



CHANGING FACES

A Changing Faces Guide for Young People

Looking different

What is in this guide?

- Information about looking different
- The world's idea of beauty
- How other people might act



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What does 'looking different' mean?

At Changing Faces, we use the words 'looking different' to describe something about your face or body that:

- Looks unusual
- Is scarred
- Looks uneven or asymmetrical
- Doesn't work in exactly the way it did or should.

Other words used are 'unusual appearance', 'condition' and 'disfigurement'. Sometimes, people use the name of their condition, like birthmark, cleft lip and palate, vitiligo, scars or burns to describe the way they look.

Everyone IS different!

Although there are lots of things about people that are similar, no two people are exactly the same.



It's one of the fantastic things about human beings.

We all have different personalities. We all look different. We all like different things. **We are all unique!** Some of us look different in a way that means other people notice us more.

Why might this be?

Tick the answer that caused you to look different:	✓
You were born with a condition that changes the shape, size, feel or look of your face or body, or how it works	
You have a birthmark or skin that is not all the same texture or colour	
You have scars or burns or changes to your face or body from an accident	
You look different after being ill or having an operation	

Whichever one you ticked, your difference is unique to you - and you'll have your own way of talking about and describing it.

Here are a few examples of some descriptions:

"When I was little a birthmark started on my cheek. At first, it was just a little red spot, but it kept growing until it was really big. Now it covers my cheek and my eye."

"I was born with Crouzon's syndrome. That means my cheekbones didn't grow properly - and my eyes are bigger and stick out more."

"I had a tumour removed from my face. Now my eye and one side of my face are sunken and different looking."

"My arm looks wonky because I was in a car crash. It's shorter than my other one and bent."



Think about how you would describe your difference to people and write it down here:

If you'd like to know more, see our guide [Build Your Confidence](#) for some tips on how to describe your condition to other people.

The same, but different

Although we are not all alike, we often have lots in common. You and your friends all look different to each other, but you'll also have some things the same and like a lot of the same things.



Meet Lorna... Lorna is fun, clever and kind. At times, she's quiet, but she is outgoing with people she knows. She has long, dark hair and brown eyes. She is happy wearing jeans and t-shirts, but does wear a dress sometimes - on special occasions. She likes music, dancing, roller skating and she plays football. She has three best friends - they spend all their time together!

Lorna also has a scar on her face from a dog bite. But what counts for Lorna and her friends is that she is herself. There is only one Lorna... and she's a fun person to be with!

Like Lorna, **how you look is only a part of you!** And like everyone else, you are unique - yes, there is only one 'you' - and you're great!

<p>Think about a good friend - write three words to say what you like about them.</p>	
<p>Now write three words your friends might use to say why they like you!</p>	

No-one is perfect

It's true - really... no-one is perfect! That's because there is no such thing! **Why not?** Well, we all have our own tastes and like different things. Some of the things I like might not be the same as some of the things you like. And it's the same with how we see people too.

Also, everyone has little 'flaws' or things they don't like about themselves - these might be spots or hairs or freckles or one leg shorter than the other or one eye bigger or a very small little toe! We all feel self-conscious at times and worry about how we look.



Did you know?

- ⚙ Some birthmarks may not show up straight away, but may get bigger a few weeks after a baby is born
- ⚙ Conditions that change your appearance can sometimes change your hearing, speech or eyesight too
- ⚙ Over 1.3 million people have a disfigurement to their face or body in the UK - that's one person in every 45

What is beauty?

Who knows? A bit like fashion, ideas of beauty change. Beauty does not mean the same thing to everyone.



- ⚙ The ancient Egyptians, Persians, and Romans thought 'sparkly' eyes were a sign of beauty
- ⚙ Elizabethan women shaved the front of their hair off as high foreheads were 'beautiful'
- ⚙ Women with long necks are thought to be pretty in the Pa Dong tribe in South East Asia - they use rings to stretch their necks
- ⚙ Scars are thought of as beautiful by the Karo tribe in Ethiopia. Women are given scars on their stomachs to attract a husband

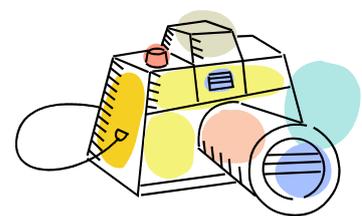
- ☀ In many African countries, women eat as much as possible to make themselves bigger, as this is thought of as more beautiful
- ☀ Some African and Amazonian tribes stretch their lips with big plates
- ☀ In Bali, some people file their teeth
- ☀ Traditionally in China, girls' feet bones were broken and then their feet were bound so they stayed tiny.

The truth about beauty

What about newspapers... magazines... films... TV... adverts... or celebrities... the truth is that many 'beautiful people' on TV and in films and magazines **do not look exactly as we see them.**

Here are three reasons why some 'beauty' is not real!

- 1) People's 'flaws' are covered up with clever make-up
- 2) Expert filming or photography shows people from 'good' angles and in flattering light
- 3) Films and photos are changed afterwards - 'airbrushed' or 'photoshopped' - to make people look thinner, taller, less freckly or spotty, or a different shape or colour.



Goodies and baddies

In films and TV shows, often the stories show us that being 'beautiful' means being good. Maybe you have noticed, we frequently see beautiful stars and heroes... but have 'baddies' who look different with scars or an unusual face or a damaged eye



This all puts a lot of pressure on us to look 'beautiful'. Of course, we all want people to think nice things about us and to look our best. In real life, looks are only part of it. What really counts is what you're like as a person.

