Pampered Princess or Holy Terror?

Billions of dollars are at stake. You get to feel glamorous and pampered all the time. People pay attention to you, and you get the nicest, flashiest wardrobe. Sounds like a lifestyle fit for a queen, right? Well, not really, it is not as simple as all that. The life I am describing is the life of a pageant competitor. It might sound glamorous, but the work, money, and time that go into creating “Barbie” is way too much for the typical eight year old.

Shows like “Toddlers and Tiaras” reveal some of the problems that go hand in hand with pageant competition. For one thing, being beautiful is a lot of work. Contestants spend countless hours doing unpleasant things like tanning, getting teeth whitened, at dance classes, at the hairdresser, etc. Then, they have to practice for their contest. This is also a lot of work…you have to practice routines or music until you look professional. Work. Work. Work. This is a lot of work. Is it work that an eight year old would enjoy? An eight year old probably doesn’t want to spend every hour of her free time doing that. Eight year olds would rather be home playing with Barbie than trying to become Barbie.

Another trouble with beauty pageants is the amount of time it takes to prepare. Contestants all spend countless hours getting as pretty as they can be. This means hour after hour of tanning, followed by hour after hour at the beauty salon. Contestant might have hair styled, complete with hair coloring, etc. Then they might have teeth whitened, then a manicure and a pedicure. These take even more time. Then they have endless hours of clothes shopping. This is too much time. Kids want to play, chat with friends, surf the internet, game, etc. Not just be stuck spending hours primping.

A potential problem could also be the money involved. Pageants contribute money to the economy, but the amount of money for individual families to compete is astronomical. Families are having a difficult time these days provide shelter and food for their kids. Should an entire family have to live in a small house and eat pinto beans every day just because one of their children competes in pageants? Entry fees, costs for clothing and countless beauty treatments cost thousands of dollars. The money spent in pageants could buy a bigger house, better meals, and even provide college tuition. It just doesn’t make sense to waste money.

Now I know some people feel pageants are just great. Who wouldn’t want their kid to win prizes and have people buzzing about how beautiful she is? But, what happens when the child doesn’t win? After all, in a contest of fifty kids, only one wins the grand prize. Does that mean she feels she is ugly? And, does that mean that the other forty-eight kids go home feeling ugly too? Should kids base how they feel about themselves on the opinions of strangers anyway? What happens if kids develop depression or poor self-esteem? Beauty pageants do more harm than good.

Beauty pageants create an environment of winners and losers. They teach children that beauty is the most important thing in their lives. Participating in pageants isn’t only harmful for the participants, it also robs families of time and money that could be put to better use. Pampered princess or holy terror? Holy terror.