

# *The* Face-Lift Sourcebook



INCLUDES BEFORE-  
AND-AFTER PHOTOS

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT:

- Preparing yourself for facial cosmetic surgery
- Alternatives such as Botox injections and laser resurfacing techniques
- Results you can realistically expect
- Recovery and postoperative maintenance

Kimberly A. Henry, M.D.  
*author of The Plastic Surgery Sourcebook*

with Marie Costa

THE  
*F*ACE-LIFT  
SOURCEBOOK

Kimberly A. Henry, M.D.

with  
Marie Costa

Foreword by  
Carolyn J. Cline, M.D., Ph.D.



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# THE FACE-LIFT SOURCEBOOK

Also by Kimberly A. Henry, M.D.:  
*The Plastic Surgery Sourcebook*  
(with Penny S. Heckaman)



# Foreword

## PLASTIC SURGERY: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

If you are contemplating plastic surgery, one of the questions you undoubtedly have on your mind is “Should I really do this?” During more than a decade of private practice as a plastic surgeon, I have found that people can go around and around with this question for days, weeks, months, and even years because the question itself contains many hidden agendas. The major clue to what is going on with this question is the word *should*. What does it really mean? Does it mean “Is it safe?” or “Can I afford it?”

The question that troubles people is “Is it personally, morally, and socially okay for me to do this?” Guilt often lurks beneath the uncertainty. One of my patients confessed, “If I were the person I really should be, I wouldn’t have to do this.” Another, a graduate student, told me, “My friends will kill me if they find out. They think we should live with what God gave us.” (I reminded her that God gave us cosmetic plastic surgeons, too!) Sixty-five-year-old Ann said, “I have the money, but I shouldn’t spend it on something so frivolous as a face-lift. I could give the money to my grandson to buy a sports car.” (Talk about frivolous!) One gray-haired professor confided, “My mother would roll over in her grave if she knew I was here. I can still hear her voice: ‘You’re beautiful just the way you are. Stop looking in the mirror all the time; someday a man is going to appreciate you for who you really are.’”

Feelings of guilt have to be resolved before surgery for practical reasons: the unconscious can cause real trouble afterward. “Okay,” it says, “you did it. But you shouldn’t have, so I’m going to punish you.” What

kind of punishment? Jessica, a fifty-four-year-old lawyer, experienced unexplained pain after her face-lift. The pain only resolved itself after she acknowledged her ambivalent feelings about not growing old gracefully. Another patient, Pamela, a twenty-five-year-old secretary, could not accept her breast implants as part of herself after having a long-desired breast augmentation procedure. She, too, was only able to accept them after she acknowledged her guilt over competitive feelings with her mother, who had larger breasts. Then there was Margaret, a thirty-eight-year-old nurse, who had diffuse guilt—guilt about being alive. The daughter of a Holocaust victim, her basic philosophy toward life was “It’s okay if you do it, just as long as you do not enjoy it.” Postoperative depression following her blepharoplasty and breast augmentation sent her into therapy. Later, she wrote me a letter in which she said that having surgery was the best thing she’d ever done. Not only did she love the way she looked, but she had been forced to confront lifelong issues and could finally be happy in life.

### **Inner Tyrants**

These are the voices that hold us back from doing what we want to do, even when we’ve been intelligent about gathering the pertinent information. These disguised voices of guilt work in devious ways. One forty-year-old woman became absolutely panic stricken just before her breast reduction surgery. Her anxiety was palpable. She was sure she was going to die, so we canceled the surgery. Later, it became clear that she felt she was going against her mother’s advice and would therefore be punished. The fact that her mother was long deceased didn’t matter. Her mother had always frowned upon doing things for the sake of vanity, and she was still struggling with letting down her mother.

Sometimes a group ethos becomes a tyrant. The woman’s movement, a phenomenon in which I participated and regard highly, has spawned a cadre of women who disapprove of plastic surgery intensely. From their point of view, a woman who undergoes such treatment falls prey to the wishes of a patriarchal society, thus in-

ternalizing the male gaze. This constricting outlook decreases women's choices and, in fact, becomes a form of tyranny in itself. Berkeley-ites by the droves have come into my office secretly, fearing lest their feminist friends get wind of it. I find this sad. Feminism is about increasing—not decreasing—women's options.

Another tyrannical group ethos uses the word *vanity* in connection with plastic surgery. That's another troublesome and ambiguous word. It is invoked in a pejorative way by those who disapprove of cosmetic surgery. Caring about your clothes, hair, and makeup and exercise is also a form of vanity, but somehow those things are okay. When it comes to surgery, though, vanity is the final bludgeon of the judgmental.

Vanity was believed by the Greeks to be a sister of Beauty and Justice—and a virtue. What happened? Beauty was knocked from her pedestal by the sword of a well-intentioned but now outworn puritanical notion that attention paid to the body took something away from the soul. Those principles are not mutually exclusive.

