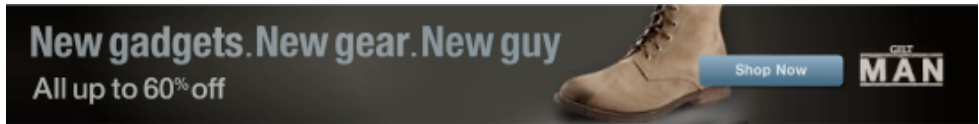




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Does sexy have a size?

By **Karen Salmansohn**, Oprah.com
June 7, 2010 9:25 a.m. EDT



THINKSTOCK

(OPRAH.com) -- If you missed the new Lane Bryant commercial with the full-figured lingerie model confidently strutting the pluses of her plus-sized figure, it's not your fault. Some networks decided the spot was too sexy to air.

In my opinion, the ban on this Lane Bryant spot is a big step forward for plus-sized women everywhere. The fact that a TV network would find this Lane Bryant spot far more sexually enticing than Victoria's Secret

Some people say bigger women look more real than the pouty models typically seen in fashion ads.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Author says her husband, friends see bigger women as "real women"

Says "A girl isn't simply beautiful for how fabulous her boobs and thighs are"

Argues it's also how she looks at the world -- her beliefs, values, passions, insights.

Blogger: I've found there are distinct upsides to being a formerly hot woman

spots -- which air all the time -- simply shows they're acknowledging the extreme sexiness of voluptuous women!

[Watch the conversation about the ad](#)

Oh, and by the way, I'm not just saying all this right now because I'm 35 pounds heavier than I've ever been in my life, due to the fact I'm due to give birth to new life -- a baby boy in August. Although I must say it's been interesting to have this new life lens, living as a highly curvy pregnant woman and shopping in plus-size clothing stores, instead of the more petite clothing stores where I normally go.

[Oprah.com: The best pants for your body type](#)

I must confess that at first it was a difficult transition, entering into a bulkier body. At the beginning of my weight gain, I'd experience many days of feeling oddly self-conscious-verging-on-insecure. In particular, I found myself worried my beau might start to find me less sexy. But I'm happy to report he finds me just as sexy -- even highly sexy -- as I sit here on my newly padded tushy writing this article.

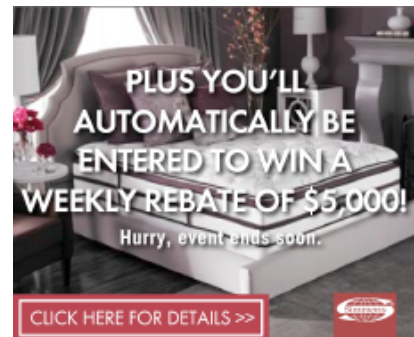
Out of curiosity I showed him the Lane Bryant spot of the plus-size lingerie model to gauge his male-o-meter reaction about her sexiness. He enthusiastically complimented the model, explaining how her strong appeal had just as much to do with how confidently she carried herself as it did with the babe-alicious curves she was carrying. Basically, he felt this model looked like she was a "real woman" -- and highly happy about it.

[Oprah.com: Get your sexy back makeovers!](#)

Interestingly enough, when I showed this Lane Bryant spot to friends here in New York and on my Facebook wall, comments like "real woman," "real beauty," "authenticity" and "self-love" kept popping up.

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Basically, most people, including myself, seem to agree -- a woman's sexiness has mostly to do with her realness, authenticity and demonstrated self-love...rather than her clothing size.

[Oprah.com: 5 things that make you sexy](#)

Indeed, I believe a big reason the Victoria's Secret spots aren't as sexually threatening to the TV networks is that these waify women don't seem real or authentic. Instead, they're a more plastic representation of highly unattainable beauty. Even the models' pouty facial expressions are plastic. And I'm sure most people would agree: A woman's confident, sparkly smile is far sexier than lips pursed in a posed pout!

The good news: There's a growing trend these days for companies and magazines to embrace the authenticity of real women as the standard for beauty and sexiness, and even to hire nonmodels as models.

Here in New York City, a mecca for uber-skinny women, Donna Sonkin, a recognized holistic health expert, has created a new specialty of coaching. She's now helping women to embrace what she calls a pursuit of "healthful thinness" versus "brittle thinness," which she is seeing far too often on the streets of New York and in her practice.

