

Perfect? Not Gigi Hadid—
and that's a good thing,
according to the campaign
on self improvement and
female empowerment
she's become the face of.

By Yi-Hwa Hanna



Middle

Behaviour



We know. One of the most highly sought-after models in the world (not to mention a tabloid darling thanks to her effortless cool factor and so-hot pairing with musician Zayn Malik), it's hard to look at Gigi (née Jelena Noura) Hadid and find, well, pretty much any kind of fault in her. She's pretty confident to boot—but she's not perfect, and she'll never claim to be. In fact, she's proud *not* to be a cookie-cutter definition of perfection—she's just a woman who knows herself pretty darn well, and is comfortable and happy with who she is. And this awesome attitude is precisely what makes her so successful.

As the face of Reebok's latest campaign, #PerfectNever, Gigi has become the frontwoman for a refreshingly honest global conversation on how to learn to love to be yourself, and purely yourself, flaws and all. In fact, the rallying cry here seems to be that our imperfections and even the mistakes that we sometimes make are a very necessary part of growth, and that they are what teach us to be stronger, more resilient, and can help fuel our drive to strive to constantly be better—but on our own terms. That's a thought that we can get behind. And so can countless other women around the world, it seems, since the campaign has really struck a chord with the public, not to mention other famous faces who have lent their own words of wisdom to it. Ronda Rousey put it powerfully: "Perfect never gets to silence its critics. Perfect never gets a shot at redemption," she says in her own Reebok video. Gigi's

attitude is no different. When it comes to her looks, she is refreshingly down-to-earth about her approach. "My mom always let me play with her makeup when I was a kid, because once I started to be able to wear makeup, I didn't really care. Less is more, I think, is major. It's always the kids who are scared to wear makeup who go to high school and then wear too much," she said while at a panel discussion at the Gigi Perfect Never event hosted by Reebok in New York City in December last year.

This healthy attitude in her upbringing, with a childhood that helped her build a solid and secure level of confidence from the ground up, has now translated to everything from

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her career to her workout regime and her life as a strong, independent woman. "[My mom] wanted me to be a volleyball player and ride horses, so that I found a confidence in myself that had nothing to do with what I looked like. And that I could carry into an industry was going to judge me for how I looked. I had to have other things that I knew about myself, that I was confident in myself [about]—that I'm a hard worker, that I'm a good person, that I'm a good friend. Those are all things you fall back on when the world judges you for things that technically, at the end of the day, are opinions." she says. Gigi says it's her background as an athlete that's another huge aspect to being able to maintain a healthy mental approach to her body, not to mention what's given her such a strong work ethic. It's also the key to keeping her motivated to work out on a regular basis: "I really had to start dealing with the

motivation thing when I moved to New York. In high school, when I was late for practice, my whole team ran. It was little things like that, [that] become important to you as a child athlete, and you start to use that as an adult. It's not the same, like, when I get to set, if I'm late, then the whole crew has to run!" she laughs, continuing: "It's different circumstances, but you learn the importance of certain things, like your time is just as important as everyone else's. They're things I don't have to think about, because they come naturally to me. So when I moved to New York, that's why it didn't work for me. I've never really put that much pressure on how I look. It's not like, 'I want to go to the gym

'trying' per se, according to Gigi. "I think it's really important to diet and changing your diet and workout regime as much as you can, because when you get static, especially body-wise, muscle memory at the end of the day turns into your body not changing, because you're doing the same thing. Mentally for me, boxing is a big thing, because it gives me the coach aspect and also the community thing, but also I just like getting better at it and getting stronger. But that's very different to, for example... my metabolism has fully changed. I have a thyroid problem that I've recently figured out medication stuff for. My body's always changing and I'm always trying to figure

because I want to get skinnier.' It was, 'I want to go to practice to make my coach happy and to be a better athlete and to get better at this.'" Nowadays, boxing is one of Gigi's favorite sports, in large part since it helps to give her that drive and motivation: "When I wake up, I'm like, I don't want to be here, but I know if I don't show up, [my coach] Rob is going to FaceTime me and be like, 'Where are you!' You have to find people that motivate you. And also I want to go to the gym because I want to be a better boxer. I want to work on something and feel like I'm improving. That's what motivates me. That's why I think being an athlete, and being proud of my athletic ability, rather than what it did physically for me, was very important, going into this industry," she says.

