

EMPOWERING

through COSMETIC SURGERY

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH BITAR COSMETIC SURGERY INSTITUTE FOUNDER DR. GEORGE BITAR

When it comes to feeling empowered, there are many ways to get there. Self-help articles across the web remind us to take care of ourselves, practice gratitude, do the things we love, raise up others, take action, ward off the negative with a positive mindset, and so on. For many of us, all this works. For others, more is needed to find self-love. Therapy is sought after for emotional growth. While personal trainers, medspas, and cosmetic surgery help others on the physical side of things. Maybe you have had cosmetic surgery and felt its empowering results, or perhaps you haven't, and the thought terrifies you. Whatever your personal views are, cosmetic surgery helps many people find a new level of confidence when approached with respect and knowledge. And for Dr. George Bitar, founder of Bitar Cosmetic Surgery Institute, this is his mission.

Love Happens' had the pleasure of asking Dr. Bitar some questions to delve into the concept of empowering through plastic surgery both here in metro Washington, DC, where he is located, and around the world. Read on to meet Dr. Bitar, learn more about the world of cosmetic surgery.





LOVE HAPPENS:

What initially drew you to the field of plastic surgery?

Dr. George Bitar: What drew me to the field of plastic surgery is the love of medicine and the love of art. I grew up in a family with many doctors, including my father, who was a pediatrician, and then my uncle, an artist.

I grew up in the war in Lebanon, where I would go with my father to the emergency room and see people injured from the war and wish that I could help them. At the same time, I developed my artistic skills in watercolor and oil paintings. So, when I grew up, I knew that I wanted to use my artistic talents and my love of medicine to help people and positively change their lives.

Lh: Tell us about your path and what led to your decision to start The Bitar Cosmetic Surgery Institute.

GB: My career path has been anything but a conventional one. I immigrated from Lebanon to the United States as a teenager and finished my formal undergraduate and medical

school training in the USA. I completed a general surgery residency, a plastic surgery residency, and an advanced aesthetic surgery fellowship in the United States. I then completed an international Aesthetic Surgery Fellowship where I operated on all six continents with some of the most prominent plastic surgeons in the world. My international operative experience also included medical missions as part of a team that operated on children with facial deformities and people who had suffered burns and debilitating trauma.

Even though I enjoyed performing the range of general surgery and reconstructive surgery procedures; however, my passion has always been aesthetic surgery. I have been blessed to have performed over 20,000 surgical procedures in my career and have lectured at international conferences in various countries. The Bitar Cosmetic Surgery Institute in the Washington DC metropolitan area, established in 2002, has been blessed with wonderful patients from 114 different countries.

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Lh: Having studied and practiced in many different countries worldwide, have you seen the ideal of beauty change based on location?

GB: Every community, culture, and country has different standards of beauty. This is a very simple yet complicated question. It is simple because everybody knows what they consider to be beautiful. It is complicated because it's very difficult for us to explain or quantify what we consider to be beautiful. This conundrum is at the heart of understanding the complex aesthetic surgery patient and being able to give them what they want.

When people come to a cosmetic surgeon and ask for a procedure that makes them look “natural,” that is not what they are really seeking! “Natural” really means wrinkles, a bump on the nose, or asymmetrical breasts. That is what natural in its unadulterated meaning really is!!! They are not looking to be natural, but rather natural is really a code word for “beautiful”....that's what they really want!

The ability to tailor procedures to make someone look beautiful yet not artificial, eccentric, or very different is the true sign of a successful aesthetic procedure. My ideal of beauty is as diverse and ever-changing as my diverse patients' ages, sex, ethnicity, nationality, and, of course, taste.

Lh: What is your philosophy on cosmetic surgery?

GB: I am very much a student of how different cultures and communities affect a person's perception of beauty. Small feet were once considered a sign of beauty in China, and so were Rubenesque bodies in Europe in the nineteenth century. Noses have filled many books due to the ethnic differences and their effect on a culture's facial aesthetics.

I love performing aesthetic surgery, but it is not for everyone! In fact, I spend more time talking people out of aesthetic surgery if they are not a reasonable candidate than talking them into it. As a result, I estimate that I have rejected about 20% of people who had wanted me to operate on them for one reason or another. My attitude towards cosmetic surgery is very pragmatic; cosmetic surgery is a tool to allow a person to improve a part of their face, expression, or body that causes them unhappiness, anxiety, or insecurity.

Lh: Love Happens is all about empowering women and making women feel confident in their own skin. How do you think cosmetic surgery and other non-invasive procedures contribute to that? Conversely, is there a danger in also going too far or doing too much?

GB: Cosmetic surgery should always follow the Goldilocks principle...not too little (unless a patient is not a candidate for cosmetic surgery in the first place) and not too big. Few things give a woman more empowerment in her own skin than a cosmetic surgery that hits the mark, especially after having kids and losing the pre-children body. Whether a mommy makeover, a Model Lift, or a rhinoplasty, cosmetic surgery is truly an amazing tool of empowerment. I see it in my institute every day—the tears of joy and the one-woman dance!!

Lh: What new procedures or techniques are you most excited about right now? Who could benefit from them?

