

*This nonfiction work is dedicated to all middle class women who are seeking affordable cosmetic surgery. It serves as a guide for not only what good work should look like, but how to find the best work at the best price. New techniques are included.*

## **A Nurse's Guide to Plastic Surgery: Loving Yourself While Loving Your Wallet.**

By Donna S. Cohen RN

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# A NURSE'S GUIDE TO PLASTIC SURGERY



*Loving Yourself  
While Loving Your Wallet*

DONNA S. COHEN RN

A Nurse's Guide to Plastic Surgery—Loving Yourself While  
Loving Your Wallet.

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I am a Registered Nurse. I am not a medical doctor or a surgeon. You may follow 100 percent of the advice and tips that I have given to you. Or, you may follow Zero. However, this book was never meant as a substitute for seeing a Board-Certified Plastic or Cosmetic Surgeon. Always get your medical advice from a board-certified MD or, in the United States, a DO.

Rather than a traditional preface, I give you my Pre-Face.  
Here is what I looked like before my 2013 facelift.



Turn the Page to see my results...of my facelift

Preface Page 2.

I give you.... the after facelift!



This is the end result of a full facelift and neck lift by Dr. Kevin Cross of Philadelphia. He was recently named the most sought-after beauty guru by Town and Country Magazine. More importantly to me, he performed 1,000 facelifts before age 40. Yes, all of these accolades happened approximately 5 years after I met him; I have a talent for picking talent. How did this talent evolve? As a retired psychiatric nurse, I am a bonafide People Reader. I read plastic surgeons for breakfast.

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## **Chapter One**

### **The Goldilocks Method**

#### **How to Find Your Perfect Plastic or Cosmetic Surgeon**

Do you find yourself looking in the mirror and wondering who is looking back at you? One minute you are 25, hoping for that promotion you so richly deserve. Then, you blink and you are over 50, hoping not to be replaced by that fresh-faced child of 25, the one with the Ivy League diploma and gold-plated internships. That youngster is priced way below the salary that you fought for tooth and nail. That youngster is coming for your job.

Meanwhile, you still have a mortgage, a child in college and parents to care for. They may have several letters after their names, but you have experience. Another thing you have that they do not is higher medical expenses. Some evil genie raised your blood pressure or gave you diabetes. Another one placed bags under your eyes and a roll of fat on what used to be your flat abdomen. Now, take a look at that impeccably dressed youngster clutching her resume and checking the shine on her Jimmy Choo high heels. She has worked hard to get ahead too. Unlike you, besides landing The Job, her most cogent thought is what hot dress and heels she will wear while club hopping this weekend.

Meanwhile, your weekend plans are raking leaves or cleaning the attic out. You do belong to a gym and may even have an aging elliptical in your basement gathering dust. The

youngster? She had her 10-mile run before dressing for the interview. You are running too-just to catch up on your work and home chores.

Old and tired is as out of style as running boards and spats. So, what can you do to outpace that youngster with the million-dollar smile and relevant resume? Take some of your accumulated vacation time and freshen your look with a few nips and tucks. Every time you turn on your computer, you are assaulted with advertisements on nutritional and anti-aging products.

Why not go all the way? What you need is a highly competent and honest plastic or cosmetic surgeon to give you a new lease on life. Think of it as a career stimulation tool.

So, how do you find your personal Dr. Right? By now, you have seen many tabloid accounts of celebrities with plastic surgery gone bad. Shows such as “Botched” include regular folks with bad surgeries. For some unfathomable reason, it seems that movie stars end up with the absolute worst surgeons, even though they have reams of cold hard cash. Personally, I have had wonderful work done; not one procedure I had come close to being in the neighborhood of botched. Over the years, I have rarely heard of a procedure that I did not like. So, I have had: two facelifts; one tummy tuck; one forehead lift; one breast lift and at least three liposuction sessions.

Not a soul on earth would consider me beautiful, with the possible exception of my husband, and then only when he is in a good mood. I seem to have a knack for choosing good surgeons. Why have I had great surgeons while others with multiple zeros in their bank accounts have had terrible

surgeries? It could be the 15 years I spent as a psychiatric nurse. We used to think of ourselves as “People Readers.” Working in the dangerous environment of an inner-city hospital, about a hair’s length from what realist term “the ghetto,” we had to get a quick read on every new patient. Quite simply, many of our patients were hardened criminals. Our goal was to get home in one piece after a fast-moving shift. Time after time, our initial danger assessment was spot-on.

That experience is the secret to my personal talent for finding talent.

## **How do you find perfection at an affordable price?**

I call my method the GOLDBLOCKS METHOD. Not too expensive, not too cheap. My surgical candidates have to be just right—in terms of experience and education. If a doctor is too newly hatched and graduated from Harvard, I pass. I am looking for the one with more procedures under their belts. They may have graduated from Drexel Medicine, the University of Pittsburgh, or any school that has a rigorous program. It is harder to get into veterinary school relative to medical school, but once the student is in, slacking is not an option due to the competition for residencies.

If you recall, Goldilocks wanted exactly the right degree of firmness in the mattress she chose. The bed had to be not too soft and not too hard. The porridge she ate had to be not too hot and not too cold.

The real trick, if there is one, for all would-be plastic surgeons is to snag a good residency in a decent teaching hospital. The bigger the hospital is, the more complicated cases

become. The resident is likely to encounter almost unsolvable medical problems. In a large teaching hospital, they may have to reconstruct the breast of a paranoid schizophrenic cancer patient. That takes some critical thinking skills.

