

5 reasons child pageants are bad for kids The father of murdered child pageant contestant JonBenet Ramsey regrets letting her compete in beauty contests — and calls *Toddlers and Tiaras* "bizarre"



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The father of
JonBenet Ramsey,
the 6-year-old
beauty queen who
was killed in 1996,
now says child
pageants are bad for
young girls.

John Ramsey and his family skyrocketed to national prominence in 1996, when Ramsey's 6-year-old daughter JonBenet, a frequent child pageant contestant, was found murdered. (The case was never solved.) Now, in an interview with *Good Morning America*, Ramsey concedes that he was wrong to put JonBenet in pageants in the first place. It's just a bad idea "to put your child on public display," he says. And shows like *Toddlers and Tiaras* that chronicle child pageants are "bizarre," Ramsey says, as pageants encourage young children to develop problematic levels of competitiveness, and focus too much on their appearance. Ramsey's warning brings to light an ongoing debate about the detrimental effects that pageants can have on children. Here, five more reasons why pageants are bad for children:

1. The girls are too young to say no

"There are examples of young girls screaming in terror as their mothers approach them with spray cans," Australian lawmaker Anna Burke tells the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. Clearly, pageants risk "the exploitation or potential exploitation of very young children who really do not have the capacity to express their own views."

2. Pageants sexualize young girls

French lawmakers want an all-out ban on child pageants, says Henry Samuel in Britain's *Telegraph*, accusing the media and reality TV of "promoting stereotypes that transform young girls into 'sexual morsels.'" Just look at the growing number of "schoolgirls as young as 8 [who] wear padded bras, high heels, or makeup, and strike suggestive poses."

Really, what is this telling our children about how they present themselves to society?

3. They cause cognitive and emotional problems

A 2007 report by the American Psychological Association found that the hypersexualization of young girls is strongly associated with eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression, says Melissa Henson at *CNN*. It can also even lead to fewer girls pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

4. Too much hair spray can stunt growth

One of the most widely used products in child pageants is hair spray, which contains phthalates, or plasticizers, that can act as hormone disruptors, says Travis Stork of CBS's *The Doctors*. For an adult beauty contestant, this is no biggie. But for a growing girl, the effects could prove detrimental. Excessive exposure to phthalates has been linked to stunted growth and even lung cancer.

5. High heels aren't made for small feet

If you're Suri Cruise, wearing high heels as a toddler is just a part of life. But when little pageant contestants wear heels, Stork says, it unnecessarily pushes their weight forward, causing lower back pain and hindering proper development of the feet. In some cases, these girls are forced to continue wearing heels outside of pageants because their feet have grown in a way that makes wearing other kinds of shoes very uncomfortable.

En vez de juguetes, bronceador y maquillaje para una niña de tres años "No quiero que otras chicas tengan una ventaja injusta", argumenta su madre



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Al ver a una niña de 3 años maquillada, lo más probable es que pensemos que está jugando con el maquillaje de su madre. Pero no es el caso de Savanna, cuya madre gasta miles de dólares para convertirla en una estrella de la escena.

La dedicación a la belleza empezó para la pequeña 'barbie', oriunda de Michigan (EE. UU.), cuando tenía tan solo 10 meses. Por ver a su hija convertida en una estrella, Lauren Jackson, además de maquillarla, empezó a someterla a sesiones de bronceado con spray "para que otras chicas no tuvieran una ventaja injusta".

La madre asegura que el proceso de bronceado no es dañino para la salud y que además a Savanna le gusta su nuevo color de piel.

Jackson contrata a un maquillador profesional para cada concurso en el que compite su niña para que le aplique labial, delineador de ojos y rímel. En este arduo proceso de transformación se van casi 5000 dólares al mes.

"Para mí los concursos son para divertirse, formar la autoestima y darle a mi niña la mejor oportunidad posible en la vida", argumenta la madre. "Cuando veo a Savanna en el escenario, el florecimiento de su autoestima, vale la pena cada centavo. Estoy muy orgullosa de mi hija bronceada", agrega ella.

Según Jackson, a Savanna le encanta participar en concursos, ser el centro de atención y caminar por la pasarela.

"Hay una línea, pero siento que mantengo a Savanna en el lado correcto. Nunca consideraría aplicarle bótox o someterla a una cirugía... ¡ya usa más maquillaje que yo", explicó Jackson su planteamiento de vida.

Estas palabras recuerdan el caso de una madre

estadounidense que inyectaba bótox a su hija de ocho años "para que la niña crezca bella y pueda ganar el concurso de Miss Universo".

¿Deben las niñas participar en concursos de belleza?

- No, las niñas deben tener una infancia sana
 - Solo si no las someten a 'torturas' de tratamientos de belleza
 - No, porque estimula a los pedófilos
 - Me da igual, es una cuestión de los padres y sus hijas
 - Sí, eso aumenta su autoestima
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