

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

Iva Ballou: Hey, everyone. Welcome back to the Love Meets Joy podcast on the Smile Train podcast network. I'm Iva Ballou. I was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. I'm the CEO of RealSophisticatedJoy and a cleft confidence coach.

Ashley Barbour: And I'm Ashley Barbour. I was also born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. I'm the creator of CleftLove. And by day I work as a teacher consultant with students who have hearing loss and today, we're discussing all things, beauty, lipstick, and confidence. So, Iva, before we jump into it, how are things going? What have you been up to?

Iva: Oh my gosh. My skin has decided to betray me. So, I don't know about Ashley. I don't know. I've never had acne. I've never, that was like the one thing that I was always very thankful for, but I turned 30 and we're in it now and I can play tick tack toe on my skin right now. And I don't know what's going on with that. Oh. Um, so that's, what's going on in my end, but I think's a very, that that's happening as we have this episode coming up today. Um, as we said, today's episode is all about beauty. And I know for me, when I think about like, when I first really started thinking about beauty and everything, I go back to playing in my mother's makeup.

Ashley: Mm. I did that too.

Iva: Yes. Like I was the little girl who, especially when I was younger, I really we've talked about before. I did not have like an image that I could look up to like, oh, that I had, I saw myself. So, I had my mother and, you know, I thought this, she was so pretty and I wanted to play in her makeup and I wanted to look like her. And it would be so funny because she'd be like, Iva, are you playing in my makeup? No. Clearly got blue eyeshadow all over big, all-over lipstick everywhere. But I just wanted to feel pretty. Um, because yes, you know, but what about you? Like, how was like, did you play makeup growing up or anything

Ashley: Like that? I totally did. Yeah. I did play in my mom's makeup, and I remember getting like kids makeup when I was a mm-hmm <affirmative> growing up too. Like at Christmas I would get like kids' makeup that, you

Iva: Know, well eyeshadow palettes and stuff.

Ashley: Yes. An eye shadow palette. There was like lip gloss. That was different colors. And I always loved playing in that. Um, but I was only allowed to wear it at home and I wasn't allowed to wear makeup out. And about until I was 15, I had fun playing in makeup, but I had a lot of other interests other than makeup until I grew up a little bit. You know what I mean?

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

- Iva: Gotcha. Totally. I was the same, uh, I couldn't really wear makeup, no red lipstick, no red nail polish. That was a big thing. Um, I remember
- Ashley: Nail polish too. I was allowed to wear nail polish mm-hmm
- Iva: I remember, I think I was, I probably was around 15 when I first got like my first set of like acrylic nails. And that was a real big thing because, you know, yes, I had to really work for that, but I think also part of it was because going into school, you just wanted to feel pretty. And I don't know about you Ashley, but you know, I actually started school technically a year earlier than I should have. So I was always,
- Ashley: Ah, me too.
- Iva: See, so I was always like a year behind where I was, or where I was supposed to be. Yeah.
- Ashley: Yeah. Cause when is your birthday?
- Iva: So, mine is in September. It's the end of September, September 26th. And yours is November,
- Ashley: Right? No, December 1st,
- Iva: December, December 1st. That's right.
- Ashley: Yeah. And December 1st is the cutoff to yeah. Get into kindergarten. And I remember my preschool teachers sort of talking with my parents about the pros and cons and they were like, yeah, we think she's ready to go on, but she's very young. So, I started school when I was four and that, you know, kind of continued throughout all of my schooling. And so, when I started college, I was actually 17 and I didn't turn 18 until December my freshman year, which was pretty wild. We
- Iva: Could have a whole other conversation about that because I was the same way we had to talk. We'll have to talk about that.
- Ashley: Yeah. I kind of wonder if you know, it, it sort of ties in with mm-hmm <affirmative> how my parents maybe protected me because I was so young. And then you add in the cleft component and everything. I feel like just a lot of my life, they were very overprotective. I think having me be sort of medically fragile in the beginning. Yeah. And then just being young, it was always much harder to sort of let go of the reins. I don't know. Did you experience that or is that kind of what you think?