When I hired Dr. Kevin Cross, who did my 2013 facelift, he told me that he was not the most or least expensive. At that time, one could pay upwards of \$35,000 for this dynamic duo (facelift and neck lift). Bingo! He was the third doc I interviewed, but rose to first place when I applied my Goldilocks method. Also, either my experience as a psychiatric nurse or female intuition told me that he was my best choice.

Dr. Cross priced his work at \$23,000. As I recall, he was devoted to working with the average woman who most likely does not have a six zero checking account. Passion is not just for the bedroom; it is also for the operating room. He offered flexibility in his pricing and *worked with me and my resources*, whereas my other candidates, though supremely qualified, set a price cast in concrete, reinforced with titanium. It never hurts to negotiate for a better price with any doctor. The best surgeons provide patients with financial wiggle room. If all of the ladies in the waiting room are wearing diamonds the size of your outstanding mortgage, that is a signal for little wiggle room in pricing.

Let's pretend for a moment that you have decided on a facelift. An entire industry for hiring household help was born to find contractors for you. Now a cottage industry that assists patients in finding affordable plastic surgery overseas has proliferated. Perhaps we need an agency to lead us to the best in the USA.

## **To find your perfect candidate, we do have some guidelines.**

The first thing I do is assess the staff. Are they friendly? Courteous? Efficient? The latter is important. Think about it. If doctors cannot manage their business, how will they manage lifting your face? Or, sculpting your abs or giving you gorgeous breasts? The obvious answer here is not to trust an office with an unorganized, unfriendly staff—even for the simplest Botox injection.

I love people-watching—and what better place than a plastic surgeon's office? We have already discussed how pricing is gauged by others in the waiting room. Pricing aside, please take a very long but polite look at your fellow patients. You should focus on quality also. Many are coming for post-surgical checks. Some are regular customers. Being a friendly sort by nature, I tend to start conversations with complete strangers. Actually, we are all in this together, so why not?

Final point: When you are seriously considering a facelift, tummy tuck or any other major appearance altering surgery, get at least three consults.

## **Why you need three consults or more**

Yes, you will pay for each one, but do this cheerfully; it is your face and body. More importantly, it's your life. You will be unconscious for most surgeries, so you will not be able to fact check or keep an eye out for mischief. Unless you are a surgeon or surgical nurse, you would not have a clue, anyway.

Actually, my first facelift, in 2009, was done under conscious sedation. With this method, the surgeon feeds you happy drugs like Valium via an IV. I remember talking to him during the procedure. I even complimented him on his sewing technique.

I would not do it again this way. Why? I remember the anesthesiologist asking me if I was OK. “No,” I replied, “I’m bored.” Waking up like Sleeping Beauty to lots of bandages and a much-appreciated cup of coffee is better, trust me. I mention conscious sedation because some people are afraid of general anesthesia. Also, if you are deemed to be a good candidate for a procedure that does not require general anesthesia, a substantial amount will be taken off of your bill and left in your wallet for lifesaving pursuits like shopping.

Also, study the doctor’s before-and-after pictures of his patients with the same zeal you would use to ace a final exam in college. Similar to a fashion model’s book, this will let you see how your prospective surgeon performed with past patients.

That book in the office or website, of course, does not show anything but surgeries that have the best outcomes. Google the doctor’s name and see what you come up with. You also may want to check with your state’s board of medicine just in case anyone filed a complaint.

I’ll admit that I never went this far with my queries, but I do trust my ability, and my sixth sense in choosing a doctor. For example, I knew Dr. Cross was Dr. Right long before he became the Town & Country Beauty guru.

Another key element in your quest for Dr. Right is to ask your friends and neighbors. While living in a Philadelphia suburb, I'd talk to friends on topics ranging from who did breasts very well and who was better at faces or tummy tucks. These discussions often happened in the ladies' locker room of my gym. At times they occurred in my favorite shopping venues. My saleswoman always knew who had liposuction and who had a wonderful facelift or a tragically awful one.

Our neighborhood in suburban Philadelphia was an informative place. I referred to it as The Elkins Park, Pa Jewish Network. You also have a network, so dial it up in your preliminary search. Girl talk, which I refer to as Woman-Speak, is a fount of collective knowledge.

Another fertile ground for your search is your beauty shop. When someone gets a facelift, they usually have tell-tale scars right behind the ears. The person shampooing you sees these scars, so this is not the time to be bashful.

**My recommendation: Ask whoever does your hair if they have seen good work walking into the shop—or, conversely, bad work. They will not name their customers, but you will find they have loads of information on the surgeons.**

Good work should never look like work at all. You may look “well-rested.” Perhaps it is like figure skating. Those beautiful kids on the ice perform pirouettes with gravity-defying leaps. No one watching knows that the skater worked since age 7 and rose before dawn to practice. Prima ballerinas also make the impossible look possible. Some Hollywood actors also make their trade look simple. When I watch a classic movie

starring Spencer Tracy, I can't see any wheels turning in his brain. Many actors possess the talent and even more importantly, the drive. Talent coupled with hard work is the formula for success for plumbers, carpenters and plastic surgeons.

Your surgeon likely worked diligently to get into the best medical school and snare the most prestigious residency. Nothing worth something is achieved without hard work. Yes, you can have an IQ on Einstein's level, but if you don't submit your homework on time, or cut classes, you will not be getting a college degree—yet alone an entrée into a snazzy residency or medical school.

Even if the doctor graduates at the top of the class in med school, this does not ensure they will get the residency they desire. The struggle does not stop with the residency either; many surgeons choose to augment their residency with a fellowship.

A fellow is an MD or DO (Doctor of Osteopathy,) who completed the residency in his or her desired specialty. Because they already have a medical license, they can legally prescribe medications, and, along with the attending doctor, can carry out the nuts and bolts of patient care.

