



**Ned Hickson**

# Want to boost your daughter's self image? Don't go for bust

When I first read about Jenna Franklin, the British girl whose parents are giving her \$8,000 breast implants for her 16th birthday, I was shocked by the notion of a father willing to be part of anything that would make his teenaged daughter more enticing to teenaged boys.

Looking ahead to my own daughter's sweet 16, I've begun saving up for a special birthday ensemble that includes sheet-metal pants and a turtleneck sweater made of chain-link. And possibly a make-up kit to go with it, depending on whether she wears her metal visor up or down.

I have no doubt my daughter will thank me later for adding a degree of difficulty to the courtship process, which will eliminate those who aren't persistent. Or, at the very least,

those without a blow torch.

While Franklin's parents say their "gift" is meant to boost their daughter's self esteem, I don't think going for bust is the answer. Even though Kay and Martin Franklin are cosmetic surgeons themselves, and say they only want the "breast" for their daughter, they have to see how the need for self-image "improvements" won't end there.

It'll be a tummy-tuck at 17, then higher cheekbones and a thinner nose for her 18th birthday. At 21, she can get those pouty lips she always wanted, and maybe a little eye work. Perhaps touch up those pointy ears she used to get teased about in grade school. Eventually, it will be time to tighten that sagging 23-year-old chin.

Then finally, when she's completely unrecognizable and can't pass through airport security without an X-ray of her head from the luggage machine, Jenna will be happy — and confident that she can lose her parents in a crowd,

which is really what the whole thing is about.

I have three teens at home. I can tell you the things that either empower or implode their self-confidence — and what they identify as being important to them — can literally change from moment to moment. On more than one occasion I have started a harmless conversation over breakfast on, let's say, why I like Fruitloops, and found myself the unwitting participant in what felt like an interview with Gary Busey. Between the Molotov cocktail of hormones coursing through their veins,

the constant flux of influences in their lives thanks to social media, the tether of cyberspace and the occasional friend you wish your child never met, the road our sons and daughters must navigate to define themselves is full of swerves and near misses.

It's our job as parents to not only be there on those rare occasions when they actually stop to ask for directions, but also to close the road when we know they don't have the skill to navigate what's ahead.

At age 16, I'm sure many girls believe larger breasts will boost self-esteem. And for the

record, most 16-year-old boys would agree with them.

But will she feel the same when she's a 35-year-old business woman tired of men looking at her self-esteem boosts instead of sales figures during staff meetings? Is a 16-year-old capable of understanding how her body will change and how breast implants will impact those changes?

Can a 16-year-old even get through the week with the same set of "best" friends they had on Monday?

As parents, we need to recognize this and intervene

when it comes to decisions that have long-term consequences, even when our kids don't agree or understand.

In all honesty, I'm glad the situation with the Franklins arose. It has prompted me to try even harder to ensure my daughter's self-confidence and self-image are grounded in who she is — *not how she looks*. Besides, I'd also like to avoid the cost of breast implant surgery.

The fact is, I'm flat busted. Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. Write him at [nedhickson@icloud.com](mailto:nedhickson@icloud.com).



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# FOOD & DINING

## Flavorful vegetarian does exist



### Cabbage With Five Spices and Ginger

Serves 4

- 1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
- 2 teaspoons shredded peeled ginger
- 4 dried red chiles, seeded, soaked in water, and drained
- 3 tablespoons sunflower oil
- 1 large onion, finely sliced
- 11 ounces cabbage, finely shredded
- 2 teaspoons panch phoron (see below)
- Salt, to taste

1. Put the mustard seeds, ginger and red chiles in a blender along with 5 tablespoons of water and whizz to a fine paste. Set aside the paste and continue with the recipe.
  2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large pot and add the onion. Fry until golden, then add the cabbage. Stir-fry for a couple of minutes until just translucent and sprinkle in the ground spice mixture and salt.
  3. Add 1/4 cup of water and cook uncovered until the cabbage is done but still
  - crisp. Remove from the heat and set aside.
  4. Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a separate pan and add the panch phoron. When it crackles, pour the oil and the seeds over the cabbage. Mix well. Serve hot, ideally with Luchis or with rice and Bengali Dal.
- To make the panch phoron, cooks can mix equal quantities of cumin seeds, fennel seeds, fenugreek seeds, black mustard seeds, and nigella seeds.

Non-vegetarians might wonder how tasty a vegetarian diet can truly be. However, many vegetarian dishes are loaded with flavor, ensuring those who prefer meat and poultry can still enjoy a vegetarian dish no matter how strong their personal preferences.

Those looking for a flavorful vegetarian dish can try the following recipe for "Cabbage With Five Spices and Ginger" from Monisha Bharadwaj's "India's Vegetarian Cooking" (Kyle Books).

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