



A Plastic Surgeon's Take on the Mom Makeover

By Carolyn C. Chang, MD FACS

This week I discovered a new phenomenon – the granny momma. Let me explain.

It was Monday morning, and I greeted a very nice woman who was in my office for a consultation. "Hello Barbara, it is wonderful to meet you. How did you find me?" The response was the usual, "Oh my friend referred me, and then I found out that a friend of a friend is your patient, and then my dermatologist recommended that I talk to you, and so now I'm here." As I got to know Barbara a little better, I could see that she was getting more and more comfortable sitting across from someone who could turn out to be her biggest nightmare – a talking mirror. That is not to say that Barbara had a whole lot to worry about. She was an attractive woman in her mid to late forties with a healthy figure, great clothes, and a fun personality. The conversation then turned to the inevitable – "What brings you here today?" She blurted out with indignation, "Someone called me a grandmother last week. I have a five year old daughter, and someone thought I was her grandmother! This happened a total of four times in the last six months. Can you believe the nerve?!!" And then the floodgates opened - her emotions ranged from rage to desperation and despair and back again. I heard about how she could run circles around any of the other moms on the playground. I heard about how she can pull off the latest trendy hip fashions, and I learned all about her camouflage tricks. Unfortunately, though, she admitted that those camouflage tricks weren't working quite so well anymore.

I looked at Barbara, and I was shocked and sympathetic at the same time – it must be a little unsettling to always be the "mature" one in a sea of perfect nubile Angelina Jolies. She's had three of her own for God's sake and takes care of three more, and for sure nobody is mistaking her for a grandmother. The irony of course is that "older moms" are not even that old. They certainly are not being offered the senior discount around town – and one could make an argument that the forties are one of the best times in a woman's life. But I do think that being around all those twenty-something's must take a toll on the psyche.

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It was then that I realized that I had discovered a new trend – rejuvenation surgery for the older mom - because Barbara was in fact the third mom that I had seen in a few weeks with a similar story. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons statistics show that cosmetic surgery is down, but clearly they are not looking in the right population.

Luckily for Barbara, there are many options available should she desire to take the God of Aging on head to head. First of all, I reassured Barbara that indeed my first impression was that she looked beautiful and healthy and happy, and that was definitely the truth. But since she did pay a consultation fee to get my professional opinion, we went through some of the options for her. We talked about the noninvasive approaches such as Botox and fillers and lasers. You can't open any magazine without being bombarded by expert opinions from the latest dermatologist on the latest miracle treatment with no downtime. Barbara had already been to the latest dermatologist and tried the latest treatments, and she still had jowling, and deepish folds around her mouth, and the beginnings of a "turkey neck." Her skin did look great, however, and I suspect that she was a little firmer than when she started, so that endeavor was not all for naught.

I explained to Barbara that what would benefit her was a lower facelift and necklift. Newer techniques and a more subtle modern aesthetic were what I would recommend, because the idea is to make Barbara look better and fresher, not different. And in fact, Barbara was delighted to know that modern facial surgery results can be so natural that not even your children can tell that you have had surgery – as I have been informed by my patients with teenagers in the house. I recommended to Barbara to leave her eyes and forehead alone, as I think that less is more, especially in the younger patient (even if she didn't think that she was young), and it is far wiser to start early and have smaller procedures done over time. I borrowed that trick from Demi Moore and Michelle Pfeiffer, two other enviable older moms that no one would mistake for a grandmother. At the end of our meeting, Barbara was visibly excited and hopeful. She didn't jump on the procedures immediately, and I am glad that she didn't because, after all, it is plastic surgery, and it is your face. And I really did think that Barbara looked great. But I do have this feeling that I will be seeing Barbara sometime soon.

All around us everything is down – from the stock market, to housing prices, and foot traffic at Macy's. But despite it all, sometimes there still is a very good reason to want to be "up!"

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