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

Iva: So my father, I would say did a better job of like masking it on the outside. Like he would push me, even though I know that he was a little bit more afraid, but my mother bless her. She had that same sense of I'm mama bear. I have to protect my baby. That sense of like, I want to just, I want to shield you. And I like how you said like, you know, medically fragile even sometimes of like putting me out there sometimes like I would be like, oh I can do it. I can do it. And she's like, no, you can't. No, you can't. And it's like, yes

Ashley: I can. Yes.

Iva: But that's just, I think mama bear or protectiveness.

Ashley: Yes. And all moms have to be protective. Right. Mm-hmm <affirmative> but my mom tells the story of before I had any treatment, she took me to a store and I think it was soon after I was born, it was one of our first outings and she just felt like it was me and her against the world because you know, if anybody would look at me weird, she would just like, look at 'em back. My mom's real sassy. And so,

Iva: Oh no,

Ashley: She just really like get on it. So that protectiveness carried on throughout my childhood.

Iva: I just found out that our moms are also going to be friends. I'm going to do the same. Except she slapped me on the counter of a honey baked ham store and was like, this is my baby <laugh>. So we were definitely going to have to have our sassy moms come on and tell about their stories because I don't even know. But that was where I think I learned like the importance of makeup and trying to blend in, like for me, my wanting to wear makeup and to wear the lipstick and everything was just because I wanted to have some sense of normalcy in trying to maybe cover up. Not just my cleft, I realize now, but also someone like my insecurity and the shame that I felt along with it.

Ashley: Yes. I definitely agree with that because I got to a point when I was in high school, I think that I started, I discovered fashion and I started wearing makeup much more. And I felt like if I was able to make myself look the best possible, then it would, you know, hide anything that I didn't like, including my cleft. Right. I just blend right in with all the other stuff you

Iva: Just blended in. No one would ever know. It's like, like, like you really thought that you were going undercover, like

Ashley: You totally did. And what's crazy though, is it took me a while to get into makeup and fashion. Um, when I was in middle school, I was not one of those, uh, very

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

super slender, you know, middle school girls that you see. I was one that sort of clung onto my baby fat.

Iva: Same, same Ashley, same

Ashley: Quite a while. Yeah. And so I had a really hard time fitting into the clothes that were popular. Some of the trends that were popular when I was in middle school are now sort of circling back around. So that was like midriff bearing tops and mm-hmm <affirmative> and everything like that. And I just had a really hard time fitting

Iva: Into super low riding jeans.

Ashley: Oh, I hope those never come back, but everything comes back around. Right.

Iva: But they do, I'm not wearing them. Mm-hmm mm-hmm.

Ashley: But I even remember this one time I was in a, uh, choir outside of school and we had to go in to be fitted for our uniforms and for the concert. And I went in, and I tried on what I would've normally had for my usual size and it didn't zip up. So, my mom was like, okay, it's fine. We'll go get the next size up. And so, she got the next size up and it was a little better, but it still didn't fit. And we did this a couple of times and until I got to a point where literally none of the uniforms fit, they didn't even have a size that fit me. And it was so hard because it was one of those moments where again, I wasn't blending in with everyone else. Mm-hmm <affirmative> right.

Iva: So I, I want to hug you for you. I want to hug you for me because I had the same similar experience except in mine. My friend had to literally at JC Penney had to rip me out of the dress because it, I couldn't get it off. Um, I couldn't get it off in trying to,

Ashley: In the dressing

Iva: Room, in the dressing room, couldn't get it off. Um, because, so my, my story is that, you know, I actually developed really early matter of fact, um, <laugh> funny story. I actually entered into womanhood on April Fool's Day when I was nine years old to the point

Ashley: That

Iva: Wow. Okay. Right. To the point that the next following year in fifth grade, everybody knew that we were having the talk at, in an assembly because of me,

Ashley: Right? Oh no.

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

Iva: Yes. Everybody knew it was only because of me. And so again, I can remember feeling like once again, I'm not fitting in once again, I'm being set apart as others. Yes. And I'm singled,

Ashley: Singled

Iva: Out. I'm singled out <laugh> but the problem was, I was always very interested in fashion and like I too was like you, I, yeah. My weight was always thick. I always had curves. Yeah. And that was back before curves were in. Yeah. So, I just never, right now it's a whole different story, but at the time I just never felt like I fit in.

