

Painful piercings produce unnatural orifices

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“Aren’t those earrings pretty?” asked my friend Jean, pointing to a jewelry store window.

“Yes,” I replied, “but you couldn’t wear them. They’re for pierced ears.”

“My ears are pierced.”

“No, they aren’t.”

“Yes, they are,” she said.

“NO, they are NOT!” I insisted.

It will not surprise to you to learn that Jean was correct about the pierced status of her ears, but I was staggered at the news of her mutilation. Since childhood, I have been adamant that I would not end life with any more orifices than those with which I began.

I imagine the idea of piercing ears started when one bored woman said to another, “Here’s an idea. Let’s get someone to jab big, sharp needles into our earlobes and force metal studs through the holes.”

I can’t even imagine how bored — drunk, is more like it — a woman would have to be to come up with the idea of having her navel pierced or, even worse, her tongue! Think about how much it hurts when you accidentally bite your tongue. Ow! Ow! Ow!

Nose piercings are relatively new to America, but when son Greg was a 5-year-old, we encountered a beautiful East Indian woman in a department store. She was dressed in a red and gold silk sari and had a diamond embedded in the side of her right nostril. I accepted the adornment as a cultural difference, but Greg was awestruck. Neck craned upward, he couldn’t take his eyes off her nose jewel.

A few weeks later, he pulled the same stunt in an artsy gift store that boasted a life-sized replica of Michaelangelo’s sculpture of David. Because David — in his full-frontal and backside nude glory — was standing on a three-foot pedestal, Greg’s neck was again craned upward ... but his gaze wasn’t on David’s nose. Mouth agape, he circled the statue until a clerk appeared, concerned, I assume, that he would wear a rut in the floor.

“He’s just looking to see if David has any piercings,” I explained, as I grabbed my son’s hand and hustled him toward the door. Greg’s head swiveled 180 degrees on his spine and his eyes never left David until we exited the store.

I've noticed that some people pierce their eyebrows. I've even heard that a few folks — surely there can't be many — pierce certain hidden portions of their anatomies, but that is just too gross to write about ... and I'm not certain I believe it anyway.

Granddaughter Zoe claims she is made in my image and will not pierce anything on her body even though her mother and older sister wear pretty earrings in their pierced ears. Peer pressure to pierce didn't work on me, but the jury is still out on Zoe who is only 10 and has a good many years to succumb to friendly persuasion.

While ear piercing is not for me, I gladly tolerate that mutilation in family and friends because earrings are such quick and easy gifts to buy. But that wasn't always so. I once thought of pierced ears the way a nun in a Catholic girls' school — according to a book I read as a teenager — viewed gum-chewing. She told her students that “a girl who will chew gum will smoke, and a girl who will smoke will do anything!” Although the book didn't spell it out, I was pretty sure when the nun said they'd do anything, she meant they would pierce their ears.

Early in our marriage, Ray and I were enjoying Thanksgiving dinner at his parents' table. His older sisters and their families were also there and somehow — it certainly didn't originate with me — the conversation turned to pierced ears. When someone asked me if my ears were pierced, I said, “No! I would just as soon wear a bone through my nose!”

Too late, I noticed that, with the exception of Ray's mother and me, every female at the table had pierced ears. A decade or so later, Ray's mom surrendered to fashion and had her ears pierced. Whenever Ray saw earrings he thought she'd like, he bought them for her. Some were expensive and others turned her ears green, but she loved them equally because they were from him.

My mother didn't have pierced ears, but she had a large collection of beautiful clip-on earrings, most of them gifts from Dad. I kept a few earrings from each mother for sentimental reasons, but I won't be wearing them because my ears are lobeless and all my orifices are original equipment.