Always ask if the attending or the fellow will be holding the knife. I insist on the attending. The fellow, in any of my surgeries, may only assist. This is your money, so again, do not be shy! After all, it was the attending, not the fellow, who was your main reason for choosing the practice. For example, I will gladly speak to the fellow if, after surgery, I am in inordinate pain, or my nurse's eye finds something questionable about



either the incision or anything else that looks amiss. You may be an attorney, a secretary or any other profession, so if you do have questions post-surgery, feel free to call and ask. This is yet another reason why your Dr. Right needs a well-trained and efficient staff.

I will add an important fact: Post-op care is baked into the cost of surgery. Asking questions is simply getting your money's worth.

When you interview candidates for your surgery, ask what type of surgery they like to do best. I have often debated this question with myself: If you are good at something, is that because you like it? Or, do you like it because you're good at it?

You should ask this question toward the end of the interview. By then, your candidate has given you his opinion on what you can achieve if you choose him. They will not have mentioned price. In fact, 10 times out of 10, you will be directed to an office manager, who will give you a breakdown. This apparent separation between the opinion and the price is merely good business. It gives the prospective patient the illusion that the Talent is so talented that as an "artiste" they are not concerned with the bottom line.

Trust me, not a dime coming into that practice comes unnoticed by the surgeon who is actually going to be doing the work. The accountant and office manager work with the doctor, as well as the nursing staff. In medicine, there is no decoupling of the bottom line.

Nonetheless, my first facelift was a bit too subtle. At the time, I did not want to appear "overdone." Later, I found out

that my surgeon was really a boob guy. (Yes, his website is full of wonderful breast jobs.)

Not one doctor nowadays can exist without a website. Peruse that first. Websites have supplanted the traditional book that used to be placed in the doctor's office. If I had studied the website of the surgeon who performed my first facelift, I would have presented a different body part to him. Nothing horrible came of that surgery; it was just not quite enough.

## **Cosmetic vs. plastic surgeon**

Do you know the difference between a plastic and a cosmetic surgeon? You can get great results from either, depending on what you are looking for.

For example, if you are bothered by under-eye bags, you may be better off with a cosmetic surgeon, specifically one that is certified in ophthalmology. I am using this as my first example purposively. The absolute worst thing any surgeon can do is change the expression of your eyes. If that happens: You are not you, but someone else.

Plenty of Hollywood stars had work that went south in the eye department. Witness the late great Jack Lemmon. Plenty of stars in the TV, film and music arenas who live lavishly and have plenty of zeroes in their bank account have chosen either dishonest or below par plastic surgeons. That is incomprehensible. It is interesting that many women without wealth get better surgical outcomes than titans of the stage and screen. Although botched surgeries occur in all walks of life, I strive to do essentially the same work for you as I did as a working nurse: Provide education and encouragement.

Believe it or not, although all of the nurses and mental health techs worked harder than the devil, when the last charts were being written and signed, we sometimes had time to discuss non-patient topics, like shopping and boyfriends—and even plastic surgery.

If you want to take off 10 years' worth of bags above or below your eyes, choose the surgeon who knows the human eye down to the cellular level. That would be an oculoplastic surgeon who has gone the extra mile to become a cosmetic surgeon. Many plastic surgeons will be kind to the expression of your eyes. My personal preference is to work with an oculoplastic surgeon for my eyes. In this tightly specialized era, the oculoplastic surgeon has honed their skills on the human eye. Consider it similar to getting post-graduate work after you have earned your Ph.D.

Cosmetic surgeons work in different specialties, such as ophthalmology or otolaryngology. Most of us find it easier to pronounce that specialty as ENT: Ear, Nose and Throat. Some of these doctors take the leap to become cosmetic surgeons. If you have a deviated septum, which calls for someone who really knows the nose, you may want to look for an ENT. They can merely straighten the inside of the nose promoting better breathing, or they can install a totally new nose.

Many a high school junior came back to school in the fall with a brand-new nose courtesy of an ENT. Of course, the damsel in question had her deviated septum repaired just in time for the senior prom. And college.

A plastic surgeon is concerned with function as well as form. This is the surgeon who bestows a perfectly shaped breast to a breast cancer survivor. A plastic surgeon has had more exposure to trauma patients and burn victims. Therefore, this specialty may have a broader level of experience and education. Some plastic surgeons confine their work to that master of humanity, the hand. I refer to it as such because the human hand is one of the elements that differentiate us from other species, including other primates. Some major cities have practices devoted entirely to plastic surgery of the hand.

A plastic surgeon is who you will see for a facelift. Although I had supreme confidence in my oculoplastic surgeon, she was not licensed to do a facelift. At the time, she still handled serious eye problems, but recently I was told that she now focuses solely on Botox and facial fillers. Dr. Mary Stefanyszyn, whom I referenced earlier, practices in Philadelphia. She is an ophthalmologist and oculoplastic surgeon who did fillers and Botox for me. When I decided that I wanted a brow lift, instead of more Botox sessions to control what she called, “That scowl,” she performed my surgery at Wills Eye in Philadelphia. A couple of years later, when I got my first facelift with Dr. Adrian Lo, he remarked, speaking of her sutures, “She is a perfectionist.” Perfectionism is one of the traits of a good surgeon. Another great trait is found in surgeons who really listen to their patients and then gives them advice. At times, you may not like the advice; the surgeon may say “No,” to you, as in, “You are not a candidate for that.” Those who tell you “No” are on the right side of the Moral Blanket. They do not see you as the next Mercedes payment. They see you as a real person. They see you as their patient and hold dearly the axiom, Do no harm.

