MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH

FOR

LISA BANKS

(**Greet the crowd wearing a mask-as you said-I would suggest that it is either one of those clear masks molded with the features of a face or an image of your face-super smooth and maybe photoshopped if possible to emphasize the “mask” we all wear)**.

Hello everyone! Recognize me? This is the mask I chose to wear today as I attempt to hide my flaws from you. We all do it in some way, shape or form, but is it necessary? We have all been conditioned by society and the media to applaud and encourage an ideal of perfect beauty, but is it even possible for anyone to achieve that kind of perfection? …And is there even **one** perfect ideal? Why do we even try? Each one of us has different opinions of what we may think is beautiful or even acceptable, and we can drive ourselves into the ground attempting to live up to an impossible standard of beauty as dictated by contemporary culture. I am standing here before you, flaws and all, and I would bet if we take an informal survey of what each one of us thinks Is either beautiful or unattractive, not only about me, but about each one of you, the one thing I am sure of is that we would have a variety of opinions!! If that’s the case, then why are we so quick to judge ourselves so harshly? Please don’t think I’m demeaning myself when I say, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” In fact, I propose a “**makeover**” for that expression…how about “One person’s flaw is another’s fascination?”

A long time ago, the Chinese philosopher, Confucius said, “Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.” We tend to be especially harsh on ourselves. Since ancient times, there has always been a culture that looks to an ideal of perfection, but lets face it, even the ancient Greek statue of the Venus de Milo, representing the goddess of love and beauty, has no arms!!! (**Say that with animation and wait for the laugh**) She’s made it through thousands of years of wear and tear and she’s **STILL** considered a symbol of beauty!! We have all been sold a formula for what “beauty” is. We’ve been brainwashed to believe that beauty is a size zero and what’s considered flawless-really isn’t. So how do we learn to appreciate others’ opinions on the subject while appreciating ourselves with all of our uniqueness?

Many years ago, there was a very popular model named Kathy Ireland, and by the way, she was not only beautiful, she was, and is **SMART**. She once said, “If we get our self-esteem from superficial places, from our popularity, appearance, business success, financial situation, health, any of these, we will be disappointed, because no one can guarantee that we’ll have them tomorrow.” I look at myself in the mirror these days and I see a different “me.” Years ago, I was as skinny as a toothpick. I was young and carefree and then…. I had a baby. I gained weight, parts of me grew and other parts grew more. My body was never the same again and I picked apart my image…. you name it, suddenly I saw the “flaws.” It was as though the hormone surge gave me x-ray vision!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I analyzed myself until I couldn’t handle it anymore… My abs? I can’t exactly call them “washboard” anymore. My teeth? We may have to call them “pearly creams”…. and by the way, last time I checked, pearls are available in a spectrum of colors, so why limit **THEIR** beauty??? Is my complexion as smooth as a baby’s bottom? No, not really. Can I pinch more than an inch? You bet I can!!! I don’t pass up the joy of savoring a brownie every now and then for the sake of my figure.

What I have learned since having a baby and observing life from different perspectives is that I know I have value. I know I‘ve earned the kinks and creases and rounded curves that I now have. What others might have tried to define as flaws in the past are just winks and nods that make me exactly who I am and there’s probably a story behind each one. And if people bother to take the time to learn about my characteristics, and me, they’ll find each one probably has a special history. As you connect those dots and learn more about who I am, and as I learn more about others in the same way, **REA**L beauty begins to shine through. I also know that, as someone once sang in a song, “It’s alright now. I’ve learned my lessons well. You can’t please everyone so you’ve got to please yourself.” Where some people might think I’m not white enough and others might think I’m not dark enough, I’ve come to learn that I am who I am and I’m unique.

Ten years ago, the actress Jamie Lee Curtis famously posed for a magazine and refused any make-up or wardrobe styling and even asked to be photographed in her underwear with no special lighting. Curtis had stated that “I don’t have great thighs, I have a … tummy. I don’t want the unsuspecting 40-year old women of the world to think I’ve got it going on. It’s such a fraud.” She refused to be subjected to what she called a “digital diet.” She also said “perfection is not copying some unattainable image from a magazine … to me, perfection is being happy with who you are. Look at me. I’m happy.”

You know what? I agree with her. I think she’s right. We are all perfectly beautiful in our own special ways, and once you and I truly accept, from the inside out that we are special and beautiful-everything considered, we will find real inner contentment and happiness Thank you all!