[Oprah.com: The self-esteem repair kit](#)

"Interestingly enough," Sonkin says, "the real beauty of healthful thinness comes from eating real foods like real organic butter, real whole milk and meat which comes from naturally raised grass-fed animals. If you try to diet with lots of diet soda, non-fat foods -- or foods with lots of chemicals -- you will ironically create extra beauty problems. You'll get digestion and skin problems and look bloated, less youthful, less glowing instead of looking vibrant, sexy and radiant, which is what real beauty is all about."

Alexis Wolfer, founder and editor-in-chief of [The Beauty Bean](#), is also doing her part to encourage real beauty. Her Beauty Bean website features [Makeup Free Mondays](#) where she prompts women to proudly post photos of themselves cosmetic-free.

[Oprah.com: The science of being sexy](#)

"Real beauty is what we real women look like without professional fashion and hair stylists -- and certainly without the use of Photoshop," says Wolfer. "I want my beauty site to shed light on what defines this real beauty and promote self-confidence rather than unattainable standards of beauty that lead to low self-confidence, as well as eating disorders both of the restrictive and binge-eating kind."

Stephanie Dolgoff, author/blogger of [Formerly Hot](#), is also doing her part to promote self-love for one's real beauty -- specifically to women in the post-40 set.

"I noticed when I entered my 40s, men would ask me if I 'had the time' -- and really just want to know the time," Dolgoff says.

"So I started to explore how I felt about my changing appearance in my site and book. Basically, Formerly Hot is about looking at the unvarnished truth about getting older -- the good, the bad and those unexpected bitch-slaps that still seem to come out of nowhere -- even if you're relatively well adjusted to the fact that you're not forever 21.

Personally I've found there are distinct upsides to being a formerly. For example, I used to feel like a composite of other people's opinions. Now, I'm comfortable with who I am, and that other people's opinions are, well, just their opinions. Here in my 40s, I'm happier

than my younger self ever could have imagined."

[Oprah.com: 11 ways to feel beautiful without makeup!](#)

I totally relate to what Dolgoff shares. I have to say, I'm far happier now as a plus-sized, pregnant, over-40 gal than as the skinny 20-something me who was constantly weighing myself and then weighing in with a harsh opinion if I didn't like the numbers on the scale. From this distance of time and maternity, I can now see how the more I used to worry about my sexiness, the more I was creating a self-fulfilling less-sexy prophecy -- as well as a less-happy prophecy.

Together we need to do something more as a society to change unrealistic expectations for female thinness and beauty. And to do so, we need to start early on by telling young girls (and young boys!) that a girl is appealing and attractive not simply because of how she looks to the world, but how she looks at the world -- her beliefs, values, passions, insights.

A girl isn't simply beautiful for how fabulous her boobs and thighs are, but for all the fabulous things she does -- and who she is! I can tell you now, I'm going to raise my soon-to-be son to view girls that way. Happily, I know my beau is the type of man who will enthusiastically send the same message.

By Karen Salmansohn from Oprah.com © 2010

Karen Salmansohn is a best-selling author known for creating self-help for people who wouldn't be caught dead reading self-help.

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siouxsienvova

I can't stand going out with



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people who obsess over calories, or confuse starving themselves with discipline.
 Certainly not going to spend the rest of my life with someone who turns their nose up
 at my Gramma's chocolate cake. A slice of cake won't kill you. Anorexia might.

comment

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mamaknosbest

Mama sez: Oh Puhleeze! It's painfully obvious that "StarshipMech" is no "Rocket Scientist." On the other hand, it really shouldn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that if you can't say something vaguely nice or reasonably intelligent you might want to think about doing civilized people ever... [more](#)

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sjs52987

I think sexy is in the eye of the beholder to a point, but unhealthy is always unattractive be it too fat or too skinny. I think as long as you are not a walking skeleton and as long as you don't get too fat to wash yourself, someone somewhere will find you sexy.

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nwboyce

I love how the image of a "real woman" nowadays is related to an overweight woman. Seriously, just because it's harder to be in shape does not make those women any less real. Obviously airbrushed models are not real, but inferring that "real women" are slightly overweight is not real, it's a scape go... [more](#)

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cpacella

i don't like super skinny women, but i don't like fat women either. Curves are great when they are nice and smooth that are part of the woman's natural figure, not when its fat, once you start seeing a the loads of cellulite, see ya later, cause i won't be the one going after you.

1 year ago | [Like \(11\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



GordiLaForge

The only "step forward" that overweight women (and men) should take is to a dietitian and an exercise physiologist!