Surgeons, if they are good at their craft, may give you an alternative plan. When Dr. Stefanyszyn did my brow lift, she advised me to just continue my Botox sessions. But when I repeated that what I wanted was a full measure instead of a half measure, she was totally onboard. I come from that long-ago mindset that the Customer is Always Right. However, I have respect for any surgeon who explains why what I want is not going to be my best option. That conversation, and the surgery itself, is a collaboration between you and your surgeon.

Always know that some collaborators in the world's sandbox of surgery are better than others. In other words, keep an open mind—and get three different opinions so you may gauge how well your candidate will collaborate with you.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Is your face crying out to be lifted?**

Most of us know that a baby cannot be spoiled by picking it up; neither can your face, within limits.

Here are some of those limits: First and foremost, always choose a board-certified doctor. Accreditation bodies are essential in offering your Dr. Right the perks of continuing education and that all-important function of networking. I am repeating this litany throughout this book—it's of the upmost importance.

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons is the mother lode of the accreditation bodies, but there are plenty from where that came from. The American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery and the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery are a few of the private clubs that those in the surgical beauty business are happy to belong to.

And why not? After the grueling shifts as residents, and a bazillion dollars in student loan debt, who would be unhappy belonging to one of these country clubs? They are happy places to network—and learn new techniques.

After you have whittled your search down to three lucky board members, there are other things to consider when deciding on a facelift or other procedure. Perhaps you are told that you only need a mini-facelift.

A mini-facelift usually does not coincide with a neck lift. It is designed for men or women who may have some sagging in the lower half of their faces. For example, jowls may start to punctuate what used to be a firm chin line.

### Money saving Alert



Celebrating your 40<sup>th</sup> or 45<sup>th</sup> birthday? Perhaps you'll want to sample plastic surgery with a mini-lift to your face.

The incisions for this preliminary facelift are usually done above the ear. According to the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery, the mini-lift may also be done under local anesthesia. This is Novocain plus some extra ingredients to instill calm. It is comparable to what used to be called "twilight sleep." Recently the surgeons switched from happy valium to sterile Versed. Valium has a stunning impact on your mood: It delivers instant happiness. I would rather be happy any day with a valium cocktail. But this is the choice of your Dr. Right. Or is it? Next time I will let my wishes known. Unfortunately, valium causes instant gratification and that is the reason that psychiatrists do not prescribe the oral version. A surgical



cocktail, given infrequently, will not be addicting. Versed is now used in many surgeries. While it does the job when administered for short procedures, it does not have an impact on mood.

In a mini-lift, shorter incisions are made, and most recipients will be able to return to normal activities sooner.

**My recommendation: Without the need for general anesthesia, a mini-lift is substantially cheaper than a full facelift. Realsell.com reports the average cost of a mini-lift is \$7125. The range reported was \$2,750-12,500. Women chatting on realsell.com report a 91 percent “worth it” from users.**

However, please understand that a problem with a mini-lift is that it does not last as long as a full facelift. (Three years versus 10 years.) Time does fly fast when you are having fun, working, and raising children, spending money on children and disciplining children.

So, are you better off just waiting a bit longer and indulging yourself in the whole enchilada of a full facelift? According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, a mini-facelift can be performed with conscious sedation instead of general anesthesia. If you have a great deal of sagging, then my advice would be to go with the full facelift. Although I personally do not care for half measures, I took the halfway path at least five times, during my 40's and early 50's. I did have excellent practitioners when we lived in Philadelphia. Dr. Mary Stefanyszyn, a cosmetic surgeon and ophthalmologist was my go-to doctor for all of my fillers and Botox . Once, she ironed my face with Thermage. At one point, she told me that she

really could not do much more for me and that a face and neck lift would serve my needs. She is an honest individual. If you live near Philadelphia, you may find her at Wills Eye or Jefferson Medical Center.

A full facelift with a neck lift can be a stunning combination. One part of the human anatomy that ages very fast is the neck. There are just so many turtle neck sweaters, or fashionable scarves a woman can own at one time. One Puerto Rican doctor I interviewed recently gets an anesthesiologist to administer the conscious sedation. In fact, they all do; they need to concentrate on their part of the job. I consulted recently with Dr. Eric Adler in Puerto Rico. He refuses to do a facelift without a neck lift. Good for him!

All facelifts now are executed by lifting not just the skin, but the muscles underlying the skin. In 2013, that is how my full face and neck lift was accomplished. I personally did not mind hanging around the apartment for a week. Come to think of it, after four days of watching TV I journeyed to Sephora, and bought some concealer. The best brand after surgery is still Dermablend. Most likely, you will be getting the dynamic duo: facelift plus neck lift.

In any case, the treatment plan must be individualized for you and only you.

There are so many variations of the human face that a surgeon must also be an artist. At John Hopkins Medical Center; a board-certified doctor specializes in ethnic facelifts. Many of my friends I worked with were African-American. Asians also have their special needs, particularly when the eyes are the focus of the surgical change.

But whatever your ethnicity, or blend thereof, a surgeon should sit with you and assess what you would be happiest with.

One question that must be asked by your presumptive surgeon is: What is it that bothers you about your appearance?

Someone out there must have absolutely nothing that bothers them; but I just haven't met that person. If you ever watched the classic film "Mean Girls," you see the reigning queens of the high school look in the mirror and find a multitude of imperfections.

Even superstar models want to change something about their looks. And if they're not 100 percent happy, what does Mrs. John Q America think about her looks?

