

Never Good-Looking Enough

When Daniel was fifteen, he started going to the gym after school. He wanted to feel stronger and look better. Many of his friends were already exercising, and it seemed like a healthy goal. But then Daniel found a different part of the internet. On these websites, people were not talking about fitness. They were talking about faces.

On these sites, users posted photos of themselves and asked strangers to judge how they looked. People commented on jawlines, eye shape, and the distance between facial features. This community called what they were doing "looksmaxxing." Supporters believe that your appearance is not just luck. They think how you look is something you can study, measure, and improve. They even give scores to different parts of the face and rank people based on how attractive they are.

There are two main ways to do this. "Softmaxxing" includes simple changes like standing up straight, using skin creams, or an exercise called "mewing." This involves pressing the tongue against the roof of the mouth, hoping to make the jaw look sharper. "Hardmaxxing" is much more serious. It can include plastic surgery or taking dangerous drugs. In extreme cases, some people even hit their faces with hard objects, believing their bones will grow back stronger. Doctors have noticed more young men coming in to ask about jaw surgery, often bringing pictures they found on social media.

Short video apps helped these ideas spread quickly. A video showing a teenager looking completely different just a few years later can reach millions of people in hours. What was once a small, hidden community became a trend that young men all over the world were talking about.

Psychologists have serious concerns about this. Constantly measuring and judging your own appearance can lead to unhealthy thinking. Doctors are especially worried about a condition called body dysmorphia. This happens when a person becomes overly focused on small or imagined problems with their appearance. This condition is often missed in young men because their obsession just looks like they are trying to be healthy.

To understand why so many young men are attracted to looksmaxxing, we need to look at the bigger picture. Many young people today find it hard to get a stable job, buy a home, or start a long-term relationship. Because these normal goals feel impossible, working on your appearance feels like one of the few things you can actually control. The beauty industry has noticed this and is selling more products to young men, promising a better life.

Sadly, focusing too much on appearance often makes life worse. Good relationships are built on warmth, humor, and connection. Spending dinner worrying about the angle of your jawline usually pushes people away.

Daniel still exercises and takes care of his skin, but he admits it is hard to escape the constant self-criticism. "The good part is that I started taking care of myself," he says. "The bad part is that once you learn to look for flaws, it's hard to stop noticing them."

- 1) Does looking good make you feel more confident, or does confidence come from inside?
- 2) Have you ever changed how you look because of something you saw on social media or because of other people?
- 3) What is a normal, healthy way to take care of your appearance?
- 4) When does taking care of yourself become an unhealthy obsession?
- 5) The article says young men focus on their appearance because normal life goals like buying a house or getting a stable job feel impossible today. Do you agree?
- 6) If someone worries too much about their looks, does it make them a worse romantic partner?
- 7) Do men and women feel the same pressure to look good, or is it different?
- 8) How much is social media to blame for young people feeling bad about their appearance?
- 9) Is the pressure to look a certain way getting stronger or weaker in Korean society?
- 10) Why do you think so many young people today try to control their appearance instead of focusing on other things?

Judge	(v)	to form an opinion about someone or something based on what you see or know	It is not fair to judge someone before you get to know them.
Jawline	(n)	the shape of the lower part of a person's face, from the chin to the ear	The actor was known for his strong jawline, which made him popular for action movie roles.
Supporter	(n)	a person who agrees with an idea, group, or plan and wants it to succeed	Supporters of the new park project collected over five thousand signatures in one week.
Measure	(v)	to find the size, amount, or level of something, usually using a tool or system	The teacher asked students to measure the length of their desks and record the results.
Rank	(v)	to put people or things in order from best to worst, or from highest to lowest	The website ranks restaurants in the city based on customer reviews and food quality.
Spread	(v)	to move or grow quickly to cover a larger area or reach more people	News of the company's closure spread through the office within minutes of the announcement.
Condition	(n)	a physical or mental health problem that affects someone over a long period of time	The doctor explained that his condition was manageable with the right medication and regular check-ups.

Dysmorphia	(n)	a mental health problem in which a person worries too much about the way they look	The counselor recognized signs of dysmorphia in the student and recommended speaking to a specialist.
Overly	(adv)	more than is necessary or reasonable	She was overly careful about every small detail, which sometimes slowed the team down.
Miss	(v)	to fail to notice or recognize something	The manager missed several warning signs that the project was falling behind schedule.
Be attracted to	(phr v)	to feel interest in or liking for someone or something	Many students are attracted to careers in technology because of the high salaries and flexible working conditions.
The bigger picture	(idm)	the full situation, including all the important facts, not just one small part of it	It is easy to focus on one bad day at work, but you need to look at the bigger picture and remember all your progress.
Stable	(adj)	not likely to change suddenly or become worse	After several difficult years, the family finally found a stable home and a steady income.
Warmth	(n)	a friendly and caring quality that makes other people feel comfortable	Her natural warmth made her popular with both colleagues and clients from the very first day.
Push someone away	(phr v)	to behave in a way that causes other people to leave or stop being close to you	His constant negativity began to push his closest friends away, even though he did not realize it.
Criticism	(n)	the act of saying that something or someone has faults or problems	The team accepted the manager's criticism and used it to improve their performance before the final presentation.
Flaw	(n)	a fault or weakness in something or someone	Every plan has a flaw, but good teams find problems early and fix them before they become serious.