Why People Get Plastic Surgery

It is not a secret that the world today is obsessed with appearances. Visual attractiveness is one of the key factors when people make choices in favor of certain objects, goods, services, and even people. Products are being sold in thoroughly-designed and appealing packages; commercials exploit a variety of sensually-pleasing imagery; Hollywood actors and TV celebrities strive to be good-looking and attractive—the examples illustrating this statement are many. So, it is not surprising that, considering this tendency, some people may feel the need to fit into the prevailing standards of beauty. Fortunately for them, modern medicine can offer a way to alter and/or enhance their appearances: plastic surgery, although being considered a controversial option by many people, is an industry popular all over the world.

The Internet is full of photographs of bad examples of plastic surgery. Everyone probably remembers the history of Michael Jackson’s nose transformations, or saw photos of Jocelyn Wildenstein. Despite the possible risks, tens of thousands of people still experiment with their facial features and body proportions, spending thousands of dollars on implants, lifts, and other cosmetic procedures. Trends and fashion cannot fully explain the motives behind undergoing plastic surgery, so let us take a closer look at what lies beneath the desire to change one’s appearance.

It is a common stereotype that plastic surgery is mostly for women. This is not necessarily true: there are many men who also undergo plastic surgery, and multiple times. One of the possible reasons for this is the fear of aging.
A person, especially if he or she can boast of charm and beauty in youth, may feel the urge to save this appearance. In a society where the first impression is always important, changes in how a person looks may affect his or her career and social relationships (Claytor Noone Plastic Surgery). This is especially true for people whose appearance is important for their profession: TV hosts, actors, pop musicians, models, and so on. Among the celebrities known to have had undergone plastic surgery procedures are Gwyneth Paltrow, Nicole Kidman, Linda Evangelista, Courtney Love, and other people whose names you got used to see in the media (Harper’s Bazaar). As for men, the list includes Mickey Rourke, Steven Tyler, Tom Cruise, Christian Bale, and many other names; some information about male celebrities undergoing plastic surgeries is mostly rumors, but the facts are still enough to say: aging men do plastic surgery as well (Ritely).

Along with aging and trying to keep up with professional requirements, there is a less common yet more morbid reason why people decide to change the way they look. In psychology, there is a well-known condition called dismorphophobia, or body dysmorphic disorder, or BDD. It is characterized by being constantly preoccupied and obsessed over one’s physical appearance. Usually, a person with BDD finds a real or an imagined flaw in his or her appearance, and start perceiving themselves as ugly or worthless because of it. The level of frustration and psychological tension can grow so high that a person with BDD will try to avoid social contact. Dismorphophobia is one of the common reasons why people choose to undergo plastic surgery procedures, but unless the true reason—the disorder—is not eliminated, a person with BDD will never feel satisfied with how they look (Treatment4Addiction).

At the same time, there are more realistic and practical reasons for doing cosmetic surgery. If a person has suffered from an accident that changes his or her appearance drastically, it is natural that he or she wants to fix it. Or, some birth defects are known to cause serious emotional or even physical
discomfort to people who have them. For example, cleft lips or skeletal deformities can bring nothing but handicaps, so the sooner they are removed, the better. In addition, it is important to notice that the outcomes of some medical surgeries such as mastectomy can be extremely traumatizing (in this particular case, a woman has one or both of her breasts removed). In this case, plastic reconstructive surgery is advisable—not from a medical point of view, but in order to alleviate psychological trauma and stress, and to return a woman to the way she used to look before (BeforeAfterSurgeryToolBox.com).

So, as we can see, the reasons to undergo plastic surgery are many. Some of them are subjective, such as the fear of aging or obsessions, and others include professional requirements, recovering from medical procedures or accidents. It is difficult to say whether some of these reasons are more significant than others, and in each particular case a person thinking about the surgery should contemplate all possible pros and cons of such a decision, weighing their possible gains and losses.