Ashley: Hmm. You said that you were interested in style from a young age and I definitely got there, but I think for me, I was able to become more interested and aware of what I was wearing once I, you know, lost a bunch of weight when I was in high school. I think I was a sophomore in high school maybe. Okay. But I, uh, started dieting and um, I ended up losing, uh, about 40 pounds close to 40 pounds. And I discovered through that, that I was able to control what my body looked like based on what I ate. And unfortunately, it turned kind of disordered, but because then I was small enough to fit into what was trendy that sort of allowed me to start wearing a lot of the things that I wanted to wear. Yes. And so, I think I was able to again, use that as a way to blend in. And then also I was able to use my eating as a way to sort of sculpt my body in a way that I was never able to sculpt my face.

Iva: Ashley, every time that we come here, it is like more and more, I feel our synergy, our connection because I have similar experience, never quite disorder in that way. Um, but I definitely know there, you know, walking a fine line of body dysmorphia, just not truly seeing my body. And that obviously goes in with my facial difference. Yes. And so I can remember again in middle school and high school being up at midnight, just trying to like do some form of exercise because I knew that I actually said it. I was like, I cannot have a cleft and be overweight. That was just my truth. And I know that's harsh to put on myself, but that was truly, I just could not do both. I would really work out and do crazy diets and everything just trying to, yeah. And I remember it was right after college. I lost a lot of weight too. And how you said, like that was the time where you felt like, oh, okay. I can really get into fashion now because I can wear some of the stuff. Yeah. Yeah. It was a superficial happiness, but I can remember feeling like, oh for one time I actually might be able to truly blend in with everybody else.

Ashley: Right. Yeah. And I also found that eating gave me a bodily autonomy that I never was able mm-hmm <affirmative> to have when I was a kid. Right, right. Cause you know, a lot of kids you're able to teach you don't touch my body unless I want you to, and, and all of that. And I was taught that in certain situations, but when

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

you're born with a cleft, I mean the number of people who come in and stare at you very intimately, like up your nose in your mouth with like, you know,

Iva: And they do it. Like it's nothing yeah.

Ashley: Fingers everywhere. And, and you're just sitting there. Right. So you don't get a choice. So I definitely think eating and controlling what I ate gave me a way, gave me control over my body in a way that I had never had before.

Iva: Yeah. That's, that's really what it is because that's the only thing that we have, especially seeing how we live in the world, where there are kind of like set beauty standards, whether or not we want to admit to, like everyone kind of falls to them. And so yes, there are a set standard. Typically it is, you know, tall, slender, small wavy flowing hair, you know, and facial wise as symmetric face, because there have been numerous studies about how pretty privileged or how people respond to people who have a more symmetrical phase. And so mm-hmm, <affirmative> what do we do for those of us who are, have a facial difference? Right. And how do we fit into that beauty standard?

Ashley: Yeah. People in general, but especially being a woman with the facial difference.

Iva: Like how do you, how do we get in and how do we measure up? And it's very hard sometimes, because we've mentioned before, neither one of us had someone to look up to, to as a kid, young woman, young teen to say, oh she has a facial difference and she's beautiful. Okay.

Ashley: Yes.

Iva: You and I didn't have that.

Ashley: Yeah. Having a woman with a facial difference and being able to see her as a, a standard of beauty would've given me so much more confidence instead, we're just given, you know, Hollywood often uses facial scarring on villains. And so you equate even your own bias becomes facial scars and facial difference equates with scary and evil and bad the villain and yes. What does that teach you about how to feel about yourself and I, yeah, I definitely know what you're saying about the female beauty standard and I, I think it starts even when you're super young, it does something that I have noticed even in some cleft groups mm-hmm <affirmative> is when a baby boy is born with a cleft mm-hmm <affirmative> a lot of the onesies that are sort of marketed or shown off they're wearing say chicks, dig scars. They do. And I have to say, I mean, it comes from a good place that they do that. Right. Like, right. But it kind of grinds my gears because there's no reverse saying for girls or women. Right. Right. I mean, babies shouldn't be sexualized anyway. But like, um, there's nothing that says, you know? Yeah. So

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

I've always wanted a shirt or something that says real men dig scars too or something.

Iva: I think we should do it. I think we should do it because it's true. But you are correct. I have seen, I have seen the onesies and yes, the baby boy is always adorable, but it does kind of say something for, you know, us girls who are born with cleft. Like what about us? So once again, it goes back to that. I don't fit in, where's my place.

Ashley: Yes. So true.

