

Crowning Glory



How do you feel about your hair? This was the question posed upon entrance to “*The Power of Hair*” event on Dec. 15th at **Saks Fifth Avenue** in NYC. Led by **Elline Surianello**, founder and CEO of **LeMetric Hair Center INC**, a panel discussion and Q&A unveiled the effects hair has on a woman’s self-esteem and sense of self. Surianello sums up the message of the event by simply saying, “hair is important to how you feel.” Conversations about hair are not really about hair. They are about culture, society, medical ailments, relationships, self-esteem or fashion.

The power of hair comes from centuries ago. Hair has historically been significant whether it is in stories, fashion, or as it relates to the medical field. **Dr. Judith Hellman, MD**, celebrity dermatologist, spoke about the various medical conditions for hair loss, including *alopecia areata* (when the immune system attacks hair follicles because it doesn’t recognize that they belong to the body), Lupus, pregnancy, anemia, cancer treatments, and thyroid abnormalities. There are many cases of self-induced stress to the scalp resulting in trauma to the follicles that cause alopecia in women. Picking of the scalp or pulling of hair whether by ones own hands or frequent use of tightened hair accessories to hold hair back are among the most common causes. There are many women who misdiagnose their condition and come to Hellman with concerns of

hair loss when in actuality, there is nothing wrong with the patient's hair. Instead of a medical condition, it is insecurity about their appearance, which can manifest into body *dysmorphic disorder* or low self-esteem in general. The reasons for this type of mental behavior can be anything from depression to societal or cultural standards that make the woman feel inadequate or a person in their life that contributes to low sense of self. In cases such as these, the patient is advised to seek psychological treatment.

Dr. Dennis Lin, MD is a psychiatrist and sex therapist dealing with depression and bi-polar disorder as well as couples counseling. Lin explains that hair is "important in terms of grooming as it signals the state of mental health." In addition, insecurity about one's hair is often a symptom of other aspects of the patient's life that are causing depression, stress, and poor body image. Lin has observed how hair is interconnected with positive or negative effects on a woman's quality of life, which includes self-esteem and sex.

Eugene Smith, celebrity hairstylist of the **Ted Gibson Salon**, is familiar with how hair relates to a woman's sexuality and confidence. He is adamant that "hair is very powerful to women...it is their biggest accessory." Smith doesn't give in to face shapes and types. He believes that it is about what a woman wants to look like and how she wants to feel. **Qianna Smith**, Editor-at-Large for **FashionQ&A.com**, adds that "hair is how we express ourselves and personality...it is internal—mind, body, and soul— not just what you make it out to be with products."

High maintenance standards of women can often be misconstrued as vain and superficial. However, hair care should be made a priority if it is keeping you from living your life. Whatever is stopping you from living up to your potential needs to be fixed whether it is teeth, nails, or hair. Of course, nowadays more than ever women are feeling guilty about spending money on hair. The key is to find a regime and budget that suits your lifestyle. Change of season, hair type (which includes cultural background that determines the thickness and strength of hair), and products can all affect the wellness of your hair in either positive or negative ways. Maintenance for not only the hair on your head but also legs, eyebrows, upper lip, bikini, underarm can often feel daunting. It goes without saying that grooming habits are healthy and necessary to feel comfortable in your body. It is also undeniable that taking control to improve the look and feel of hair is empowering for women. If the answer to the question of how you feel about your hair implies a happier and more confident woman then there isn't much to regret.