**Everyone Needs a Best Friend**

*Barbie Fills the Spot*

When I was five, Barbie was my role model. Ken was the one I would marry someday. Barbie's virtual world on Channel 33 became my life. When I ran off the bus, I would join my big sister in front of our Barbie playhouse where I dressed all my little Barbie dolls with belly shirts and short skirts. Ken cooked dinner for Barbie or cleaned the house. Although my image of Barbie and Ken was built on independence and responsibility, my mom always told me that Barbie was bad. She said these “Barbie games” turn people into “anorexic hookers with a low self-esteem.” But Barbie was my best friend and I was hers! She would never let me down.

Barbie is the reason that I am able to write creatively, care for others, and even nurture relationships. Countries, like Saudi Arabia and Iran, have banned Barbie and to the detriment of the development of their girls and women. They argue that she is a “manifestation of western culture” (Kreiss); I say she teaches a women to be free, to express themselves. Even in our own country a congressman in West Virginia, Democratic Delegate Jeff Eldridge, is proposing a bill to ban Barbie. He claims Barbie “promotes and influences girls to place an undue importance on physical beauty to the detriment of their intellectual and emotional development.” He is wrong. Barbie teaches girls to not only to be confident, but also to respect others without judgment of their beauty, intellect, or emotional development. Barbie has not only developed my intellectual development, but I have learned how to treat others with respect.

It is not Barbie's fault that some girls deem themselves less beautiful than others; it is the fault of their upbringing. Many children grow up believing that they do not need to change and they are perfect just the way they are; this is the true determining factor in the body image of girls. I was raised to believe that I am beautiful; there was nothing Barbie could do to make me think any differently. Just because a child plays with Barbie does not mean she will work at Hooters or get an eating disorder. The negative effect on self-esteem, is exaggerated. Yes, Barbie might be a little underweight, but what is important is that children have a role model that has a great personality. In all of the Barbie movies and television shows, she is a caring, supportive woman with a heart full of courage. In the unstable lives that many girls have around the globe, it is important to have a well-rounded role model like Barbie. And a girl is never too old to have a role model; go buy Barbie today – she is only $6.99 and the box comes free!

The best part of having Barbie by your side is constantly having a friend. When I was little, I would have long conversations and roleplay with Barbie. I would create imaginary conversations between Barbie and Ken while walking in the park or while watching television. These kinds of experiences are key to developing a young girl’s sense of imagination. I spent my spare time creating colorful outfits and matching wigs with my Barbie out of the spare fabric from the upstairs closet. Barbie relieved my stress so I never got worn down by the responsibilities of life as an elementary schooler or doing my chores at home. I learned how to be creative. I learned how to develop my own ideas and be original. This is one of the hardest lessons for a girl to learn in life, and Barbie can help you do it!

My first words might have been “belly shirt” or “blonde;” Barbie practically taught me how to talk. Thank you, Barbie. Nineteen Barlow students agreed: Barbie should not be banned.

Despite what many mothers say about the bad effects Barbie has on the lives of young girls, Barbie has made me the creative and original person I am today. Girls need to learn these important life skills, and Barbie can help each and every girl get there.

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