

The Power of a Woman's Smile

We all do it...some more than others, but why? Perhaps actor and author John Cleese in "The Human Face" said it best, "A genuine smile gives us a warm glow of pleasure. A quick raise of the eyebrows grabs our

attention – it is our most common expression of greeting"

For many years I have observed that women seem to find it easier than men to flash a big smile. However, when I smile back, I think I am smiling just as much, but evidently not! I recently caught myself looking into my car mirror and I found what I thought was a big smile was just a medium grin.

So was this just a fluke? I vowed to continue to test myself in my car mirror when I would let a woman driver go first at a stop sign, or a mother cross the road. I watched patiently. When they offered their friendly smiles and I smiled back only to steal a look in my rearview mirror, I consistently found mine was anything but a big toothy grin! So now I was confused. Was it really easier for women to suddenly smile? And were women giving a fake smile or a true smile?

Psychology author Paul Ekman says, "We smile for many different reasons." But he adds, "There is only one smile that is the true smile." And yet even our "fake" smile can offer benefits. Perhaps Ekman's opinion that a "polite smile" of "thanks" could be what women may offer easier than men. After all, a study by Yale psychologist Marianne LaFrance and others showed that women do tend to smile more than men, except when they are in similar situations. There are masking smiles to cover up what you are feeling, as well as enjoyment smiles.

CEO of LittlePinkBook.com, Cynthia Good agreed with the research that women smile more than men. She states "Early on, women are taught to be pleasant. Smiling is one way to accomplish that. It's also a way to diffuse tension. Women are often under pressure to come across as 'nice,' and smiling makes a person appear friendly. Also, older women are told to smile so they look more youthful and attractive. In our youth

obsessed culture this comes in handy."

Southern hospitality is a known fact, so I wondered if Southern women are taught to smile more when growing up. Atlanta psychiatrist Dr. Sheldon Cohen acknowledged, "In my experience, I think Southern women are taught to smile more and we like to smile back at them so they want to smile even more." Good adds that based on her experience growing up in Los Angeles but now living in Atlanta, "Women in the South smile more frequently. They are taught to be sweet and friendly." Maybe that is just another reason why I love living in Atlanta.

In an article by Katy Waldman for *Slate*, Waldman wrote, "In a raft of studies, women report smiling more than men (and men report smiling less than women). They speak of grinning on the job with strangers, with relatives, in a dazzlingly diverse array of situations. An unscientific scan of high school yearbook photos, newspaper clippings, Facebook pics, and advertisements backs up those studies: Women flash their pearly whites far more frequently than men, at least when someone is taking their picture. And in simulated job interviews, female participants salt their speech with smiles, while male test subjects are more likely to adopt neutral expressions."

CAN A SMILE PREDICT THE FUTURE?

Psychologist, Dr. Dacher Keltner thinks so, and backs up his opinion with four decades of research that showed that a smile can indeed predict the future. His study was based on how a single smile in a photograph can and did predict women's happiness four decades later! Keltner and his team studied photographs of young women at age 21 in their yearbook and surveyed them up to their 50s. They coded the presence of two muscle actions: the zygomatic major which pulls the lip corners up; and the orbicularis oculi, which circles the eye, when that muscle contracts it is associated with pleasure.

The genuine smile of enjoyment not only makes us feel good but it makes others feel good as well. Just ask Mr. Kadokawa,