Understanding your body and how it works is another trick to achieving your best physical state, without even

out. [Last] year, I was eating healthy but very well-rounded carbs and veggies and meat, because that's what I wanted to work on. I'd eat big meals and I had a squats post-it note in my kitchen so I would remember to do squats, because I wanted to work on my butt! But also before the VS show, I did my ballet class that focuses a lot on specific parts, because if you do it two days before and you carb-load the night before, your muscles are going to pop a lot more. Those are things that have been tested for athletes before, and it works really well. You have to do it in smart ways—like for big football teams, they have full pasta meals before they play the next day, because that's good for your muscles. So it's learning the little things about yourself and what works in the timing. And maybe also don't do it for the first time when it's the important time. Test it before. It's so funny, some of the VS girls, I was at dinner with them



and they were eating spinach the night before [the show], and then after the show we had burgers. The next day we woke up and they were like, 'My muscles look so much better,' because they'd just had a burger! So that's how they learned that. So maybe next year they'll have a burger the night before because their muscles will be more prominent the next day. I grew up loving the VS Angels models, but I never Googled what Candice Swanepoel was eating [or things like that]. Maybe it's because I was an athlete, but I knew about myself in that way. So I think it's important to just know you more than trying to copy other people," she says.

Her approach to her personal style is just as organic. "Thank [goodness] that I get to wear sports clothes and that people think it's cool! It started with me as an athlete in high school. I wanted to wear a sports bra so that I didn't have to change after school. I wanted to wear

leggings so that I could go straight to practice. I'd throw a sweater over that, then when I moved to New York, someone [would send] me a designer jacket so I'd put that over my leggings, because I was in college and having to go to castings and working out all at the same time. So I'd wake up at 6 in the morning, go to work, and go straight to the gym, so I had to make a cute outfit for school, but underneath that is the outfit I'm going to work out in at the end of the day. That felt comfortable, and that felt 'me,' and more efficient. I'm just grateful that athleisure is accepted right now, or I wouldn't be on any style anything! I feel like I can be more myself when I'm comfortable. I hate being at a party and, like, pulling down a tight skirt all night. I'd so much rather put leggings and heels on and be comfortable," Gigi says. Aside from the love for athleisure, she's also thrilled to be working with Reebok because of the voice it's giving to women.

"People say 'We want to hear what you think,' but they don't actually care. Or really give you the opportunity sit down and just talk. It's always like, you get a two-second clip where [if] you don't say exactly the perfect thing, it's going to go viral. Give people the opportunity to talk like that, and it's really nice. It just comes naturally to Reebok and that's why it's nice to be a part of it. It feels empowering. Reebok was the first-ever company to create shoes for women to work out in. At one point, workout clothes were only made for men, and when women started to work out, they were wearing men's clothes. I hope girls can see now how you can be empowered by working out, and it's not just about how you look or what you're showing to the world, but it also has a huge impact on your mental stability and your ability to find self worth in other things. It's about what makes you proud at the end of the day, what you got better at, and all that," she says.

Gigi is all about constant self-improvement. It's how she drives herself towards success, even in her personal time. She paints, watches documentaries, and loves to cook: "I'm really into balanced diets. I'm cool with carbs, I'm cool with meat. I eat everything, but I'm really into good ingredients. So I always eat organic, and I shop really well, and I like cooking at home. I make a tomato soup all from scratch. It cooks for a long time, you can put orzo in it, and I do whole grain and cheddar grilled cheese dippers on the side. But I make it all from scratch. So you're having a great meal, but it's all really healthy. I love spaghetti bolognese, anything that has all of those different elements, but that I know it comes from a good place. I love becoming a better chef. Good ingredients are where you need to start, always," she says. If the good ingredients that make Gigi the woman that she is are anything to go by, we'd say she's right. ■