Our ideas about our bodies are a construction and a reflection of the social culture to which we are exposed. The search for a stereotypical body image implies the manipulation of the body as an object, shaped, displayed, and exhibited, following physical parameters driven by the economics of the fashion, advertising and media industries. This has led to a mass psychology that separates people from their bodies. The body is seen as a mere support, an object without symbolic value, different from the self and devoid of conscience. It serves a commodity whose "owner's" value rises and falls depending on how it compares to industry stereotypes.

Furthermore, the fashion industry plays with our conflicting needs as human beings - the need for inclusion that makes us try to be like others, and the need for individuality that leads to the pursuit of our uniqueness. It has managed to train us to associate states of feelings with particular garments - a business suit or an evening gown stand as success or elegance. We increasingly pursue psychic comfort through garments which may give us a sense of status or allows us to escape from the drudgery of daily life, fantasizing of our uniqueness. It has managed to train us to view the body as something which is external to us and eventually altogether disowning it.

Of course, our sense of comfort exists only momentarily because most of us fall short in size, shape, beauty or in other dimensions. While fashion can be glamorous and fun, it also can be damaging to our sense of well-being. We separate from our bodies, experiencing it as something which is external to us and eventually altogether disowning it.

While fashion can be glamorous and fun, it also can be damaging to our sense of well-being. Yet if we have the strength and determination to reject fashion stereotypes and learn to appreciate our body for how it actually exists and embrace it as an integral part of the whole self - as, in fact, the self. We can play with fashion as a means of self-expression, comfort and belonging, rather than being played upon by it.

Based on the essay, The Body in Fashion by Tiago Pinto Ribeiro, MS, and Raquel Barbosa, PhD.

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