Iva: That kind of leads to, you know, we talked about this before, is that kind of feeling like you live in two worlds, you know, where you have this standard of beauty and this is what you're supposed to adhere to, but I was born with a facial difference, so I can't really check that off. But then also, right. I'm an African American woman. So, there's this standard of beauty that kind of goes along with it. And I can remember growing up, I actually would think like, would I have liked my cleft more if I was lighter skin?

Ashley: Oh, that's interesting.

Iva: Like that was always a, really a question that I can remember feeling like, like maybe that would make me feel better about it. And so just trying to figure like where do I fit in? How do I fit in like, um, cause even in the African American community, you know, cleft is not common. Right. So, there would be times where it's like, I don't fit in over here and just trying to figure out where is my place and yeah. What is beautiful and what does beautiful mean to me and how can I feel beautiful on the inside? That was something that was a really big struggle for me. Uh, so I mean, that's what we're trying to navigate.

Ashley: Yeah. I'm curious to learn more about how you, you know, what beauty means to you now and like, do you feel at this point, because now you're in your thirties, mm-hmm <affirmative> do you feel like you can navigate two worlds in multiple senses successfully now? And is there one world over another that you feel the most comfortable in?

Iva: That is a great question, Ashley, and I'm actually going to answer it right after the break.

Speaker 3: We are happy to tell you more about our sponsor: Smile Train. Smile Train pioneered a sustainable model of partnering with local medical professionals in more than 70 countries. In 22 years, it has supported more than 1.5 million safe cleft surgeries, more than all other cleft charities combined. And as many people in our audience know, children born with clefts often need more essential cleft treatments than just surgery. Because their partners provide local, year-round

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

care, Smile Train is also able to fund nutritional support, dental care, orthodontic treatment, speech therapy, and psychosocial support for those who need it. Smile Train invests in their partners, providing them with the state-of-the-art equipment and training they need to make safe and quality care possible for those who need it most. Visit smiletrain.org/donate/lovemeetsjoy today and donate \$21 a month to make sure that every child with a cleft can receive the care they need whenever they need it.

Ashley: Before the break I asked you a question and I'm dying to know the answer. Okay. So you mentioned that it was a challenge when you were growing up. Yeah. Sort of straddling two different worlds. And I'm curious now that you're in your thirties and more confident and secure in who you are, is there one world that you feel the most comfortable in?

Iva: So it's going to sound like a cop out, but it's not. I've decided I don't have to live permanently in either one world. I have taken the best of both worlds and I have merged them together. And what you see of me is that, is that marriage, you know, there are certain parts

Ashley: Of, I love that, that

Iva: Like I always tell people that one thing that I, that I almost kind of love sounds weird that of my cleft is it gave me grit. It gave me resiliency. It gave me determination. But also that's also a part of the African American culture. So why can't I manage that together? Why can't I fit in that? And so I

Ashley: Love that

Iva: Part of what the like RealSophisticatedJoy or the confidence was me deciding that I'm going to make my beauty standard for what it means for me. And the moment that I did that things became so much easier. And it's funny because as you said, I spent 30 years of feeling like I didn't fit in and I wasn't pretty. And now yes, if you ask me, I, I think I'm pretty, I think I'm gorgeous, not on a like bragging way, but it's just, I know where I fit in for myself and that is beautiful for me. So

Ashley: Yes. You found your worthiness. That's been there the whole time.

Iva: I found my worthiness. I found my joy. I got into it. I tapped into it and that's what it is. And so Ashley, I want to know about you. Yes. Like, so how are you filling out or living into your beauty standards?

Ashley: So we've talked repeatedly about this idea of camouflage and blending in. And I do think sometimes there are days when I still struggle with that sometimes where I want to always present the absolute best version of myself. Cause I'm afraid if I'm too vulnerable, mm-hmm <affirmative> then it won't be pleasing. But on the

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

whole, I really sort of adhere to that cheesy saying like, why blend in? When you were born to stand out?

Iva: I love cheese. I love cheese, keep it up.

