



Plastic Surgery Brigade

Longing for the perfect postbaby body

By Kelli Wheeler

Let's talk plastic surgery, shall we? Lately it's been a hot topic of conversation and reality TV programming. With January here and fresh New Year's resolutions haunting us to lose those inches rimming our stomachs and thighs (never mind the big butts—thanks to J. Lo, they're in), the pressure is on to effect change on our bodies.

Fifteen years ago, my girlfriends and I stumbled upon the topic of plastic surgery and conducted an informal survey of who thought we might need something and what it would be. Back then, I wasn't happy with where my development quit on me, but it never occurred to me that I could go and purchase desired parts at a later date. I remember we concluded: "Ewww, gross! Why would someone do that to her body?"

Of course, when we had that discussion, we had slim, hard, 18-

year-old bodies and perky parts! Cut to today: Multiple children later, I'm staring the mid-30's in the face, my metabolism is quitting on me, and I've fired the first shot in Operation Hide the Aging by finally giving in and dying my hair to combat the advancing gray army.

I should've decked her, but she was just stating the obvious.

When I got together with my high school girlfriends this year for our annual girls' getaway, the question of plastic surgery resurfaced. This time around, we didn't discuss the theoretical question of who we thought might one day need something. As a girlfriend so eloquently put it, "As soon as I'm done nursing Abby, I'm going in to get these suckers lifted." We then came up with at least five women we knew who had enhanced their figures surgically after having children. Of course, we felt it was our duty to critique among ourselves how well their plastic surgeons did.

One thing we all agreed upon was that plastic surgery has become an increasingly acceptable and financially attainable option. In this age of salad in a bag and refrigerated cookie dough, if people don't see the results they want immediately with diet and exercise they just go tie up their stomachs or inject poison in their faces. Before, it seemed as though such procedures were reserved

for the famous and rich. Now, I can go to almost any gathering and find someone who's had something done. And, in another big change, people are willing to talk about it!

At a recent children's birthday party I attended, the hostess announced, "I have to get a picture of my girlfriend—she just got her boobs done three weeks ago." And to my surprise, instead of decking her for revealing her recent purchase, her friend proudly smiled and posed for the picture. Since there seemed to be a high level of openness going on, I finally asked my girlfriend the question I already knew the answer to: "Did you recently bring home a set of twins yourself?" And there, in front of men, women and children, she said, "No, I didn't get these recently. I've had these for almost three years!"

We then jumped into a lively debate. "No way," I said. "I saw you last year at this time and you were not prancing around pointing directions with your big road signs like you are now." Girlfriend With New Boobs agreed.

"You're right," my girlfriend finally conceded. "It hasn't been that long. But it feels like I've had them forever. You should get some."

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The two women went on to answer all my questions, discussing the details of their surgeries for almost an hour. If we weren't in the middle of a children's birthday party, I think I also would have gotten a visual

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comparison. I did get to poke at them, though.

So my friends and I have been talking plastic surgery. Now that most of us are done having kids, we've finally stood in the mirror with new clarity and assessed the battle wounds are little darlings have left us. We've moved from being grossed out by plastic surgery to booking consultations. Some have actually surrendered to the invading cellulite and retreating elasticity and joined the Plastic Surgery Brigade, despite reassurances from husbands and friends that we look fine the way we are.

But sometimes when you look in the mirror and the body you see doesn't jive with the youthfulness you feel in your head, the pull to join the ranks of the Plastic Surgery Brigade can't be resisted any longer. When hard work and commitment don't yield the results you're looking for, disappointment can turn to

desperation. Suddenly, the body you thought was imperfect as a teenager becomes something you'd pay money and pain for to have again.

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Heck, I buy the premade cookie dough and have actually poked at a friend's new boobs with impressed wistfulness. Now that Colin Powell is available, I may need to bring him on as a rational advisor in Operation Hide the Aging.

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