What about other people?

Trouble is... this stuff is on TV, or in films, newspapers and magazines so often - some people believe it!

Some people think that being a celebrity or being 'beautiful' means someone is good, nice, clever, happy, lucky... someone who has everything! And think that people who look different in some way might be bad, sad, mad, stupid and unlucky. Of course, none of this is true!



The thing is - when some people think like this, they might judge people who look different... and treat them differently.

Mo has a scar on his lip from an operation for his cleft lip. Some people think he's 'tough' because of his scar. Sometimes, boys try to pick a fight with him. Mo is a kind, quiet, calm person. He doesn't like fights and wishes people would get to know him, rather than judge him by his scar.

Ella has a small right hand and is missing two fingers. When people notice... they sometimes say, "Poor thing". And often people think she can't do any sports because of her hand. Ella doesn't take any notice - she is good at throwing and catching with her left hand, she is on the football team at school - and she's great at bowling!

Rosa has cystic hygroma which means her face is swollen in places. Some people who don't know her think she is stupid because of how she looks - and sometimes people talk to her very slowly and loudly. This is annoying. Actually, Rosa is very clever and usually comes top of her class.

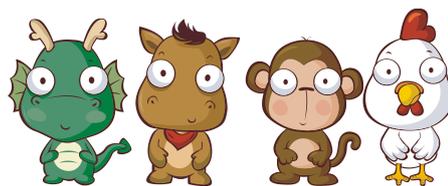
It's good to remember, not everyone judges people by how they look, even though it can feel like that sometimes.



If you are judged for how you look, this can be hard - especially when you try to tell other people that you are not the way they see you.

Changing Faces helps people who look different. We can talk together and think of ways to help you deal with things.

Staring, comments and questions



Mark's story: "A friend and I were going home from school on the bus and there was a guy from another school who kept staring in our direction. To make him aware that I had noticed, I said to my friend that when this guy gets off we should wave and smile at him... which we duly did. I thought it was a good way of being friendly whilst hopefully giving him something to think about."

Some people may behave strangely when they see someone who looks different. They might **stare...** or **glance and then glance again**. Or, **turn away** and **ignore you**. Some people might say **'you poor thing'**. Others might **point**. People might **ask you what happened** to you... or **why** you look the way you do. A few people might **laugh**, or even **make faces** or **say unkind things**.

If these things happen to you, it can be hard to cope. You may feel:

- ⚙ **As if you are being judged or criticised by others**
- ⚙ Embarrassed and awkward
- ⚙ **Self-conscious, like you stand out**
- ⚙ **Angry or cross**
- ⚙ **Sad and unhappy**
- ⚙ **Worried, anxious and scared**
- ⚙ **Unconfident and useless**

Do any of these ring a bell?

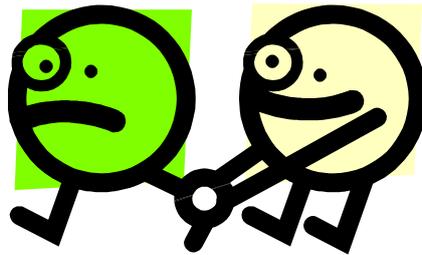
"Whenever I go anywhere where there are lots of people, it means that someone is going to stare. Going on buses and standing in queues are worst."



"There's a boy at school who teases me because of my eczema. He calls me, 'Scabby', or shouts, 'Yuck, get away... it's catching!' He pulls faces and makes vomiting noises."

"Sometimes people look at me... and get embarrassed and giggle... or they just look away."

When people you don't know see you, what sorts of things do they do or say? How does this make you feel?



Teasing

Everyone is teased sometimes, but it can be hard if it happens a lot. People might tease you by saying mean things to you, or behind your back. Or pull faces or tell jokes about you.

Teasing, staring and comments can happen at school, or where you live, or when you're out, especially if you're somewhere new or there are lots of people. Even grown-ups might say things at times...

Teasing can be upsetting and hurtful - it is important to tell someone (a grown up you trust) if you are worried or if it happens a lot.



When teasing becomes bullying

- When you're teased about the same thing again and again, or teased about something that bothers you, then it doesn't matter how light-hearted other people think it is, it can be very hurtful.
- Sometimes, when you look, sound or seem different, this can get worse and turn into bullying.
- Bullying is anything done to deliberately upset, humiliate or hurt you by the same person or group of people.
- Bullying is when you're teased or picked on in a nasty way and you are finding it upsetting and difficult to deal with. It's when the teasing goes on over and over again. It can be lots of things... like being called names or other nasty comments over and over. Or hitting or other ways of being hurt. It could be stealing your stuff or chasing you... it could be lots of smaller things together that make you feel bad...
- If you think you are being bullied, you might want to look at another Changing Faces sheet [When teasing becomes bullying](#)

Remember:

- Everyone is different
- Some differences are just more noticeable
- People have different meanings of beauty
- What really counts is how we are on the inside!

To find out more about what might be going on or you and other people, and how to deal with this, try reading the next guide called **Feeling Different**.

Supporting and advising

Changing Faces offers information, advice and support to children, parents and adults with scars, marks or conditions that affect their appearance.

Informing

We work to improve policy and practice in organisations. Through staff training and consultancy we help to create fair and inclusive environments.

Campaigning

We campaign for social change. We aim to promote a society in which people are treated fairly and equally.

Changing Faces

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This guide is also available, on request, in plain text and on CD

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