Here is a hint: cosmetic and plastic surgeons, excluding every wonder cream sold, equal \$17 billion dollars annually. That, my friends, is lots of grocery dollars.

In the U.S., we are mostly ethnic blends. Each face is unique. Perhaps you want a few tweaks before you get to the red meat of a facelift with a neck lift. I had a forehead lift first, and also dabbled in noninvasive procedures, such as Thermage. Thermage is a forerunner to the now ubiquitous radio-frequency devices. These devices use heat to remodel the collagen that comprises every youthful and aging face. The Conquistadors had it wrong: Collagen is the fountain of youth.

New machines develop with lightning speed, only to be supplanted a few years later by the next must-have device. But, at the end of the day, or by the end of your fifth or sixth decade,

nothing will serve you better than a scalpel and the magician who is wielding it.

If you do go for a full facelift with a neck lift, you will be put under general anesthesia. To say it again, this is really the better way to go, unless you possess a grinding fear of anesthesia.

What always surprised me is the number of women who, after the pain of childbirth, are afraid of a needle or anesthesia. This is after squeezing something the size of a large watermelon out of something with the diameter of a garden hose.



Attention Ladies! Needles are not as painful as childbirth! Stop whining!

If your mini-facelift can be done with conscious sedation, you will be able to find a good surgeon and anesthesiologist to give you IV sedation with Versed. This drug, in my opinion, is less happy than good old-fashioned Valium. But, if you want a better experience, go for general anesthesia. I bet that while in the transition phase of labor, you would have sold your first born for one teeny hit of general anesthesia. Hell, I would have given the husband up.

The real “tell” of aging is the neck. And the jowls. Jowls make a woman look like a puppy of a certain breed. I am thinking of the Chinese dog, a Shar Pei. Come to think of it, lots of men have that look.

**My recommendation: Never schedule a full facelift without a neck lift.**

In my never-ending quest to learn Spanish, I often watch Colombian TV series on Netflix. One of my favorite actors, Juan Pablo Gamboa, age 53, who looks as gringo as I do, appears as if he got a facelift without the neck lift.

Terrible! He just does not match! It is like wearing one brown shoe and one black shoe. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this is a surgical and fashion faux pas. My husband and I could tell instantly.

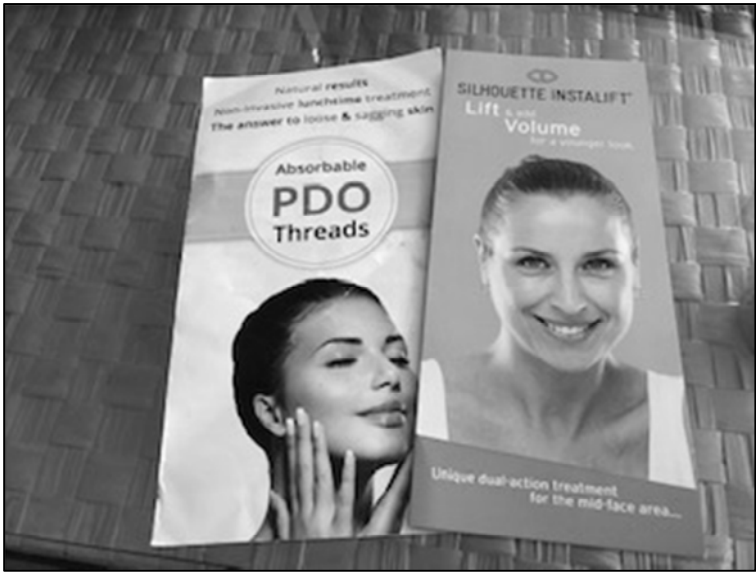
Every once in a while, the two of us see celebrities with really fine work. For example, Marlo Thomas looks to have had exceptional work. Many celebrities had absolutely awful work. I would do anything short of murder to find Marlo’s wizard. Her husband, talk show inventor Phil Donahue must have gone to the same surgeon. They continue to be a glamorous couple.

Marlo, if you are reading this: [AuthordonnascohenRN@gmail.com](mailto:AuthordonnascohenRN@gmail.com). Please send me the name of your Magician.

**What can you do if a face and neck lift is not possible for you at the moment?**

Perhaps you are scalpel-phobic or, you are only in your 40s and just want a little something to lift your face. Perhaps you have had Botox and fillers and want just a bit more. Perhaps the Coronavirus stole your job. Or, you have a number of boring bills to pay; mortgages, tuition, groceries—all those annoying yet necessary items and more. A vast section of our population falls into this category.

Another scenario—and one that applies to many—is the possibility of freshening your previously perfect facelift and neck lift. I would fall into this category.



Have you taken a peek at one of these brochures?

You may have seen one of these brochures in the office where you get your Botox. I am betting that you have read them while waiting for your doctor. All endorse new ways to get a younger look.

### **So, how do these relatively new methods differ?**

PDO threads originated with cardiac surgery (PDO stands for Polydioxanone.) The brochure states that it is “one of the safest materials to be implanted in the body.” According to the resident blogger of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, a PDO lift will last four to six months. Actually, because it stimulates collagen production, results can last more than a year.

Collagen is Your Skin's Natural Superstar. It bestows elasticity, and thus, a more youthful appearance. It is your personal fountain of youth. Do not look for it in a face cream. The collagen molecule is much too large to penetrate the deeper layers of the skin.

There are two methods that your board-certified doctor can employ. The first is inserting the needle under the skin while creating a shape similar to a hashtag. This will inspire the skin, just like a skin peel, to create more collagen. The thread is reabsorbed naturally in about four to six months. Or, a more immediate effect can be attained by using a barbed thread, which can be pulled horizontally and vertically by your physician. PDO threads are a less-invasive method of lifting the lower face, including the neck.