The idea of symptom replacement is another old saw. As a former psychologist, I remember a strong belief within the profession that wanting to change how one looked through surgery was symptomatic of an unresolved psychological issue, and once the change was achieved something else would replace it as a cause of dissatisfaction. Unfortunately, this misconception survives today.

There is no real difference between cosmetic plastic surgery and reconstructive plastic surgery. We tend to think of the latter as acceptable because it is necessary. Discomfort with a body part that one is born with, or with an aging face that no longer reflects a youthful spirit, is just as deforming to the person who bears it as is a scar from an accident.

## Beauty

Whether we like it or not, appearance impacts us greatly. Our fast-paced society allows little time to get to know one another, so a first impression becomes a very powerful factor in making decisions



about, say, courting or hiring. Psychological studies show that more attractive people are thought to be nicer, smarter, more competent, and more reliable. Unfair, unfortunately, but true.

Over the fifteen years I've been in practice, the number of men undergoing plastic surgery has increased drastically. I see several interesting aspects to this phenomenon. Men are divorced more often nowadays than in decades past, and are increasingly aware of the tentative nature of the job market even at the highest levels. Men trained to make executive decisions learn quickly to view their physical body image in the context of a "corporate image." Thus it is useful to clarify, streamline, and market them, if you will. Men are simply putting their best foot forward, and their mothers would surely approve of that.

Beauty is a practical issue in our society. When people are uncomfortable with a body part, they feel deformed. And if they feel deformed, they act deformed. They are less assertive, less adventuresome, and sometimes reclusive. Often they settle for less in life, or do strange gymnastics to make a life. Before her rhinoplasty, Barbara would only approach people from a certain angle, lest they see her full profile. Eventually, growing obsessed, she limited not only others' point of view of her, but her own view of things through this angle. After her surgery, she exclaimed, "I had no idea how much time and energy I had bound up with trying to live with the nose I thought ugly. I feel so freed up now and so much more energetic."

## **Making the Decision**

Most people seeking cosmetic surgery are well adjusted. You are probably one of them. But if you have some guilty feelings working in the shadows, you can work with yourself to straighten them out. You can begin by becoming the critical inner voice that is telling you not to do it. Talk out loud. Say all the unspeakable things this voice has been whispering in your ear. Relish the experience. After all, this voice is *you*. Be forceful, say even the ridiculous if it comes

into your mind. When you start to hear the voice that wants the surgery, switch to that voice. Vent the yearnings and wishes that voice is expressing. You may find that there is a third voice coming forth, a moderating voice, a deal maker. That is your adult self who wants to negotiate between the other two voices. Speak the thoughts and feelings of the deal maker. Repeat this process a few times. After a while, you will most likely be able to make peace among the warring parties. You may come to realize that the critical voice has been stopping you from doing a number of things in life. Good. You're on your way to positive change. If you can't make peace with yourself, counseling might help. On the whole, I have found that people are very creative deal makers.

You will approach plastic surgery the way you approach most other new situations in your life. One common question people have is "Should I do everything at once or one at a time?" Once the medical safety of any approach is established, the answer depends on your own style and personality. Some people like to dive into the water; others like to put a toe in first and enter gradually. Which type are you? This will give you a clue as to how comfortably you will tolerate surgery.

A fear that many patients have is that once they have plastic surgery they'll never stop, sort of like eating nuts or potato chips. This fear, like most, is groundless. Only once have I encountered a patient with a continual need to change his appearance. And I would not even consider him an addict but rather someone who could not accept himself on a basic level. The vast majority of patients undergo surgery successfully and move on in life with more self-esteem, energy, and determination. As the husband of one of my patients said, "Before her surgery, Jeannie was wishy-washy about making decisions; now she just moves ahead. She even tells me off now and then, which she would never do before. I kinda like it," he said, grinning.

There is such a phenomenon as total body discontent, and that can be solved through psychological work. Joan, a thirty-seven-year-old decorator, was a prime example. She came into my office saying,

“I hate my hips, I hate my thighs, I hate my breasts, I hate my face, I hate all of it.” Joan was a poor candidate for plastic surgery. She was disgusted with being overweight and with her unsatisfying life over which she felt little control. She underwent counseling, lost 60 pounds, and emerged with a much more positive self-image. Only then could we surgically address her lack of upper and lower body proportion.