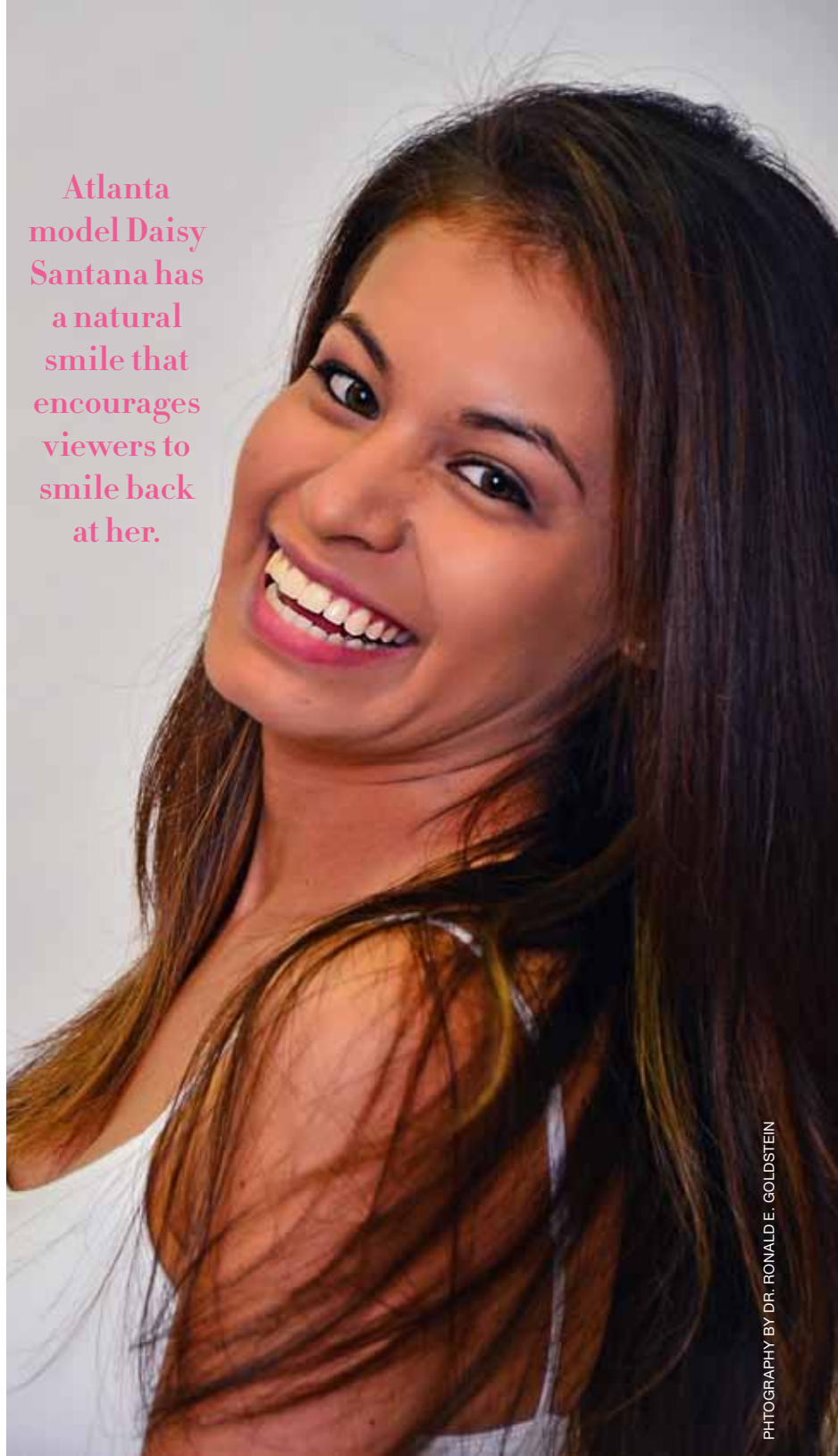
a smiling school tutor in Japan, who states, "In the past, Japanese culture discouraged smiling but now it is ok and people are learning how to smile." In India, Laughing Club founder Dr. Madan Kataria has many classes teaching people to laugh, which boosts the immune system and helps people to smile more. Even "force laugh helps since the body doesn't know the difference..." It still works!

On a personal note, I have taken thousands of photographs of both men and women before any treatment to improve their smiles. But when asked to smile, 90% of the time I see a fake smile. However, after I have finished making improvements, they don't hesitate to dazzle their true smile. I believe that a major reason is the subconscious realization that they are now proud of how their smile looks. In fact, I have had numerous patients who had been hiding their smile for so long it took retraining of their muscles plus realizing they could and should smile. The realization that their smiles were indeed good enough allowed them to finally let others enjoy seeing it too.

Another reason for not smiling was brought out by writer Meredith Lepore, who penned an article in defense of actress Kristin Stewart, who she said is known for not smiling. Stewart explained in the June issue of *Vanity Fair* that it was her anxiety over not appearing real that causes her to not smile.

So, for whatever reason folks hesitate to smile, their decision does affect how others see them and form their opinions about them as well. We humans have facial muscles that enable us to make up to 7,000 distinct expressions, but we only use about 100 of them! So if you feel your smile is holding you back from enjoying life more or keeping you from getting a better job, it may be time to consider changing your smile. It might even change your life as well!

Atlanta
model Daisy
Santana has
a natural
smile that
encourages
viewers to
smile back
at her.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DR. RONALDE. GOLDSTEIN



WITH A LIFELONG INTEREST IN BEAUTY, DR. RONALD GOLDSTEIN CONDUCTS ONGOING RESEARCH ON THE PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS PHENOMENON AND ITS ROLE IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PERSONAL SUCCESS. HIS DENTAL PRACTICE WAS THE FIRST TO MOVE BEYOND THE SMILE AND FOCUS ON OVERALL FACIAL HARMONY. HE WRITES EXTENSIVELY FOR BOTH CONSUMERS AND THE DENTAL PROFESSION ON BEAUTY, ESTHETIC DENTISTRY AND RELATED TOPICS. DR. GOLDSTEIN IS THE AUTHOR OF THE 2-VOLUME TEXTBOOK, *ESTHETICS IN DENTISTRY AND CHANGE YOUR SMILE* (12 FOREIGN TRANSLATIONS), WHICH NOW IN ITS 4TH EDITION IS THE TOP-SELLING CONSUMER GUIDE TO COSMETIC DENTISTRY FOUND IN THOUSANDS OF DENTISTS' RECEPTION ROOMS AROUND THE WORLD. HE IS ON THE ADVISORY BOARD OF *NEW BEAUTY* MAGAZINE AND WRITES FOR IT AS WELL. HE IS THE FOUNDER OF TOMORROW'S SMILES, A NATIONAL NON-PROFIT FUND THAT HELPS DESERVING ADOLESCENTS RECEIVE LIFE-CHANGING SMILES THROUGH COSMETIC DENTISTRY. HIS MULTIDISCIPLINARY PRACTICE IS IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

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