



The title 'L.A. Confidential' is presented in a stylized, graphic manner. The letters 'L' and 'A' are large, blue, serif characters. The period between them is a solid blue circle. The word 'Confidential' is written in a smaller, blue, serif font below the 'L.A.', enclosed within large, blue, square brackets. Dotted orange lines extend upwards from the top of the 'L', the period, and the 'A', converging towards the top of the page.

L.A. Confidential

Growing up under the critical eye of Hollywood can be hard, but actor **Christina Applegate** has managed to thrive. The funny lady and mom taps into the lessons of her own life to help her daughter develop a healthy sense of self-esteem and confidence

BY LAUREN PAIGE KENNEDY

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MACPHERSON/CORBIS OUTLINE

R

RAISED IN LOS ANGELES

BY A SINGLE MOTHER, COMEDIC ACTOR
CHRISTINA APPLGATE, 41, REMEMBERS FEELING
THE SAME PRESSURES WE ALL FACE GROWING UP:
TRYING TO FIT IN WITH OTHER KIDS WHILE ALSO
FORGING A HEALTHY SENSE OF SELF.

Applegate, who returns this month to the big screen in the farce *Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues* with funny men Steve Carell, Will Ferrell, and Paul Rudd, says she was never the type to chase after the popular crowd or adopt fashion fads. Quite the opposite: “I was the kid at 13 whose head was shaved,” she says. “I wore thrift-shop clothes and Doc Martens, and worked that whole vagabond-hobo look.”

Which is not to say she didn’t sometimes battle doubt. “I’ve never met a girl who hasn’t struggled,” she says of the female penchant for picking apart personal imperfections. “Seems to be a universal part of our development.” Even with California-blond good looks, and with the success of her late-’80s hit sitcom, *Married...With Children*, under her belt—plus the rabid male fan base that came with it—Applegate had to work hard on her own self-esteem when she was younger.

“I remember being around 20 years old, and I still didn’t feel so comfortable in my skin,” she says. “A girlfriend of mine, who was a few years older, said: ‘Trust me. You’re going to—all of sudden!—be *in* your skin. You just will, and all of that [anxiety] will go away. And she was right. I did feel like: *I am who I am*. I don’t care what anyone thinks. That was a great moment when I realized it.”

These are refreshing words coming from a woman who’s been performing since she was a baby—the television and film star landed her first commercial at 5 months—in a town famous for shaking the confidence of many a head-turning beauty. And while Hollywood is notoriously hard on child stars, this is one actor who’s managed to segue seamlessly from youthful roles to top-tier status with her humor, sense of style, and self-esteem fully intact.

[SELF EXPRESSION]

These days, the mother of 3-year-old Sadie—with musician husband Martyn LeNoble, of *Porno for Pyros* fame—takes care to cultivate a strong streak of individualism in her daughter. It begins each morning with how her toddler dresses herself for the day.

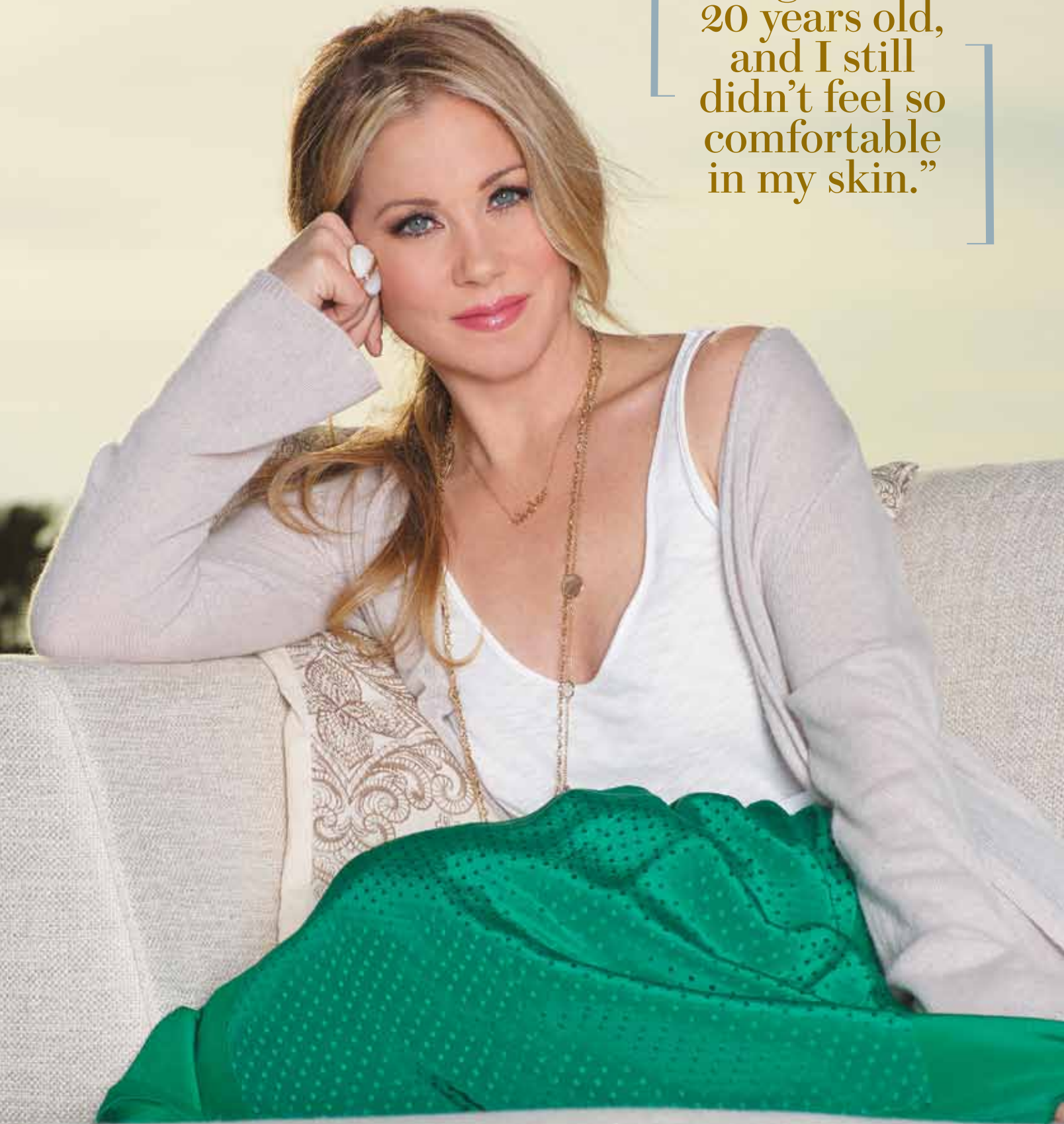
“Self-esteem is something you as a parent want to instill in your kids, to be an individual,” she says. “That’s what it was for me [when I was younger], when I finally felt like I was following *no one*. And Sadie is such an individual! I don’t make her wear anything. Sometimes her outfits are ridiculously awesome. Some are ridiculously ridiculous and beautiful. She’ll insist on wearing two differently colored shoes to school. She insists on the blue one *and* the green one. And I’ll say: ‘Great! Do it!’ I love watching her be independent.”

