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Pressure to Be Perfect

After Stint in Rehab, Demi Lovato Tells Teens There is Help

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What Happened:

Demi Lovato was the envy of many young girls in 2010. She was starring in her own sitcom “Sonny with a Chance” on the Disney Channel and touring with the Jonas Brothers. Her life seemed too good to be true. Turns out, it was.

On Nov. 1, 2010, Demi left the tour and checked into a treatment center to deal with “emotional and physical issues she has dealt with for some time.” It was a shocking move: Disney placed Sonny on hiatus, and then in early January began filming new episodes without her. “This allows her the time she needs to get well, without distraction or pressure,” a Disney spokesperson said.

On Jan. 28, 2011, Demi was released from the clinic, but she’d kept mum on what put her there until this spring when she released a quick video and more recently spoke to *Seventeen* magazine.

“I basically had a nervous breakdown,” she told *Seventeen* in an interview published in its May issue. “I was really bad off. My parents and my manager pulled me aside and said, ‘You need to get some help.’ It was an intervention. I wanted freedom from the inner demons. I wanted to start my life over.” She admitted to the magazine she had an eating disorder, which she’ll deal with “for the rest of my life.” She also admitted to cutting herself.

In support of the Jed Foundation, an organization that deals with teen stress and suicide, Demi recently recorded a public service announcement for its Love Is Louder than the Pressure to be Perfect Campaign.

“There’s a ton of pressure out there to meet impossible standards,” she says in the PSA. “To look right, be smart, be thin, talented and popular. And many of us feel like we have to be everything to everyone. But it doesn’t have to be that way.” Girls who feel that pressure need to find an outlet to express themselves, she says: painting, singing, dancing, running, you name it.

“If you are going through that dark period, go to your family and closest friends,” she told *Seventeen*. “Don’t put yourself in danger. It’s very crucial that you get your feelings out—but don’t ever inflict harm on your own body because your body is so sacred. I wish I could tell every young girl with an eating disorder or who has harmed herself in any

way that she's worthy of life and that her life has meaning. You can overcome and get through anything."

Talk About It

According to a poll by *Seventeen* magazine, about 73 percent of teen girls and young women feel a "pressure to be perfect." Have you ever felt that you had to be, as Demi says, "everything to everyone"? Do people tell you that you have to be this way? Or does that pressure come more from inside yourself?

Do you think guys feel the same pressure that girls do? If not, do they deal with different sorts of pressure? What might they be?

Demi says she paints when she's feeling overwhelmed with pressure. What do you do to relieve stress? Exercise? Sing? Hang out with friends?

Many girls deal with that pressure in pretty harmful ways. Many can develop eating disorders or struggle with depression. According to that *Seventeen* poll, 15 percent of teens have cut themselves or hurt themselves on purpose. Do you know anyone who's dealing with stuff like that? Do you know where he or she could go for help? If not, talk with your youth leaders. They'll help you find some direction.

It's obviously great that Demi Lovato got some good help for her issues, even as she acknowledges that she's not out of the woods yet. Do you think it was scary for her to talk about this stuff publicly? Do you think she might help others by coming forward?

What the Bible Says:

"The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes" (Luke 12:22).

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6).