cosmetic procedures. Perhaps of greater concern are findings from a global study conducted by Dove, which revealed that merely four per cent of women worldwide consider themselves beautiful. This prevalent self-perception of not being enough raises the question: what really denotes beauty? The truth is that beauty cannot be measured externally by the use of fillers, foundations or physical

attributes; true beauty is a unique light that shines deep from within and radiates outwards.

Clinical psychologist and Body Image Movement ambassador, Dr Emma Johnston, expresses concern regarding the storm of social media posts and selfies promoting a superficial sense of worth. “The detrimental effect this has on body image and self-esteem has seen a surge in clinics offering cosmetic procedures as demand increases,” says Dr Johnston. “This then normalises cosmetic procedures and the idea that we are not good enough the way we are. Our greatest asset is not our appearance, but lies in the choices we make every day to be the best human being we can be.”

Thankfully, the West has become greatly influenced by Eastern practices promoting spiritual awareness, which can counteract harmful messages from the controversial 'plastic positive' movement. Of course, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be aesthetically pleasing, but what do we predominantly invest in: how we look or who we are? Ultimately, the choice is ours, but we should bear in mind that spiritual beauty acquires longer-lasting fulfilment that infiltrates our entire lives, as opposed to generally fleeting satisfaction of physical 'enhancers'.

***I believe a beautiful person is a confident person; not cocky, just self-contained.***

### More than this body

Whilst the idea of beauty has changed throughout the ages, one constant is glorification of a particular 'picture-perfect' appearance. Essentially, there is no one kind of beauty; it is a rich uniqueness transcending physical form. Founder of Body Image Movement, Taryn Brumfitt, declares in her documentary, *Embrace*: "This body of mine is not an ornament, it's a vehicle." This revelation provokes an attitude of gratitude for our body's functions, rather than obsessing over perceived flaws.

Motivational speaker and author of *Unmasked* (\$34.99, Penguin), Turia Pitt, exemplifies how life experiences shed powerful light on this concept; appreciating bodies beyond beauty and beauty beyond bodies. In 2011, Pitt was trapped in a blazing fire whilst competing in an ultramarathon in Western Australia's Kimberley region. After suffering severe burns to 65 per cent of her body, she wore a mask and full-body compression suit for two years and has endured more than 200 surgeries. This former model's appearance may have changed, but her beauty is more radiant than ever.

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## Loving Kindness Meditation

**Sarah Ball recommends this *metta bhavana* [loving kindness] meditation to soften your heart and sense your beauty:**

- Meditate on someone you easily love; notice the feeling in your heart when you think of them, and hold this tenderness as your focus.
- Offer intentions from your heart, starting with yourself: "May I be happy, may I be free, may I be peaceful, loving and at ease."
- Pause momentarily, and offer the invocation: "May you be happy, may you be free, may you be peaceful, loving and at ease." Repeat this for someone you know and love, followed by an acquaintance you don't know well, someone you have never spoken with, someone you find challenging, and finally everyone everywhere.
- Close the process by sitting quietly and continuing to hold this feeling in your heart.

"If offering this intention widely is too confronting in any given moment, perhaps practice simply offering the prayer to yourself and, as you feel ready, gradually begin offering it outward to others," suggests Ball.

For details on nation-wide Body Love Yoga workshops, visit [sarahball.com.au/body-love-yoga](http://sarahball.com.au/body-love-yoga)



contained," says Pitt. "Lots of things make us confident; our appearance is just one. More importantly, it is self-belief that you can achieve amazing things and accepting compliments with grace. It is having presence of mind to understand that physical appearance is just an outer shell and ultimately we are so much more. Before my accident, I really liked how I looked. Since then, I have grown to really like how I look."

Whilst the definition of inner beauty is somewhat subjective, Dr Johnston believes it stems from acceptance of self and others, respecting others despite differences, and lack of judgement based on physical appearance. This, she says, can be maintained through

mindfulness-based activities like yoga and meditation that teach us to be present and not constrained by thoughts and worries. Founder of Body Love Yoga, Sarah Ball, suggests contemplating: what is the body's value?