Many parents find it difficult not to interfere in their kids’ choices—or their closets. The same creative vein that led the teenaged Applegate to troll secondhand shops and don grunge attire enables her to stand back and let Sadie be Sadie.

“Some parents feel judged by other parents” about what their kids wear, she says. “But I don’t feel that way. If I tried to make my daughter put on something she doesn’t like, she wouldn’t feel good about herself. Sadie always has a purpose to her outfits. Today it was, ‘Mama, I need something to twirl.’ So she put on a frilly skirt with the craziest leggings ever.” Applegate laughs at the mental image. “And I encourage her to express herself.”

Applegate’s secure, relaxed attitude—not to mention her high-profile name—made her an ideal partner for FabKids.com, a new girl’s clothing line. Applegate recently teamed up

“I remember
being around
20 years old,
and I still
didn’t feel so
comfortable
in my skin.”



with the company as a creative partner, saying she likes FabKids' mission to encourage girls to shine in their own unique ways. On the website, kids and parents fill out a "style profile" that customizes outfits to reflect changing moods and months. The notion is to get away from a cookie-cutter approach.

While appearance is just one aspect of self-esteem, allowing a child to make individual choices without too much interference is the right move, says Elizabeth Berger, MD, New York City-based child psychiatrist and author of *Raising Kids With Character: Developing Trust and Personal Integrity in Children*.

"On one hand, the parent generally has a better grip on what is safe, what is appropriate, and what is beautiful and can always force a showdown," Berger says. "But the child also needs the parent's support of his or her own point of view. What is damaged by the overbearing approach is a child's self-esteem. The parent needs to produce magic here, by embracing the child's *difference* from the parent." In other words, step in if your kid wants to wear swimwear on a freezing winter's day. But go ahead and praise clashing colors if your child is proud that she paired them by herself.

What to do on the occasions when a parent must intervene? "It's best for a parent to simply say, 'No. We're not doing that,' in a simple, direct way and then move on," Berger advises.



THE PARENT TRAP

Two child psychologists weigh in on how to negotiate our brand-saturated, consumer-driven world.

A strong foundation comes first.

Elizabeth Berger, MD, New York City-based child psychiatrist and author of *Raising Kids With Character*, insists that youthful trends, no matter how alarming to an adult, aren't the biggest issue. "Parents need help in negotiating trust, communication, and genuine intimacy" between themselves and their children, she says. It's not the phone or the booty shorts, per se; it's "modeling the right behaviors, and then placing more faith in the child's judgment."

Parents need to "praise positive behaviors" and "not view their own job as solely being the police." Instead, foster openness and loving conversation—so a child can explain why owning an item of clothing or tech device is important to him or her.

Don't start at "no." Negotiate.