Ingrid Lugo, my erstwhile eyebrow designer, told me that she thinks that a newer method, the Silhouette Instalift, is better than PDO threads. When Ingrid tells me something is “better,” she means more effective. This thread lift is done with local anesthesia, and concentrates the lift in the mid-face region. Although the implanted device is small, it purports to add volume through the same collagen factory that PDO threads uses.

The Silhouette Instalift lasts for at least 18 months, sometimes up to three years. It is a 45-minute procedure with very little down time, for those of us with minimal time. I have met many women; not one of them has enough time.

Caution: My local med spa stopped doing the thread lifts because the patients complained that they felt a “foreign body” in their faces, so they wanted them taken out.



That latter situation may ensue from the thickness of your skin; I have been blessed with good skin, but it happens to be thin. I will not be getting this treatment.

Repeatedly getting thread lifts, in spite of the low down-time, may add up to real money. At some point, especially if you are 50 or older, it may be best to schedule a full facelift or mini face lift. A nurse friend of mine, after swearing me to secrecy, used her accumulated three-week vacation for a mini facelift.

**My recommendation: The less invasive a procedure is, the less time the result will last. Over time, those costs add up. You may be better off in the long run with an invasive procedure. I heard from an impeccable source that you will not be taking your money to the grave. So, just do it.**

Although inflammation gets a bad rap, controlled inflammation procedures—chemical facial peels, inserting threads, and others use the same controlled inflammation concept. Ditto for the new girl on the block, micro needling, a treatment that uses a rolling needle device. That is followed by a special fluid: your own concentrated blood plasma. This is most likely is offered at a surgeon's office or med-spa near you.

So, what is the age defying component of your blood plasma? If you have recently searched for information on age-proofing your face and body, you may have heard of PRP, (Platelet Rich Plasma.)

I gave PRP a test run at an exceptional center close to home, Numed. First, the doctor rolled a device over my face that had tiny needles. This was not at all painful. Then, she applied part

of my own blood, after it was centrifuged to separate the platelets from the rest of the serum. The centrifuge yields a tiny section of plasma-rich platelets. Imagine the size of the average vial of blood taken from you for a routine blood test.

That is all the blood this entails. After centrifuging, only a narrow strip of yellow-tinged white can be seen in the middle of the test tube.

Plasma Rich Platelets, (PRP) is touted by some to be a forerunner of stem cells. It is my view that other serums could be just as well be applied after getting microneedling.

It is also used for hair growth, which I desperately need, but science, which is flying at warp speed, may discover something better for hair loss. The makers of Latisse, Allergan, were working on a product that helps hair to grow. That would be a product I would buy with my last dollar. Or my last nickel.

In my case, I found that the high cost of the microneedling treatment only gave my face a giggle instead of a belly laugh. The center that I went to is exceptional, but upon later investigation, I found that it is better for extremely damaged skin. My skin, thanks to aggressive use of sunscreens and hats, is peerless.

So, if your skin is not too sun damaged, or, if your skin is pitted by long ago acne, microneedling will become your best friend.

## **What if your skin is not a train wreck?**

We found a home derma roller kit at Amazon for \$12.95. That is far cheaper than the \$355 that I paid. In any event, I am skeptical about PRP in general. After using the Amazon model, I slather on an inexpensive Neutrogena product called Hydro Boost that employs hyaluronic acid. This is one of the body's natural chemicals that act like a sponge, pulling moisture in and plumping the surface of the skin. It may also be layered with two other anti-aging superstars, Vitamin C and retinol. As a matter of fact, many fillers that either your dermatologist or surgeon uses are made from hyaluronic acid.

### **Money Saving Alert**

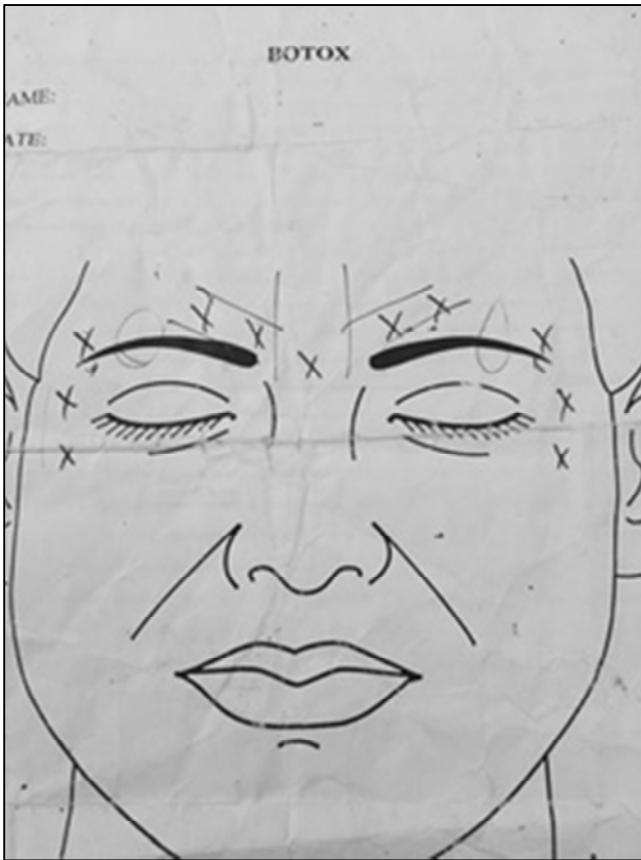


According to **[healthline.com](http://healthline.com)**, dermatologists list the Neutrogena product, Hydro Boost as the third best product containing hyaluronic acid. I include it because it is most likely within your budget. These products draw moisture into the skin, plumping it up so that fine lines disappear. Healthline is a blog focusing on women that is connected to medical doctors as well as nurses and other healthcare professionals.