Ashley: Right. <laugh> like we, in a lot of ways we're given such a gift, you know? Like, like you said, it's, it gave you, your cleft gave you resilience and strength. And I a hundred percent believe that if I was not born with a cleft, I would not be the person that I am today. I wouldn't have the empathy

Iva: Same. Oh, I say that all the time. Yes,

Ashley: Yes. I wouldn't have the same empathy. And in fact, I, I have no idea who I would be without it, but I have a feeling that this is the better version. <laugh>

Iva: Absolutely, absolutely. And something else you, you said like you don't like the mess of vulnerability, but think about it. Yeah. A sundae, an ice cream sundae, the sweet spot of an ice cream sundae. It's messy. Let's be messy. It's okay. Let's be messy.

Ashley: It's I, you know, and I'm trying to give myself more grace and more resilience and I'm, I'm getting better as things go on. So it's just some days that I have a hard time. Right. <laugh> so I, I just want to like be transparent that it's not perfect every single day, but I've come a long way, baby. You know, very proud of

Iva: You

Ashley: A long way. So I am curious mm-hmm <affirmative> because this also ties in with what we've been talking about. Yes. That we, as cleft affected people have sort of a, an interesting journey with beauty because yeah, we undergo reconstructive surgery from a very young age and while a lot of those surgeries we get them is a functional reason, there is also a cosmetic portion to the surgeries as well. And I, I know that you and I have a lot of similar feelings and I'm curious if you ever found it hard to stop doing more surgeries or would you still do more or how did you know when you were quote unquote done?

Iva: So it's funny. I actually had someone say that to me literally yesterday. Like they just impromptu decided to, oh, ask me, do you think you'll have another surgery? Your face looks kind of funny and videos. And I was just like,

Ashley: Was it a friend or like an internet stranger?

Iva: It was an internet stranger. Like they, they were like, yeah, they were like, I like the real, but have you ever thought? And I was like, thank you for liking the real <laugh> whatever. But how I knew that I, you know, cause it's always one thing

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

to theorize and talk about something, but to be a practitioner of something, yes. Is another. And in that moment I realized like I really am a practitioner because I there's nothing more for me to fix how I feel about myself. Mm. And that's when, you know yes. When it's time to stop for the audience listening, if you are still on that journey, I want to be the person who lets, you know, we're never going to be perfect. None of us is going to be perfect. Even the, the biggest celebrity you can think of, they're going to have some type of insecurity that they're going through or something that they feel that bothers them. So you just have to make sure that you are grounded in yourself and make sure to invite love and joy into your cleft journey. And I think that will give you your answer of like when to finish surgeries. Yeah.

Iva: So, for the person listening no more surgeries <laugh>

Ashley: Well, I'm going to actually say that that is a very personal choice because when I was 17, typically when you are a late teenager yeah. That's when you sort of get your more cosmetic rhinoplasty, right. Your nose job mm-hmm <affirmative>. And when I was 17, I was done with surgeries. I was, I was done. I didn't want to do anymore. And I was good and I spent the next decade plus a few years loving myself, right. To the best of my ability and being okay with it. But then right before my 30th birthday, I started thinking, you know, maybe I kind of want to look into that. And I really kind of struggled with that decision because I didn't know if that meant that the last 15 years of me feeling confident in how I looked was a lie.

Iva: Ah, okay.

Ashley: Yeah. And I really had to come to terms with the fact that it, it wasn't, and that we're always calling this a journey and it truly is, and your feelings might change throughout it. And that's okay. So, I did end up doing the rhinoplasty, uh, soon after I turned 30 and I am so happy with the results. Good. But like, I remember thinking that that was going to be the one thing that, you know, fixed it. All right. Mm-hmm <affirmative> mm-hmm <affirmative> and made me perfect. And I realized after that surgery that there just wasn't, it, it wasn't perfect. It was, it was different. It was perhaps improved if that's what you want to say, but it, it wasn't,

Iva: It wasn't this earth shattering. Oh, I'm a whole new person. No, it's none of that.

Ashley: It's yeah. The, the heavens didn't open up. Like no angels were singing. Like I thought that they would be. Nope. Um, there was no like harps, like, nope, it's just, so I really had to come to terms with the fact that it's an inside job and your confidence is an inside job. And there are certain, if you're at a place where you feel like getting another surgery is going to help you get to that confidence. Great. But also keeping in mind that a lot of it is internal work too. So be prepared to do that as well.

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

Iva: That what you just said, like that was a word, you've got to make sure that you're ready to do the work. Cause it is it's just work. All right. All right. This has been a lot of heavy stuff. Let's <laugh> let's get back to the fun stuff. Let's liven it up. So, we could not talk about fashion and beauty and confidence without talking about makeup.

