

Pageantry and healthcare; Miss International SA on grabbing your dreams

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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Miss International South Africa 2022, Ferini Dayal, has a grasp on how to pursue your dreams no matter how split they may seem.



Image supplied: Miss International SA Ferini Dayal

Dayal will be representing South Africa in Japan at the Miss International pageant in December.

She is also a surgeon at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, with the intent of pursuing plastic and reconstructive surgery. She is also the founder of the Dayal Foundation, a charitable institute that looks to make a difference through fundraising and medical advocacy.

We spoke with Dayal to find out more about how she ended up combining seemingly polarised worlds...

 ***Tell us how your journey ended up combining the medical and pageant worlds.***

My heart has always resided with medicine. For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to be a doctor. But my dad being in broadcasting and covering pageantry, from a young age I was fortunate enough to watch incredible South African women walk the stage and become international icons for making a difference.

I worked extremely hard in my medical career to qualify as one of the youngest in my class with two degrees, thereafter I knew that I wanted to pursue pageantry to show that women from completely different fields could successfully do both.

I won my first pageant at age 14, later on competing in Miss South Africa and now the current Miss International South Africa.



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▣ ***How do you manage your time between being a surgeon and pageantry?***

Time management has been a skill I've nurtured over the years to get to a point where I'm able to say I'm managing.

It's definitely tough, surgery on its own comes with many challenging factors - add in my philanthropy and pageantry, and it's an entire universe of juggling on its own.

Having a strong support structure is extremely important and I'm so grateful to have a family who assists me in all aspects of my career choices. It's imperative to plan ahead to understand what to prioritise and most importantly for me to know exactly the path you want to take. This will allow you to understand what to say yes and no to, to remain true to your causes and this way your true successes flourish.

▣ ***You are an advocate for women's health - could you tell us more about what challenges women face in South Africa and why you have tried to help with these challenges?***

There are so many challenges within the healthcare system as a whole. Specifically for women, access to health care and availability of resources remains a huge concern.

It's important to address these issues and so many people around the country are doing so. One that I've specifically focused on and opted to support is period poverty (sanitary pads), living in a society where pads are not considered as free healthcare is something that needs to be revolutionised.

Gender-based violence in our country is something that as a doctor we see on a daily basis, our numbers are portraying that we are the rape capital of the world, and not enough is being done about it. I dedicate my time to speaking to women in hospitals to empower them to speak up against it, to report it and to be aware of the help that's available in and out of the system.

Teen pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, mental illness, and breast cancer - these are just some of the issues I advocate for that affect our women, and each issue comes with its own difficulties.

I've chosen to stand for them because I know the difference I've been able to make being afforded the opportunities and would like each woman to have the same chance in doing so, and understanding that they can with the correct guidance and help make change is why we should all have a hand in creating a system that supports us all going forward.



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▣ ***In your opinion, what changes do we need in the medical system to make women's health more accessible?***

Accessibility to health stems from understanding that it's a vicious circle of lack of staff, lack of hospitals, lack of resources, and thus poverty-stricken societies unable to attain access to health.

Changes need to happen both from a department level in appropriately recognising the issue and funding change and additionally from educating our populations of understanding disease and knowing when to seek help.

To create this change, money needs to be placed correctly into staffing, revamping hospitals and ensuring that hospitals have sufficient stock for our doctors to adequately be trained and perform their duties.

Additionally, our people need to understand the basics of health issues in our country and when and how to seek appropriate help.

■ ***You are heading off to represent South Africa in Japan soon, how are you feeling about it?***

I'm ecstatic, it's a dream come true for me to represent our country and to show them who I am on that stage.

To get to do what I love at an international level is an absolute honour - and, hopefully, so will the crown.

■ ***What value do you see in pageantry?***

Pageantry has shown its success in the many women who have created change in the world from it.

Pageantry is a platform for women, strong empowered women, to stand for a cause and make a change. They're a voice for millions of women who need one and evidently so, have the ability to influence on a mass scale for change.

There's nothing more valuable than having the opportunity to change the life of another for the better and when done in the correct light - and that's exactly what pageantry does.

■ ***What advice do you have for people who have dreams that don't seem to 'mix'?***

No one defines perfection for your life but you. No one can tell you what works and what doesn't in success except the person walking that path, and that last decision is always yours.

Never allow anyone to define who and what your dreams are, know your purpose and undeniably follow it until you have become exactly who you are meant to be in this world.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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