

## **Republican Perspective**

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**by John Littig**

### **Trust Us, You Look Great**

In my April 19 column “You Won’t Believe This One,” I described the removal of a scale from the gym at Canada’s Carleton University. A student complained that the presence of the scale triggered her anxiety, presumably by reminding her she is not winning the battle with her BMI.

The column described backlash and ridicule of the scale’s removal. One student acerbically suggested banning mirrors because they could be equally distressing. Well, it turns out that no trigger for emotional trauma (whether real or imagined and no matter how frivolous or dubious) is to be overlooked or discounted. Thus the facetious suggestion to ban mirrors has come true.

Sabrina, an idealistic student at Laguna Hills High School, replaced mirrors in the girls’ restrooms with “signs of affirmation.” Girls who look in the mirror see, instead of their reflection, messages like “You are beautiful” and “You are enough.” Apparently the school had a “What if....Week,” each day having a specific theme, one being “What if we showed more love?” Sabrina, who made and posted the signs, told ABC News (this made the news) “I put the signs in the bathroom the night before so students would see them throughout the next day.” So her affirmation-instead-of-mirrors effort was planned to last one day.

Sabrina’s project was certainly well-intentioned. She wanted to make other girls feel loved and valuable. But she overlooked that mirrors serve a purpose. Girls don’t want to go through their school day with hair askew, spinach-teeth, cockeyed pussy hat, or smeared mascara. A “you are beautiful” feel-good message does not help a girl to make it so.

So along comes an adult who might help Sabrina understand this. Chelsea, the school’s activities director, told ABC News that Sabrina had “made it her goal for the semester to spread positive messages around campus.” She also said that student reaction had been so positive that there were no immediate plans to take the signs down.

As the adult in this scenario, activities director Chelsea---in addition to praising Sabrina’s desire to raise other girls’ self esteem---might also have helped her to understand that mirrors serve an actual purpose by reflecting reality and allowing people to make needed adjustments.

Well, it turns out that Laguna Hills High was not the only, or even the first, school to experiment with removing or covering mirrors. A couple of months earlier, a dorm at

Bucknell University covered its bathroom mirrors during “Self Love Week” and “Eating Disorder Awareness Day.”

The signs said: “Trust us you look great. Take a break from the mirror today and be good to yourself and your body, regardless of appearance. Know that you are much more than how you look. Celebrate your inner beauty today...” and so on. How this promotes eating disorder awareness is unclear. It would even seem to promote *unawareness*.

I claim no expertise in this area, but it would seem logical that eating disorders are serious problems which require medical treatment or psychological intervention and cannot be wished away by covering a mirror with a message of affirmation and self love.

At first glance, removal of the gym’s scale and covering mirrors with signs of praise may seem silly or frivolous. But in fact both acts represent the denial of reality. Denial is in vogue on today’s campus and is being enabled---even encouraged---by school administrators and teachers.

Administrators and teachers tend to promptly give in to student demands and to the mindset that uncomfortable truths should be ignored, dissenting opinions should be silenced, and “safe spaces” should be provided. These adults---in loco parentis---should be providing a dose of reality rather than reinforcing its denial.

In the world beyond graduation safe spaces are in short supply. And denial will prove to have been an unhelpful lesson with unfortunate consequences.