Ashley: Yes, for sure.

Iva: And for me particularly, it is my love of lipstick and I,

Ashley: Ah,

Iva: I was gifted this love from my mother. So, my mother being who she is, audience, you might, we, we might actually be having a chance for you guys to talk to our moms. <laugh> one of my favorite stories of my mother is one of my brother was born and this woman just pushed out her son. But before she would allow him to come see her mind you it's a brand-new baby,

Ashley: An infant,

Iva: An infant, like just fresh out of the womb. She would not let the nurses bring him in until she put on lipstick. My mother has always said that, no matter what, if you put on lipstick, you will feel better. And I can remember as a little girl thinking that she was absurd, like how is lipstick? Especially being with the cleft. Like that's not going to change anything, but as I got older yeah. And I, I started really being intentional and wearing lipstick. And I would find that, you know what it does make me feel better. It does kind of put a little bit of confidence into me. And it's like those little things that you can do to kind of make you feel confident. I'm going to find little ways to make me feel confident. So, for sure, now I love lipstick and I love the makeup. So, what about you?

Ashley: I played with lipstick when I was a kid mm-hmm <affirmative>, but when I became more aware of the fact that I was supposed to like to highlight my best features, quote unquote. Right, right. I didn't wear it. Right. Mm-hmm <affirmative> I would just maybe lip gloss, but no color. And I actually remember I was in a wedding and I was getting my makeup done before the wedding. And I remember the makeup artist looking at me and she goes, which do you want to highlight your eyes or your lips? And I looked at her like, are you insane? <laugh> <laugh> which one do you think I want to highlight?

Iva: <laugh> see, like, she might have been genuine. She might have been so genuine. I

Ashley: Think she was. Yes. So I was like, uh, definitely my eyes, because I have really big eyes. People can't see that right now, but they're pretty big. And so they're

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

easy to play up. And so I had her do that and then I don't know, maybe in my late twenties mm-hmm <affirmative> I decided to just give it a go, I think. And I remember I loved it. I loved being able to change the colors. Yes. I, it just sort of tied everything all together. I love wearing kind of crazy colored lipstick. It's been a while with the masks that I've been able to actually use my whole lipstick collection. But yeah. Like I just think it's so fun. I remember when I started wearing it, I had a non-cleft affected friend say, man, I love that you wear lipstick all the time. It makes me want to wear lipstick. And I was like, oh right then <laugh>

Iva: Exactly.

Ashley: And you know, it definitely gives me a lot of confidence.

Iva: It does.

Ashley: But when I was a kid, I remember my pediatrician telling my mom something I might want to do when I get older in order to make my lips. Uh, because my upper lip is pretty thin. Mm-hmm <affirmative> uh, is I might want to overline them. Do you overline your lips?

Iva: No,

Ashley: I don't either. I just follow my normal line.

Iva: Yeah. I just follow normally. So, and for me even over lining wouldn't do anything because the way that mine is, it's more so like if you really look at my lips or like one is side is fuller. So over lining wouldn't do much.

Ashley: Um, but if you, like, I think what some people do is they would like make the other side fuller to match.

Iva: Uh, no. Cause first off, I would be so concerned that I do it wrong or that it looks like

Ashley: I know. And

Iva: <laugh>,

Ashley: And everyone can tell that it's just overdrawn. I have no idea how people do that. <laugh>

Iva: Because I've seen on Instagram when people have done that and I see how they do it and I'm just like, wow, that is real commitment. No, I know.

