

# The Washington Post

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2008

FROM "MY BEAUTIFUL MOMMY" When a mother tells her daughter that she is going to have cosmetic surgery, the little girl asks, "Mommy, is your nose going to light up?"



## Taking a Kid's-Eye View Of Cosmetic Surgery

*Plastic Surgeon Turns Author to Explain 'Mommy Makeovers'*

By SANDRA G. BOODMAN  
Washington Post Staff Writer

The hardcover book by board-certified plastic surgeon **Michael A. Salzhauer**, published by Big Tent Books and available for purchase online, seeks to answer the insistent questions posed by some young children: Why is Mommy's nose smaller? Where did her tummy go? And what's with all those bandages?

"I don't know whether to laugh or cry," said Diana Zuckerman, president of the non-profit National Research Center for Women and Families, after reading "My Beautiful Mommy."

"This is disturbing on so many levels,"

she added. "For one thing, it perpetuates a completely unrealistic ideal" of female beauty: the large-breasted, wasp-waisted, midriff-baring Barbie-doll look. Zuckerman, who says she is not opposed to all plastic surgery, notes that the book's portrayal of postoperative recovery seems remarkably short: The mother is up and around soon after her tummy tuck, which in real life can require a much longer recuperation.

"And I'm sure there's a good reason the mother had to wear skin-tight pants and a crop top," Zuckerman added, "but I don't know what it is."

Salzhauer does. "Mothers, at least those in South Florida, do look and dress like that," said the 36-year-old physician who

hosts a Sunday morning radio call-in show called "Nip Talk Radio."

"Being a doctor, I can't deal with the political or philosophical arguments" surrounding cosmetic surgery, Salzhauer said. "I have to deal with reality." The book, he said, gives parents "a vehicle to explain the plastic surgery process to their kids" who may be too young to understand why a parent is choosing to undergo an appearance-altering operation.

The bulk of his practice, Salzhauer said, consists of women between 20 and 40 undergoing what he calls "mommy makeovers": breast implants, breast lifts and tummy tucks.

Salzhauer said his interest in children's

reactions to cosmetic surgery was sparked by questions his daughter, who was then 4, asked when he underwent a nose job several years ago. As the father of four young children, Salzhauer said, "I read a lot of children's books" and realized there was no book for 4- to 7-year-olds that could explain why a parent who wasn't sick was having an operation.

Many of his patients, he added, bring their children to plastic surgery consultations and even postoperative appointments.

Zuckerman questioned why the mother in the book has just a small bandage on her perky new nose, not the black eyes that typically follow rhinoplasty, and why she's up and around a few days after her tummy tuck,

not lying in bed in a haze of pain waiting for her next Percocet.

Then there's the appearance of plastic surgeon "Dr. Michael," who looks like Superman. "It wasn't my idea," said Salzhauer, who said it was the illustrator's concept. "Of course, that's how I see myself when I look in the mirror."

Ten percent of the proceeds from the book, he said, will be earmarked for children's plastic surgery charities. A Spanish-language version is also available; Salzhauer hopes it will appeal to patients in Latin America, where cosmetic medicine is also popular.

Comments: [boodmans@washpost.com](mailto:boodmans@washpost.com).