



K's interview with Dr. Stevie Meriel Schmiedel,

Founder of Pinkstinks Germany e.V.

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K: What was your main reason for launching Pinkstinks Germany?

Stevie Schmiedel: When the seventh season of „Germany’s Next Top Model“ started, a study circulated in the media that showed it made many girls unhappy: They compared themselves to the models and thought of themselves as ugly. Yet, only 2% of us are as tall and skinny as models and, to top it off, the pictures are manipulated: In real life nobody looks like people in advertisements, not even the models themselves. Nonetheless, „Topmodel” may be promoted everywhere and even elementary school students watch it. More than half of the girls in Germany think of themselves as too fat, because they are told: Become a top model and you will be happy. Many girls really believe that they would be happier as top models, they would be popular and envied. They constantly compare themselves to the unattainable ideals of beauty they were fed already as toddlers: Princess Lillifee, Barbie and Top Model. That produces stress and makes many girls unhappy. Instead of slamming their fists on the table and fighting injustice, they speak in a high, sweet voice and try to please. This uncertainty is worth gold: toys and fashion producers earn millions with it. If you don’t like yourself, you buy lots of clothes and jewelry to embellish yourself. I got sick of that. As grown women, these girls often earn less than men and put up with being insulted and discriminated. They don’t even notice. That’s why Pinkstinks wants to shake them awake.

K: "Girls can't throw", what do you say to that?

Stevie Schmiedel: There are more differences between girls than there are between girls and boys. Some girls can’t throw well, others throw better than boys. In our culture, we are used to belittling girls – they are not challenged to let out their anger and energy. If girls learn to climb, throw and run at an early age – like boys traditionally do – they can throw just as well as boys.

K: What would you say to someone who claims prejudice is a good thing?

Stevie Schmiedel: Prejudice creates fear. If I constantly hear that athletic girls won’t find a man, I start to believe it. And then I am scared of behaving “like a boy”. And

suddenly I only see athletic girls who don't have a boyfriend – my eyes are closed to the many female athletes that very much have partners. Prejudice is anything but good.

K: Have you ever been affected by prejudice?

Stevie Schmiedel: A short while ago someone ranted about me: „She just wants to be on TV“, because we were in the media a lot in the past years. That really hurts, because taking a stand publically is very strenuous and the television and radio interviews really wore me out. I came home late in the evening and there was very little family time. If someone else wanted to do the job for Pinkstinks, I wouldn't mind. It's very upsetting when people don't realize how hard one works. Prejudices arise when one doesn't chew things over or doesn't look closely enough.

K: Do you think you are prejudiced?

Stevie Schmiedel: Just yesterday I discovered a prejudice in me! I saw a man in a British waxed jacket and immediately categorized him as a conservative person with many prejudices. Only later did I realize that I also own a waxed jacket – inherited from my mother. I enjoy wearing it because it smells like her. I had blocked that out, closed my eyes.

K: How would you explain the meaning of prejudice and sexism.

Stevie Schmiedel: Prejudices are opinions about someone or something formed before one has really come into contact with them. Sexism is prejudice related to the sexes. „Girls can't throw“ is a prejudice and sexist. The person saying it didn't really look or is no longer able to see properly because prejudice has created too much fear. What if girls can also throw well? That would confuse the image we use for orientation (girls = not athletic, pink, sweet, fragil; boys = athletic, wild, blue, fast). Confusion creates fear.

K: Do you think it is right to separate boys and girls for PE without giving them the choice of switching to the other PE class?

Stevie Schmiedel: No, of course students should be able to choose, which PE class to take. One should group by interests, not by gender: One class is more challenging, in the other, the pace is a bit more relaxed. That would also make many boys happy, who are often under a lot of pressure to excel in sports.

K: How do you think we can make the world less sexist and less prejudiced?

Stevie Schmiedel: By expressing our fears. We should talk more about the images we have in our heads, where they come from and whom they benefit. And then we can slowly mix the images. This requires compassion. An old man said to me once: „But a

woman is a woman, and a man is a man! That's what I have always thought – and now you are mixing it all up. That scares me. What you are saying fascinates me, but please, say it slowly. Otherwise I might shut the door on you. You have to be very gentle with me.“

If we approach one another very carefully and look closely – then we see the strong girls, the weaker boys and notice that they are all likable. Pause the flood of images and form your own opinions. I wish you and your friends lots of fun and success with it!