1 year ago | [Like \(15\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



FisherJim

Wow! Whatever happened to beauty is in the eye of the beholder? My personal preference: Lane Bryant model: sexy, perfect bottom, too much on top. I'll leave the stomach sporting the six pack to the guys in the gym (or Billy Bub on the couch) but if you're carrying a keg, that's not attractive to ... [more](#)

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zuriel

Most men & women are attracted to partners that look healthy. Too skinny or too fat is going to turn most people off. Don't get in shape for other people though, do it for yourself! Eating right and regular exercise will keep your body running like the high performance machine it was designed... [more](#)

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ElPasoan1

As long as a woman has somewhat of a waist line- that can be sexy. Weight doesn't matter if you have an hour glass figure- to me anyways. Let me know what you think!

1 year ago | [Like \(15\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



JOMO

Ever since I was a 5'-9", 200 lb, 33 inch waist, 20 inch arm tween I had this thing for a pretty lady with some meat on her

bones. I have always been in agreement with Sir Mixalot and the guys who held a wake for the demise of Pamela Anderson's twin virtues. My favorite media hotties were Kate Winsl... [more](#)

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• **skipfrmdc**

truer words...I don't know about you guys but a brother needs somethin' to hold on to. It gets cold here in DC and I haven't needed a blanket in 23 years of marriage. Unhealthy weight at either extreme is not good. Most sisters can carry a "little extra". Most of these celebrities could use a decent... [more](#)

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• **Redstick99**

All you guys that like women who wear a size 0 dress are idiots. I am a man saying this. I don't like obese women. But if she is proportionate and has curves, now that's sexy. I'll take a little junk in the trunk over an anorexic petite woman with no backside any day. Education and brains are a... [more](#)

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• **midonko**

Lovely, you're going from one end to the other. I'm all for women with curves, I think they can be just as beautiful as any other woman. But it's not right to just assume all "skinny, size 0" women are anorexic or unhealthy. Just like not all women who have more meat on their bones are unhealthy. Li... [more](#)

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• **Onanism0**

Beautiful trophy wives are worthless. That's the price men pay who can afford it, and it usually takes a lot of money to bag one, too. This story is not about whether a fat woman or a skinny woman is marry-able. It is, however, about what is and is not sexy. Fat is not sexy.

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• **Onanism0**

USAmericans are some of the (if not THE) fattest people on the planet. Glorifying fat with ads like this is wrong. Sure some fat people can't help it, but most of the overweight are just lazy. They take the elevator to go up 2 or 3 floors when they could take the stairs. They sit around all day inst... [more](#)

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• **LadyHiroko**

Isn't said that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder"? Or some crap like that? Anyway, I don't consider myself "fat". "Pudgy" but certainly not "fat" even though that's what the BMI tells me I am. If you compare me to my best friend, you'll see what I'm talking about. When I did my calculations I'... [more](#)

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• **KenUsaukmeov**

women. You aren't going to somehow convince men that your fat is attractive. You can't indoctrinate instincts. My suggestion is, if you want to be able to find a better quality man, all you have to do is get in shape. It's much easier for women. you don't have to be intelligent, rich, funny, ta... [more](#)

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• **beekersue**

I think the commercials were to riske'. It is hard to be sexy being overweight. It has to be a frame of mind, and if one is not good at that frame of mind, they (I) look frumpy. I wish I had something to say to others, but, I am overweight also, and I don't like it. And, do something about it? Eas... [more](#)

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• **rosignol**

That doesn't seem like a very fair comparison. 1. Your husband--the dedicated, expectant father of your child--isn't going to insult heavier women just before you bring his offspring into the world. In fact, you're doing him a huge, ego-stroking favor by passing on those genes. Of course that loo... [more](#)

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• **DarronFreed**

Of course her husband is not going say that heavier women are not sexy. He still has hope that he might one day get laid again.

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rossignol

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Guest

She doesn't overweight just the higher end of normal weight. Just like other models on the heavier side of thin look normal, not underweight. Now get Seinfeld's George dancing off on my screen please. SO many disgusting, fat men, yet because we are too polite to interrupt their ego they don't stay i... [more](#)
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patsgal97

pretty sad to think that now people say that a size 12 is "plus" size...if you are healthy that's what matters. each person's body is different..whatever size is healthy for you..is healthy
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otherone

But do you know anyone that is healthy that is a size 12?
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