

CROP TOPS AND AGING GRACEFULLY

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I have a love/hate relationship with fashion. I LOVE scoping out all the draping flowy fabrics that make me want to spin a circle in my own living room (yes, I'm 33, girls will *always* love to spin). Pinterest has made this fashion education experience even more convenient and fun. I love getting dressed up for a night out with my handsome hubs

and I LOVE the feeling of "no one in the history of the world has ever felt so beautiful as I do in THIS dress, right now." Thank you, long and classy tribal trends; thank you flowy sweater jackets over flowy sundresses. You did it.

Enter crop tops. I hate you crop tops.

I was working out in Heaven on earth the other day (aka, Lifetime Fitness) – every stay at home Mommy's dream - awesome childcare, endless class options, always available equipment... but this is not an ad, back to crop tops. So as I was totally owning the elliptical, a happy, sweaty mess, crazy hair and 5 year old running shoes (I realize this is a problem all you fitness people out there); and in walks crop top #1,#2 and #3. By the clear view of their flat tummies, my guess is they were not using the aforementioned childcare. And I'm not complaining – growing a human is miraculous. Growing a child when you grow from a size 2 to a size "pregasauras" (I had a friend whose husband actually CALLED her that during months 7-9, and yes, they are still married), twice in 3 years, the miracle leaves a mark. It's beautiful, and I think most of us can say we love our bodies, but I'm not rocking the crop top anytime soon.

During both of my experiences growing a little human I had a lot of comments about how I was "all belly." Word to the wise - this is a major compliment to a gargantuan pregnant lady. Nothing else really changed for me, but my 31 pound weight gain that was all in my belly pretty much disqualified me from rocking the crop top after all was said and done. For those of you who manufactured humans and have no idea what I'm talking about, just give yourself a high-5 and keep it to yourself. The rest of us ~~hate~~ admire you.

But before you hang your head and sigh in defeat over the re-entrance of the crop top, keep a couple of things in mind:

1 – Fashion is ever changing, this too shall pass.

2 – Beauty is eternal.

I made it a personal goal to age gracefully when I was at the convenient age of about 18. I remember noticing all the efforts in our culture dedicated to preserve the appearance of youth, and it seemed *exhausting*. Now, to be clear, this is not a blog on the subject of plastic surgery, and I'm not calling all women to go au natural. I'm still wearing make-up and shaving my legs (don't worry, Brandon). But **when we inaccurately define beauty as what we have to offer the world in our physical**

appearance, we *totally* misunderstand our value, power, and significance. Not only that, but we feel tremendous pressure to keep things as flawless as possible, by whatever means necessary. Sidenote – does anyone else find it totally insane that men are stereotypically *more sophisticated and sexy as they age*? Moving on...

One of my favorite books of all time is [Captivating](#), by [John and Stasi Eldridge](#). They walk through the truth behind some remarkable claims about beauty. Here's a highlight:

"Beauty may be the most powerful thing on earth. Beauty speaks. Beauty invites. Beauty nourishes. Beauty comforts. Beauty inspires. Beauty is transcendent. Beauty draws us to God."

Beauty is something women offer the world that is a direct character trait of God. It can be sorely misunderstood by both giver and receiver, but it's powerful and captivating stuff. And this is important: *real beauty is not limited by age*. **God didn't say: I would like the 17-27 year olds to represent me with noteworthy significance and power.** Beauty is not something we happen upon, it's not genetic, and it's very available when we live intentionally and most powerfully when we know who we represent.

I believe to age gracefully is to breathe life into the people around us. Not to be mistaken for empty encouragement or tolerant driven pats on the back. **Beauty beckons people into life.**

Can we agree to start noticing more than the number of lines on our faces? One of my favorite people likes to say "where wrinkles are, smiles have been." And we've laughed a lot together, because I don't feel pressure to perform. And when you don't have to perform, hearts are free to be opened. She invites me and many others into life.

When, in our lives, we live in pursuit of employing our beauty, we are dangerously graceful. There is a confident perspective of true beauty and value that is not nearly parallel to that which the world tells us is so. To age gracefully? To live well - in full confidence that a wrinkle is far from a flaw, that an ache is not the end of a dream. When, in complete humility, we can tell a story about a life lived outside of ourselves, and into a kingdom.