GB: I am very excited about the fact that our Model Lift has become the mainstay non-surgical facial rejuvenation treatment for our patient base. The Model Lift incorporates multiple modalities of non-surgical facial rejuvenation, including



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neuromodulators, fillers, thread lifts, and Kybella to melt the neck fat. They are combined in an artistic way to enhance a person’s facial features, mainly the harmonious relationship between their nose, cheeks, lips, chin, and jawline. This harmony between facial features is what defines a million-dollar model.

Technology has advanced so that I am able to really improve someone’s facial features in a way that only photoshop could a few years ago. We are also excited about Qwo, which is a non-surgical and non-laser way of improving cellulite and is the first and only FDA-approved injectable for the treatment of moderate to severe cellulite in the buttocks of adult women.

In addition, new technology has made ethnic rhinoplasties much more natural and suitable for a patient’s face more than ever before. I am excited to be doing a high volume of ethnic rhinoplasties for patients from all ethnic backgrounds who want a natural nose that fits their face.

Lh: Women have become increasingly interested in aging gracefully, and there has been a lot of emphasis on being proactive about the skin’s appearance and health. What are the best things women could do to ward off signs of aging from a young age?

GB: Having beautiful skin is now more important and highly sought after than ever. At Bitar Cosmetic Surgery Institute, we go to great lengths with our new Model Skin complete skincare line to present our patients with alternatives to treat different types of skin types and solve many of the problems such as aging hyperpigmentation, sensitive skin, acne, and post-laser care. In addition, our skincare line allows patients to be active outside and exposed to the elements while protecting and maintaining youthful skin.

Because we are a plastic surgery center, our skincare ranges from treating people who do not want to undergo any surgical procedures to people who have had surgical procedures and want to camouflage them.

We also offer the gamut of skincare treatments such as Plasma Pen, which is the latest in improving fine lines and wrinkles and skin blemishes. Other skincare treatments that we offer are Hydrafacial, laser resurfacing, and micro-needling with radiofrequency treatment to the underlying skin.

We recently wrote a chapter from our institute about the many uses of platelet-rich plasma (PRP), which we combine with our skincare, laser, and hair transplant patients to improve the result and invigorate the skin with a person’s own naturally existing growth factors.

Lh: We believe that if a woman feels comfortable in her appearance, she will be more confident and able to focus her attention on other areas of her life, such as her family or career. What would you say to women who are either too nervous about cosmetic surgery or maybe have a stigma against plastic surgery and other non-invasive procedures?

GB: A friend of mine who is a plastic surgery consultant once told me that plastic surgeons take care of the problems that bother people so that they can get on with their lives. As a cosmetic surgeon who does 100% cosmetic surgery, I truly believe that what a woman should know about cosmetic surgery is that it is there if you need it, but you absolutely don’t have to have it.

Think of cosmetic surgery as a tool that allows you to improve your self-esteem, improve certain aspects of your looks that you are not happy with, and help you achieve a nicer figure if you were not genetically given the figure that you wanted.

I feel that cosmetic surgery needs to be looked upon in a general sense of empowering women, just like exercise does, and just like becoming financially independent does. It is not the “end all be all,” but another avenue if applied appropriately. Cosmetic surgery can enhance your life in a meaningful way, from the smallest of skincare procedures to facelifts, breast augmentations, and tummy tucks.

Lh: Society has undoubtedly embraced the use of plastic surgery and non-invasive procedures. However, there remains a trace of stigma against the practice. What do you think has contributed to the general stigma or distrust in plastic surgery? How are experienced and ethical plastic



surgeons working to change that perception?

GB: That is an excellent question. As a member of the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons and the American Society of Plastic Surgery and the director of an advanced aesthetic fellowship program, I embrace the use of plastic surgery to better people’s lives in a very ethical and appropriate manner.

Everything in life taken to the extremes is harmful, and plastic surgery is not an exception. Unfortunately, those people who misuse plastic surgery and abuse people’s trust make the news headlines. Rest assured, millions of people in America have had cosmetic surgery and are very happy with themselves but keep it to themselves. Those happy patients do not make the news, but it does not mean that they have not benefited from well-done procedures performed by ethical plastic surgeons.

The societies that I belong to have as one of our main goals, educating plastic surgeons to perform safe, effective, and life-changing plastic surgery while educating patients about appropriate procedures to undertake and dangerous plastic surgeries to avoid.

The best advice I can give to your readers who are seeking plastic surgery is to seek a board-certified plastic surgeon and do as much homework on picking a plastic surgeon as you would do on selecting a new car. Three areas that you should never go cheap on are your parachute, your scuba gear, and your plastic surgery!

Lh: Lastly, what is your ultimate goal as a plastic surgeon? When do you feel most satisfied, and how do you want your patients to feel after a procedure?

GB: My ultimate goal as a plastic surgeon is to live a very meaningful life combining the skills that I have to give my patients and my staff a worthwhile existence and be able to spend time with my family in a balanced way.

Our institute has three main goals: Creating beautiful results for our patients, educating other doctors and members of the community about plastic surgery, and contributing to the community, whether socially or charitably.

I think the more we are true to our mission statement, the more I believe my goals have been met as both a plastic surgeon and a human being. Hopefully, my staff and my patients feel the same way.