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SBS 3201

Gender Dress & Society

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The Cost of a Perfect Ideal

Dear Younger Shana,

Hello darling, you are about 12-14 years old, attending the Young Women's Leadership School in Queens. You're a young girl, attending a girls only middle school. You chose to attend a uniform school, so that way you wouldn't be bullied or feel self-conscious about what you wore and how you looked. You were a chubby elementary schooler, who just wanted to look good in new fashions dad couldn't afford yet. Your parents picked out everything for you in elementary, so now you begin to have a choice, as you move into a middle school in Long Island which gives you all freedom to dress however you'd like.

Emotional Cost

Emotionally, you were very self-conscious about how you looked and your body weight. Initially you didn't like the way you looked and always looked for ways to beautify yourself. In this point in time, you were obsessed with having a flat stomach, as this accentuated your skinny body. You were, for the most part, content with the way you looked. You had a pretty face, and just wanted the body to "make up" for what was "missing". I'm here to tell you nothing was missing. When you got older, you developed your breasts & your butt, I know that was your biggest concern. Mom had a full chest of breasts at your age, but you took after dad. Skinny. You spent a lot of time feeling so sad about your skinny body...when others wanted what you had. I want to tell you Young Shana, that you had nothing to worry about. You always had natural beauty, but as you grew older, your body changed too. You struggled so much with your weight; going from 110lb to 180 in the span of a year. Then back down to 150...130lbs. You changed so much & I want you to know, in adulthood, you are exactly who you wished you were at your young age. Be proud. Be endlessly confident. Let your confidence shine through you no matter *what* you look like. You were always well rounded, and you still are now, even more perfected, beautiful & well put together. Dad would be proud of the way you upkept your health, appearance in the world, and how you present yourself. He's proud of you in the end, and so am I. Don't worry so much, or even cry about your looks. You only get better, and more confident; thanks to you.

Financial Cost

Financially, you were always savvy. You always knew how to save money, as you always had to budget yourself. At this point in time, be ever so grateful to the dollar store pencil liner you use to do your horrendously thick eyeliner in the bathroom at school. It costed you \$1, but your go-to product for the next 10 years will still be less than \$5. You were always smart in the beginning of your beauty and makeup journey, but that stayed and I might even say got a little irresponsible as you grew older and made your own money. Right now, you feel that you can barely afford the things you want, but when you get older, you're showered with all material makeup things. Right now, you budget yourself and do what you can to create your closet. This never changes in the end. I want you to know that finances will give you the power to express yourself, and don't worry, the time for you to make your own money will come. Try creating your own clothing, you have an interest in nails, but save up and buy a sewing machine. This will help you in the long run.

Health Cost

Wow, you really want that flat stomach huh? Do you *really* think doing 40 crunches a day will create magical abs, when you eat Oreos for breakfast? You're so stressed about your body right now! Give it time to grow. Right now, you're not your healthiest. You're living life by the grace of that little fast metabolism. You right now, is like how Keshan is now. He's (my youngest brother) about 14 now, doing all that he can to bulk and become huge, just like how you always wanted that bigger butt. Let me tell you a secret, its coming. Your health journey was crazy, wild, and still going. My love, you accomplished all of your goals by 24. Your body has never looked better and changes every year now. You are skinny now but ended up actually getting fat! In college, you weighed close to 200lbs for a 5'7 woman. Crazy right! But you gained all that weight, had a big butt, large breasts and then you were annoyed by your gut. Eventually you ended up working out, *properly*. You went to hard on yourself for not losing weight that first year, but you should've known it was going to be okay. As time went on, you actually lost the fat. You got back down to your goal weight! You were around 130-140lbs at ages 21-22. You're 24 now, weighing in at about 170 on a good day and 159 on your skinnier days, and girl let me tell you; you're packing now. You went *hard* in the gym with your brothers and cousins, 3-4 times a week. Your leg press PR (Personal Record) is now 270lb. Yes, you can leg press this. Your legs, butt calves have never been bigger, muscular and more defined. It makes a statement when you walk into the room. Well deserved, Younger Shana. It wasn't easy *at all* and you did it. You are so much healthier now, eating so much better, still enjoying meals, but keeping positive. You know what you had to do, and you inevitably figured it out like *you know you can*.

My Advice..

What I want to advise you Shana, is to have trust in yourself; have trust in mother nature. The body is a thing that evolves more and more, now in your mid-20's you're thinking about marriage, and children. You now want 4/5 children, and you now upkeep your physical health as to attain such things. Your journey with health was a long one, but remember; your physical health says a lot about your mental health too, it can help with your mental health and ends up being so important as you age. Never let anyone control you or tell you what you can or cannot wear Shana. Never. You are the artist of your life, and you control every way in which you appear into this world. Make **yourself** happy with the way you look. Boys come and go, I promise you. They may get mad at how you choose to express yourself but *know* that you are the prize, not them.

Always continue to carry yourself with respect, poise, class and authority. You carry so much inner power, that you choose to express outwardly. Continue to embrace your need for dress, continue to feed your inner creative and wear what feels right to you. Stop worrying about what you don't have, and hold tightly to the attributes God has blessed you with. The journey of your changing body is *not* over, but don't worry, eventually you'll get a hang of the wave, and ride it effortlessly.

The last thing I want to mention, never compare yourself. Don't ever look at what you don't have, and **feel less**, because chances are, there's probably a million things that you have that she can never have. Be confident, in what makes you, YOU. Never forget your inner power.