

No PhotoShop! AbbeyPost Signs The Brave Girls Alliance Heroes Pledge

By Jen (<http://abbeypost.com/blog/author/jena/>)

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By now you may have heard about the “No Photoshop” pledge being taken by retailers.

The [Brave Girls Alliance](http://www.bravegirlswant.com/) (<http://www.bravegirlswant.com/>) is on a mission to protect girls from over-manipulated images in advertising. Thanks in part to ads’ heavy reliance on Photoshop, girls start longing to be thinner as early as



1st grade

(<http://www.bravegirlswant.com/research-on-effects-of-altered-images-of-bodies.html>), and teens fear weight gain more than cancer or losing their parents.

Here's a quote with some shocking statistics, from the Brave Girls Alliance website:

We can't ignore the public health crisis being caused by photoshopped ads nor, more importantly, the false and unrealistic expectations of what people can and should look like that result from ads. The problems resulting have reached epidemic proportions (no hyperbole). And while of course no one means to cause any harm, the truth is, a lot of harm is being caused by the ad industry. A lot. Consider this:

- 53% of 13 year-old girls are unhappy with their bodies. By the time they're 17, 78% are.

- 3 of the most common mental health problems among girls—eating disorders, depression, and low self-esteem—are linked to the depiction of girls and women in the media.

- 6 in 10 girls stop doing something they love because they feel badly about their bodies.

The Heroes Pledge for Advertisers

(<http://www.bravegirlswant.com/advertisers-pledge-form.html>) includes agreeing not to change the size, shape or color of models in ads. If those changes are made, then a Truth in Advertising label will be included in the ad, and the ad won't be displayed anywhere children under 13 might see them.

Our founder, Cynthia Schames (<http://abbeypost.com/about>) eagerly took the pledge (<http://www.bravegirlswant.com/advertisers-pledge-form.html>) this week, and we did a little Q&A with her to learn more about how she thinks

about AbbeyPost's role in helping women and girls foster positive self image.

Jen: The Brave Girls Alliance Advertisers Pledge seeks to protect children (especially those under 13) from unrealistic, idealized images. We're all aware of teens' self image problems. As a mom, can you describe the impact these images have on younger girls?

Cynthia: I'm a Mom to a 6 year old little girl who is just entering the first grade, and already I can see signs that the media's portrayal of women impacts her own self-image. Everything from cartoons to kids movies to magazines idealizes and frankly distorts the female body (and often, attitudes!) into an unrealistic notion. I work hard as a parent to ensure that my kids know they're special and beautiful just the way they are.

And by extension, that's the mission we are committed to at AbbeyPost as well. We believe in empowering women to embrace themselves just the way they are, and be the very best that they can be, without comparisons.

Jen: How do you think these images affect adult women? We're all aware that these images are fake, yet criticizing our bodies is so commonplace – are overphotoshopped images a factor?

Cynthia: Absolutely, I believe that the images we see every day affect our own perceptions of ourselves, and warp our standards of beauty. One very disturbing campaign that comes to my mind was the Steve Madden shoes ad campaign, where young female models were overtly distorted into giant bobbleheads with enormous childlike eyes, surreally tiny bodies—and huge feet, to sell shoes. That's an extreme example and of course no one in her right mind would consciously think it was at all realistic, but at the same time, these images clearly stick in our minds as some sort of subconsciously desirable ideal.

The irony is, when you talk to men, the majority of them actually say that they prefer women with defined curves and adult figures. Most men don't want a Bratz or Barbie doll on their arms. So why can't we, as women, love our bodies the way they are?

Jen: How do you think these images affect boys and men?

Cynthia: Well, I'm also the mother of a six year old boy (yep, twins!) . I will say that I see fewer effects on his psychology at this stage, but I definitely am concerned about both the idealization and the objectification of women's bodies in media as he gets older.

Jen: Advertising has always been about selling a fantasy. The Advertiser's Pledge seeks to keep the fantasy closer to reality. How do you strike a balance between making someone (and the clothes they're wearing) look appealing to customers and keeping the images realistic?

Cynthia: I think a big part of it is making clothes that are wearable, attractive, and well-made in the first place. For example, it's a lot easier to take photographs of our high-quality dresses and make them look great than it would be if we were selling cheap fast fashion that was hastily thrown together in a sweatshop. Because the clothes simply ARE better—and I think as women we all deserve that.

At AbbeyPost, we are also dedicated to working with diverse models. Our typical models range from a size 14 to size 18. Customers have told us they want to see clothes on bodies they can relate to, so we intentionally choose models with a variety of body shapes as well. Every image may not resonate with you, but if you spend a few moments on our site, you're sure to find a model whose body shape is similar to yours.

We have actually NEVER done extreme photoshopping of our images, by the way. We do color-correct, smooth wrinkles in a garment, and make minor adjustments like lighting, but even before the Advertiser's Pledge, we have

never (nor would we ever) alter the shape, size or proportions of a model's body or body parts. We embrace them for who they are!

Jen: Do you think it's possible for a company that takes the pledge to stay competitive among other companies that don't?

Cynthia: Absolutely. We have very strong values and philosophies as a company, and I hope that as we continue to grow our brand identity (we are only a few months old, after all!) more and more shoppers will see those values come through in everything we do, and will identify with them. And I am confident that over time, consumers will start demanding truth in advertising.

Jen: The pledge addresses only one aspect of this problem – ads. What other changes would you like to see? (such as magazines, music videos, promotional photos that musicians and actors release, heavily edited selfies)

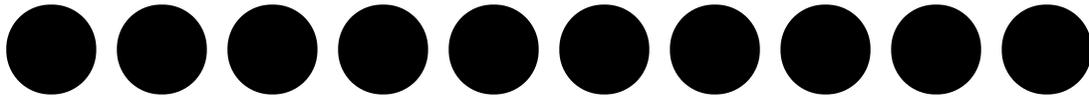
Cynthia: All of the above! Look, I love beautiful images just as much as the next girl (hello, [Pinterest \(http://www.pinterest.com/abbeypost/!\)](http://www.pinterest.com/abbeypost/)) but I believe publishers and marketers owe it to consumers to realistically and respectfully portray the female body in all its many iterations. We don't all look like Beyonce—and that's okay! The world is a big, diverse, and beautiful place, and I'd like to see media of all types begin to reflect that. We see the Advertiser's Pledge as just one more step toward making that a reality.

We're thrilled that the Brave Girls Alliance is doing this important work, and we're honored to be a part of it. We are looking forward to seeing more and more companies joining us in taking the pledge!



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