"The goal is to get to yes," says Diane E. Levin, PhD, professor of education at Wheelock College in Boston, and author of *So Sexy, So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood*. Which is not to say parents should roll right over. "Everything is a process. Talk to kids at their level of development," Levin

advises. "Ask a lot of questions, and find out what the child is thinking. Too often, parents get stuck in a thought process of 'danger, danger, danger' without considering how to build the right skills in children to help them negotiate the world. Parents should see themselves as resources, so children feel confident coming to them with their problems and questions. Explain honestly to them why you have misgivings. And then find the compromise that makes them feel as if they've been heard and understood."

Maybe it's not short-shorts, but a cute skirt instead, "one that she picks out," Levin says. Maybe it really is the latest smartphone—but one set with strict parental controls.

Remember, every child is different.

"Of course, temperament matters," says Berger. "Some children are more mature than others, and some are less responsible." Only you as a parent know what is exactly right for your child. But remember, "kids build their self-esteem through developing interests, becoming better at what they try to do, and discovering resistance and resilience," Levin says. When parents allow their children to test uncharted waters, they "work through new experiences together as a family and then model the right behaviors."

[SELF SERVICE]

Applegate, who had a widely reported encounter with breast cancer in 2008 that resulted in a bilateral mastectomy and reconstructive plastic surgery, understands the importance of feeling good, inside and out. (Applegate is involved with Right Action for Women, the foundation she created to provide assistance to women at increased risk for breast cancer who don't have insurance or financial resources to cover the cost of screenings.) For her, it starts with healthful eating and regular exercise—even if the latter is often tough to squeeze into her schedule.

After her cancer diagnosis, "I did a macrobiotic diet for four years," she says. "I'm not [strictly] doing that anymore. I always gave myself days off from it, but—because I know how it makes me feel—I try to follow those principles as closely as possible." (The macrobiotic diet consists primarily of healthy grains and vegetables, with beans and legumes lending necessary protein, along with small amounts of fish and nuts.)

"I've also been a vegetarian since I was 15," she adds. "I stay away from things that don't make my body feel good. That's not to say I don't like a good pizza, but I'll have a gluten-free pizza," Applegate says. "I have a taste for weird stuff. My taste buds are well-trained. And my whole family avoids preservatives and toxins. We eat organic, including Sadie."

Like many mothers, Applegate says finding the time for exercise is no easy task. "It's been a struggle for the last couple of years to get into a rhythm again," she says. "Before, when it was just me, I could go to spin class, or see my trainer, or take a two-hour dance class, or whatever. Since Sadie, it's been hard. I'm

still struggling to leave behind the last remnants of being pregnant. I try to do some kind of cardio: spin bike, elliptical, or treadmill. I go between those three things. And my trainer does weight training and core-strength work with me. After I [gave birth] my back gave me a lot of trouble, so I've been working hard to build core strength to make it strong again."

While some women pin up supermodel photos as their workout ideals, Applegate's motivation is a picture of herself from her twenties. She laughs out loud when she admits this. "I used to have a killer stomach," she says. "Why didn't I know it? I use that photo for motivation. I won't ever be 5' 11"," she adds ruefully. "But at least I know *this* is actually attainable!"

Which circles back to how girls and women feel about themselves, and how hard they scrutinize their supposed flaws. "It's that self-esteem thing again," Applegate muses. "Why don't *any* of us know it? Because I had it going on! I just didn't realize it."

[FUNNY BUSINESS]

With *Anchorman 2* opening nationwide in December, she says she feels better than ever about herself and her choices. She admits that before her NBC series *Up All Night* with Will Arnett and Maya Rudolph was canceled last spring, she felt out of whack.

"I left for work before Sadie woke up. I'd see her for lunch every day and go right back to the set. It was really hard," she says now. "When you work a 12- or 14-hour-per-day job, balance is hard to find." Film work, with its stop-start schedules and hours of downtime between takes, seems to suit her better. If the film set is also loaded with laughter, so much the better. "I've never met a funnier group," she says of the *Anchorman 2* cast, which includes comedy vets Kristen Wiig, Tina Fey, and Sacha Baron Cohen. "It was so hard to keep a straight face on the set. I managed to do it on the first *Anchorman*, but on this one I gave up. I would just *lose* it."



Christina's FEEL-GOOD TIPS

Don't beat yourself up after birth.

"I still have my old jeans from before I had Sadie three years ago," the actor says. "One day I'm gonna get back into 'em. Even if it won't be one day soon."

Look for opportunities to exercise.

For several years, Applegate tried to squeeze in her workouts during her daughter's naptime—and didn't always succeed. "Now I can drop her off at school and race home, maybe get in some cardio and core-strength work before I need to turn around and pick her back up."

Make nutrition a priority.

"I drink a green drink every morning," says Applegate, who began following a macrobiotic diet after her bout with breast cancer. Research shows that colorful vegetables such as kale, carrots, and beets in green drinks and blender smoothies, provide powerful antioxidants and may offer cancer-fighting properties. Green teas boast similar benefits, and may help fight weight gain, too.

Find the funny.

"I'm not the funniest person offscreen," Applegate admits. "But there's nothing better than making people laugh. That's a thrill," says the star, who has kept America in stitches for decades.