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

- Ashley: No like what if it rubs off part of the way? Like it could just be a mess.
- Iva: So do you have like any other like makeup tricks that you may do?
- Ashley: So I actually do not. I know some cleft affected people who are skilled with concealer and foundation. Okay. Cover up their scars if they're more prominent.
- Iva: Yeah. I've heard that.
- Ashley: I have never done that, but I also am not a big foundation wearer. You said earlier in the podcast today that you've always had great skin. Yes. And I have not. I started breaking out when I was probably in the fourth grade and really, you know, it didn't stop until I was in my twenties. Yeah. And so, I have, um, I'm like, I just have very oily skin and okay. I think it's just like a genetic thing, ethnicity. Yeah. Related thing. So part of having, um, very oily skin is I also have very large pores. Yeah. And so I have never found a foundation that doesn't just sink into them. And I remember asking maybe a surgeon once I think it was when I was going in for my rhinoplasty and I asked, or he was worried about my skin. I don't know. Being too thick
- Iva: Elasticity you think? Yeah. Okay.
- Ashley: No, he was like worried that my skin was too thick because I have big pores and um, that my skin would be too thick to see minor changes underneath. Like when they in the rhinoplasty. Um, also there's a joke buried somewhere in there about me having thick skin. Right. Like, okay. Um, I think all of us born with cleft have thick skin. You
- Iva: Have to, you have to <laugh>
- Ashley: You can't have to. So I was like, yes, I do have thick skin. Um, yeah, but I just have never, um, I I've never been able to wear, do you wear foundation? No, because you said your skin is really similar. Yeah. You just have really great skin <laugh> I
- Iva: Could look well not right now. Right now, you can play tick tack toe on it, but normally it is just concealer. Normally I am just a concealer it's and also living in Florida. I was not about to be with a whole bunch of makeup. It's going to come right off. Yeah. It's going to come right off. It
- Ashley: Can feel real thick for
- Iva: Yes.

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

Ashley: Sure. I've had so much fun talking to you about makeup and all this fun stuff. Cuz, I know we get into some kind of deep stuff. Sometimes

Iva: We do well that's needed

Ashley: It. You know it's needed it a little balance. Right. Mm-hmm <affirmative> just like the journey. There are so many highs and lows. So absolutely. I love that. We can talk about it all, you know? Yes. But we've reached the end of our episode and now it's time for our favorite segment. Yes. That we like to call Smile and Slay where we talk about questions that we've received from friends and family. So, our question of the day, are you ready? Iva?

Iva: I'm ready. Give it to me.

Ashley: <laugh> our question of the day is I've seen some cleft affected people, have pursued permanent makeup in order to make their lips look more symmetrical. Is that something you would ever consider?

Iva: Ooh, I don't know if it is because I'm cleft affected. I'm really good at sizing up symmetry and I have to say no all because it's permanent and if it doesn't come outright, you can't undo it <laugh> you can't undo it

Ashley: So

Iva: True. And I will be mortified. And then also to Ashley's point, as she said earlier in the episode, 10 years from now, I may change and I may not want that. And it's

Ashley: Permanent. Yes.

Iva: For that reason for myself. No. Yeah. I would never, not even my eyebrows.

Ashley: No, you wouldn't get a micro bladed.

Iva: Mm-hmm no, typically what I do is I get my eyebrows threaded and then tinted and that lasts me about two, two weeks, two to three weeks. So, and I've been going to her for years. That's my girl. I can do that. <laugh> what about you?

Ashley: Yeah. Yeah. I've definitely heard that tinting is good. I think I would do microblading, but I would also be too scared to have my like permanent makeup put on my lips or to have my scars tattooed to make them less noticeable. Because what if something happens something. What if someone makes a mistake and I know it's semipermanent, so it's not as permanent as like the ink and a tattoo, but it's still permanent and it's still, I, I don't think I would do that. I would consider it's not, uh, permanent makeup, but I, I have considered doing lip fillers before just to add yes. Fullness to my top lip,

Love Meets Joy Podcast
Episode 4: Cleft, Confidence, and Beauty Standards
Transcript

Iva: But which I do know a lot of cleft affected women do that. And so yes. You know, again, I totally support that if that's going to, especially if it's going to enhance your confidence. And I love when I see the, you know, see their post and yes, that's something that's discussed. So there's always that option. But that's our show for today. Guys, if you want to show us your lipstick, go ahead and send that over. Or if you are like no to the permanent makeup or permanent anything let us know or

Ashley: Yes please.

Iva: Yes, please. That's true. Yes, please. <laugh> and you can, that's our show for today and you can find me on Instagram and TikTok at Real Sophisticated Joy.

Ashley: And you can find me Ashley on Instagram at CleftLove IG and on TikTok at CleftLove. And don't forget to go to smiletrain.org, to learn more about all the wonderful things Smile Train is doing for the cleft community around the world. You can find us on your favorite podcast streaming site. And while you're there, please don't forget to leave us a five star review. Thanks so much for listening. Bye bye guys.

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