I would love to get my greedy little hands on some medical-grade hyaluronic acid. Or, a magic wand to deliver collagen right where I want it: on my face and neck. I would even buy a large vial of Botox if I could. Years ago, I took a class and it is much less complicated than brain surgery. My favorite injector in Philadelphia, Dr. Mary Stefanyszyn, told me that she practiced on herself to become proficient in her practice.

The only caveat with Botox is that once it is injected, no doctor, even a brain surgeon as expert as Dr. Ben Carson, can get it out. Therefore, you want a practitioner who puts a bit in, sees how it percolates, then has you back to add some more. Any doctor will keep a record of how many units of Botox you have had. That way, if you remain with that doctor, he or she will know how much to put in. Dr. Stefanyszyn used to sprinkle it like fairy dust over a wide area. That was the best way to get the loudest bang for my buck.

**My recommendation: Ask your practitioner how many units of Botox they intend to start with. You are looking for 25 units and not a fraction more. Trust me, they will always book another session for you. Besides, Botox takes at least 72 hours to fully reveal its magic. Why gamble with your face or your checkbook? Put all your chips on 25 and you will hit the jackpot.**



This is my personal Botox map, provided  
by Dr. Mary Stefanyszyn

Although there are great doctors in Puerto Rico, most of them only place Botox in the bullseye between the eyes. This may be a Mars/Venus issue. So, I shall look for a female injector next time. Women evolved as gatherers; therefore we are more inclined to look at any object, and identify various

points. Men, on the other hand were focused on hitting the bull's eye. (Eons ago, the wooly mammoth's eye or heart.)

Perhaps I will get lucky in either Blackjack or publishing and get another facelift! That is what I would prefer. We all have wish-lists, and one more facelift is on mine. What is on your wish-list?

## **Chapter Three**

### **For Your Eyes Only**



Photo from Unsplash Harry Quan

If you have thought about getting your eyes done, my first task is to talk you out of getting your favorite plastic surgeon to do it.

Why? No one knows more about the eye than ophthalmologists. They know it right down to the cellular level.

Here is something else: If the expression of your eyes is changed, even a little bit—you are no longer you. Although many plastic surgeons can work within the confines of your expression, I believe that an oculoplastic surgeon understands it better.

Remember the late Jack Lemmon. I looked at his after-facelift pictures, and to be perfectly honest, he looked Chinese. Lemmon perhaps typified the average white male, something that added to his wide appeal. He embodied Everyman in a way that has not been duplicated.

Recently I watched a movie that made my head spin. The female star's eyes looked as if she had them done in Filene's Basement. In case you have never been to Boston, Massachusetts, Filene's was a wonderful department store that had a basement with incredible deals. Sometimes, women would get in to fist fights over the merchandise. Who doesn't like a bargain? You do not want a particular type of bargain though; plastic surgery basement specials, especially those that include your eyes. Her eyes were, by far, one of the worst examples of cosmetic surgery that I have seen in quite some time.

So, what are the qualifications of cosmetic surgeons who are also ophthalmologists? The doctor must get additional surgical training, so, they are not plastic surgeons, but are cosmetic surgeons. The leap from, let us say ophthalmology to cosmetic surgeon requires two years' work under an accredited cosmetic or plastic surgeon.

I had both eyes done several years ago, and it looks as if I am ready for Round 2. I would choose an ophthalmologist who is a cosmetic surgeon.

My first choice would be the woman who I used before, Dr. Mary Stefanyszyn at Wills Eye, Philadelphia. Truly, she is the only one who I would trust with my eyes.



I could not help but wonder—yes, again—why Hollywood royalty gets such terrible plastic surgeries. Are they not in the Nexus of Power and living in an expensive place where everyone knows everyone? Incomprehensible!

I know that you are curious as to what Hollywood star I was referencing. Actually, there are quite a few of them who should have hired me to find their Dr. Right. Recently, I dialed up the film *Bird Box* on Netflix. I was shocked at Sandra Bullock's eyes. They looked as if a random teenager had cut school and played with surgical instruments. Actually, I was shocked at her whole face, which she semi-explained was due to allergies. I am guessing that the act of explaining her face puffiness either means that others noticed or that gazing in the mirror she was unhappy. To me, it looked as if someone used a heavy hand with the facial fillers.

**I want to state unequivocally that I do not know—and will never know—if she had any type of surgery. My remarks are solely my opinion. You may have a different view.**

This is what I do know, and I will direct this comment to all stars of the stage, screen and recording labels—Americans are not stupid. Celebrities, many of whom never graduated from High School, seem to think that their audience, you know, we peasants who buy tickets to their movies or buy their CDs are stupid. We the Peasants support their lavish lifestyles. So, I believe we deserve honesty.

So, I am going to let you watch the movie *Bird Box* on Netflix or wherever you rent your movies. You can let me know

what you think by emailing me at [authordonnascohenRN@gmail.com](mailto:authordonnascohenRN@gmail.com) The only recent photos of Bullock that I could find includes sunglasses and very dark eye make-up. Perhaps by now, she had someone talented to fix whatever it was. One can only hope.

Most of the shots in Bird Box, after the apocalyptic vision has been revealed, show Sandra and the other innocent victims with eye coverings. That was the perfect special effect for her at the time.