"Would someone that is no longer alive care about their looks if they could have one more day of living?" asks Ball. "No! Focus on enjoying every little thing your body can do rather than how it looks. Can your body hug? Do that often. Can it dance? Do that too. Can it make love, laugh or work on projects you care about? Savour that! Do things that genuinely invoke freedom and joy, bypassing the expensive, painful and ultimately unfulfilling experience of being a little more 'beautiful' by society's standards."

### **Cultivating self-love**

Ball says that while most are familiar with the idea that real beauty stems from within, this message often fails to change our conviction that we are not beautiful enough if we don't fit an 'ideal' mould. If we are to accept and love others despite differences, we must love and celebrate our individuality. Acquiring self-love may seem like rigorously climbing rocky mountaintops barefoot, but the view from the top is breathtaking – and we can all arrive there.

"The most important relationship you will ever have is with yourself. How do you talk to yourself? Do you pat yourself on the back for each

achievement, no matter how small? Are you proud to be the person you are, or do you constantly put yourself down with negative self-talk?" queries Pitt.

"I can't claim to always get internal dialogue right, but one thing that helps is talking to myself like I would to my best mate. Say you make a mistake at work and tell yourself you are useless. Would you say that to your best mate? No. You would say that they are awesome, that people aren't perfect, to cut themselves some slack and move on," she adds.

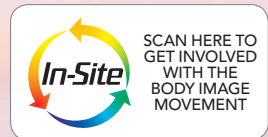
Mindfulness-based practices create awareness for a 'busy' mind, and provide self-empowering tools to outshine it. *In Beautiful You: A Daily Guide to Radical Self-Acceptance* (\$22, Seal Press), Rosie Molinary discusses research that links consistent yoga practice with higher self-esteem, along with a number of techniques that can achieve this liberating outcome. "The yogic mantra [word or phrase repeated during prayer or meditation] practice 'so hum' ('I am that') is especially useful if triggered by negative self-talk or media images that don't reflect how you look. Internalising the sound 'so' upon inhalation and 'hum' upon exhalation, this mantra pierces the heavy burden of our own

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limitations and supports our sense of worthiness as part of a greater whole, regardless of how we look," says Ball.

"You only need to immerse yourself in nature to appreciate how diverse and plentiful true beauty is. We don't see a small bird lamenting that it's not an eagle, or an eagle regretting that it doesn't have the feathers of a peacock. We humans are just as diversely beautiful," she says.





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### Self-care, shine and share

Sadly, 67 per cent of Dove's global study participants reportedly withdraw from life-engaging activities due to being upset about their looks. Pitt addressed this in her 2014 TEDX talk, where she stated that worrying about how we look, rather than what we can offer the world, is wasted energy. Releasing limiting beliefs and reconnecting with our spiritual magnificence organically enables us to give back and enhance others' lives, which triggers remarkable flow-on effects.

"Our capacity for kindness and compassion is phenomenal. I am alive today because of 17 generous Americans who donated their skin," says Pitt, who recently launched an online program named Turia's School of Champions ([turiashampions.com](http://turiashampions.com)). "Their gracious gift is something I will be forever

grateful for. Because of this, I have been able to live my life to the max; now mentoring thousands of people to achieve their biggest goals, and grow confidence and self-belief."

It is important to remember that being of service doesn't mean being selfless, as our light cannot shine brightly amid burnout. Constantly replenishing our own cup through acts of self-care (like that yoga class or a sneaky siesta) allows us to give more abundantly from the overflow. "If we are always looking to put others before ourselves, we are never self-nurturing and therefore never finding true inner fulfilment. To achieve a greater level of ability to be present for the needs of others, we firstly need to be present in recognising our own needs," says Dr Johnston. "How would you

want to be remembered: as someone who looked great in selfies, or for the person you were and positive influences you had on the world?"

With tender loving self-care, we can profoundly impact this world. Why wait until we look a little more 'beautiful' to discover how sensational we truly are, from the inside out? We already are beautiful. We already are capable of great things; we only need to peel back layers of conditioning and plug into our potential. Don't wait another day; embrace your inner beauty and shine now. ANH

Want to help spread positive messages about true beauty? Check out [bodyimagemovement.com/ambassador/](http://bodyimagemovement.com/ambassador/) to find out how to become a Body Image Movement Global Ambassador.

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