### **Am I a Good Candidate?**

You may be wondering, “How do I know if I am a good candidate for cosmetic plastic surgery?” If you like yourself generally but are bothered by a certain circumscribed area of the body, then it’s worth seeking plastic surgery consultation. Once you find that improvement is safe and possible, consider the following questions:

1. *What role do I expect plastic surgery to play in my life?*  
Be sure your expectations are reasonable. Cosmetic surgical change will not bring you a boyfriend or girlfriend if your personality is unpleasant; it won’t bring you a job if you are unskilled or unkempt; and it won’t keep a wandering spouse close to home.
2. *Have I truly resolved my ambivalent feelings?*  
For instance, do you still hear an invisible voice ringing in your ears saying, “You’re so vain, and all this money you’re spending, it’s a sin.” Resolve the conflict by talking with yourself out loud so that you can be 100 percent behind what you’re doing.
3. *Have I dealt with the significant others in my life who disapprove of cosmetic surgery?*  
Settle the issue with them, perhaps through the gentle assertion that it’s none of their business. You’ve already settled it for yourself. The last thing you’ll want to hear when you’re recovering is undermining, guilt-provoking comments from

others. During your postoperative period, you'll need loving care, not criticism.

4. *How will I cope with a complication if I get one?*

Chances are you won't get one. But if you are one of the rare birds who does, you need to be able to say to yourself and mean it: "I will not criticize myself for undergoing this surgery. I went about this procedure thoughtfully and intelligently. That's all I could ask of myself. I'm glad I did it because I really wanted to, and I'll live through this period and be kind and gentle with myself."

Choosing a good doctor is the key to a successful outcome. You need someone who is not only qualified but who really listens to you and cares about you. The first step in finding a good plastic surgeon is to find someone who is board certified or board eligible in the specialty. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons will give you the names of three qualified surgeons in your area. Interview them. Ask to talk to former patients. See if you feel listened to, and trust your reactions. If it doesn't feel right, then this person is not right for you. Move on and find someone who not only does good work but is someone with whom you have a rapport. You will be living with the results of your surgery, not the doctor. Look after your own well-being carefully. If you do, the chances are you will have an extremely rewarding experience.

CAROLYN J. CLINE, M.D., PH.D.



# Acknowledgments

**W** RITING A BOOK IS A DAUNTING PROJECT, and this was no exception. Thanks to my coauthor, Marie Costa, I've also learned that it can be fun. I also thank my children and my staff for their patience and ongoing support.

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# Introduction

*The purpose of surgery for the aging face is to  
allow the individual to live the experience of commuting  
between youth and old age in an active and harmonious manner.*

DR. IVO PITANGUY

WHILE IT MAY BE TRUE THAT “you’re only as old as you feel,” it’s hard to feel youthful when you look, well, old. And while everyone ages at a different pace, no one is exempt from the effects of gravity, sun, pollution, and stress—both “good” and “bad.” Sooner or later our cheeks and necks begin to sag, our eyelids droop, and wrinkles start to accumulate around our eyes and mouth.

Although some people still insist that it is possible to age gracefully and “naturally,” the rest of us welcome whatever help we can find to keep time’s ravages at bay. Indeed, in our image-conscious society, we may not be able to afford *not* to do whatever we can to look good for as long as possible. Right or wrong, youth and beauty all too often win out over age and wisdom, so we want to stay young and beautiful (or at least attractive) for as long as we can.

So how do we do that? Good genes certainly help, as can a healthy diet, regular exercise, a good skin care program, and an optimistic outlook. But let’s face it, those can take you only so far. Plastic surgery takes up where those self-help programs leave off. Just as growing numbers of people have sought out plastic surgeons to correct what they see as nature’s mistakes—whether a bumpy nose, a receding chin, jug handle ears, or undersized breasts—more and more people are turning to plastic surgery to help them keep looking as young as they feel. Often more than mere vanity is at stake, particularly for men, who are showing an increasing interest in

face-lifts and other antiaging procedures, not to attract the opposite sex but to maintain a competitive edge in business.

In my previous book, *The Plastic Surgery Sourcebook*, we looked at the whole array of plastic surgery procedures. This book will focus on the face, and specifically on those procedures meant to counteract aging, from the least invasive to the most invasive. We'll start by describing how the face ages, beginning in our twenties and continuing through our sixties and beyond, and then look at the steps we can take to turn back the clock. We'll help you analyze whether and when you need a face-lift, or whether you could benefit from other procedures that are less involved, less expensive, and less disrupting to your life. We'll look at what exactly is involved in each type of procedure, including the costs, what to expect, possible complications, recovery time, and potential benefits. Finally, we'll treat you to the personal journal of a woman who has had a face-lift and gone on to enjoy its benefits.

As a plastic surgeon, I am perhaps more keenly aware than most people of the changes time makes in everyone's face, including my own. I noticed the first signs in my mirror when I was barely past thirty, in the form of baggy upper eyelids and crow's-feet in the corners of my eyes. It didn't take long before I scheduled my first antiaging procedure, an upper lid blepharoplasty. Eventually I went on to have laser resurfacing and Botox injections, with the result that I look not just younger but fresher, more relaxed, and vibrant.

I believe the benefits of age rejuvenation surgery outweigh the risks and are worth every bit of the cost. Hopefully, at the end of our journey together, you will know if the same holds true for you.



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