Perhaps she has gotten that train wreck of an eye redesign (or accident) fixed in 2020. I certainly hope so. This sad business could derail her career. She is a very talented actress so it would be a pity to knock her off of the screen. Come to think of it, they always seem to throw the lady actresses to the wolves when scarcely out of puberty. I believe we need more women to work in film. Women who are not Twiggy, have wrinkles, and can act should all get work and get it now.

On the other hand, there's Dolly Parton. I applaud her honesty. She once said "It costs a lot of money to look this cheap!" She also said, "If I see something baggin' or dragin' I'm going to have it nipped, tucked or sucked." Yes, I would love to sit down and woman-speak with her! Access Maharishi Google about her quotes and you will see a real woman who is accessible to her fans. She is as smart as a whip and a successful business woman as well.

Her Dollywood park is a winner, and she quipped, "If I ever open another park, it will be in Silicon Valley." There is

humility, clearly emanating from this star that loves and respects honesty. Dolly is 74 years young,

Another quote I loved from Miss Dolly concerned her ample bust line, “Of course they look good—I paid enough for them!” Many movie stars proclaim themselves as feminists. I believe that the true feminist is honest and willing to help all of us non-movie stars to look and feel better.

As far as I know, this is a woman who does absolutely everything with expertise. I feel a kinship with her, though I can’t sing a note. I am always honest about every cosmetic surgery that I have had. So, when someone tells me that I look younger than my age, I just say, “I have had great work” If I was not genetically designed to wear a D Cup, I would most likely get implants, and may say, as Dolly did when discussing her breasts. “They should look good. I paid enough for them”

In my extremely wild youth, which ended sometime in my 40s, I met Mama Cass and Mick Jagger at the same party. Why can’t we have actresses who look like Mama Cass? She could sing, and I bet if she put her mind to it, she would have been able to act, too. Jamie Lee Curtis is another celebrity I admire. She was brave enough to put out realistic pictures of her over-40 self. She did this to a service to all of us who may have a layer of cellulite on our thighs and buttocks. I give her an A+ for honesty.

Without a modicum of honesty, where would we be?

To be honest, in my next life, I would like to be a Black Motown singer. I have already asked the man upstairs. I would also like to be born with thick hair. Perhaps I was bad in a former life, because all my life I have been Hair Challenged. As I write these words, I am listening to Motown on Spotify.



Not Twiggy. I will never introduce her to my man!  
This model has fabulous eyes and perhaps a body to match.

Personally, I would never get any work done in NYC or California. They are more expensive than almost anywhere. Better to go to Philadelphia, New Orleans or Boise, Idaho. If you live in California, stay there, but find a doctor who is not in

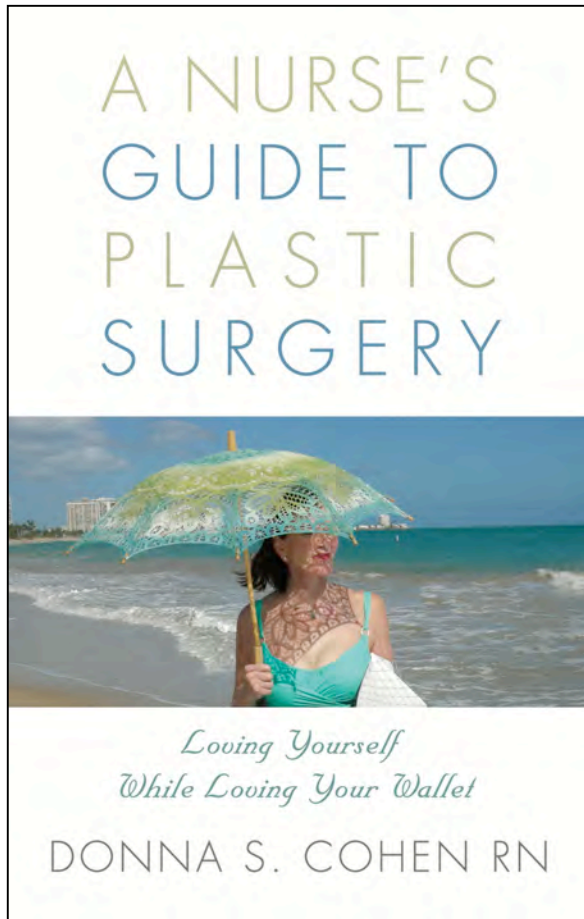
Los Angeles; try a smaller town with good surgeons. Your husband and your bank account will thank you for it,

Oh, there is also a famous actress who is not looking her best, therefore not working. She once called her main squeeze Dennis Quaid. Just peruse Dr. Google's site and be prepared for some shock but no awe.

It is beyond unfair that Hollywood enthusiastically places older men in juicy rolls but discards actresses such as Meg Ryan once they no longer look like a man's teenage fantasy. I believe she was once called, "America's Sweetheart."

Hmmm, Dennis Quaid, I would like to peruse him. But I am old enough to be his older sister. Life is beautiful as a big sister—you can boss the younger one as desired. I wonder what I could direct him to do. Well, someday after I am gone, my grandson may read this book. So, I will endeavor to keep my writing PG. Every woman, even married ones have sexual fantasy men. Like a fine wine, I do not plan on looking older. I plan on looking better. A woman with style always knows how to pull it off. A wealthy woman can keep herself waist high in boy toys. That is a fact that you can take to the bank!

For my eyes only, and perhaps yours, I stand by my cautionary advice at the beginning of this chapter: if you need a more youthful look for your eyes—find an oculoplastic surgeon.



*This nonfiction work is dedicated to all middle class women who are seeking affordable cosmetic surgery. It serves as a guide for not only what good work should look like, but how to find the best work at the best price. New techniques are included.*

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