

# Past the comfort zone



*Dear young me: You are way stronger than you know, but maybe lose the 'shroom-cut?*

About five years ago, a new colleague walked into my office, positively bursting with charisma, and right from the outset I couldn't help but admire her zest for life. Little did I know at the time that she was a survivor of stage four breast cancer—a diagnosis that a very small percentage of people live through. She was about to face a lifetime of hard choices—even if she survived, she'd have to be on medication for years, and consider tough questions like whether she'd be able to have kids or not someday—but instead of breaking down, she gritted her teeth and decided she would do whatever it took to fight it. She took matters into her own hands, shaving off her hair before letting the chemo take it from her, continuing to go to the gym and have lunch with friends, and doing whatever she could to stay upbeat throughout the long, painful treatment. There's a happy ending: Now, seven years later, she's cancer-free, successful, and one of the healthiest people I know. I am proud to call her one of my closest friends, and she inspires me more than she'll

ever know. While many of us won't have to face a situation like that, that doesn't mean the things we struggle with in our own daily battles aren't important too—just ask the women who took up our 30-day challenges (p.100). Being strong isn't always about being unbreakable—to me, true fearlessness is discovering who you are and what sets your soul on fire, and having the courage to embrace it. And sometimes, it can even take admitting that you have certain weaknesses in order to make that first leap past them. We all have our own trigger points that test our mettle,

but no matter how big or small they might seem to others, facing our fears shapes us into stronger people. Various studies have shown that confronting what scares us is what ultimately helps us conquer it, and that it's practically essential to push ourselves out of our comfort zones if we're to see a change. As the saying goes, "If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you." I've had my fair share of difficult experiences in life thus far, and while I sometimes wish that I could go back in time and tell my younger self not to be afraid of the path ahead, I'd also try not to change a thing—because it's those very same hardships that have made me who I am today. Without them, I'd never have discovered that underneath that mushroom-cut hairdo and some rather unfortunate glasses, was a fighter. Some of us are born with a natural fortitude, and others have to build it, but either way, just remember: You are almost always stronger than you realise. Being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, October is always a pretty inspirational month when it comes to seeing courageous women around the world, and what better time is there to promise yourself that, from now on, even when you feel the fear, you'll do it anyway? Trust me, the results could be amazing. In fact, we'd love to see you guys try to challenge one of your fears this month—you can tag us on social media at @WomensHealthME.

We hope you enjoy the issue—see you in November!

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## TIME FOR A CHANGE

### IF YOU HAVE...

#### 10 SECONDS

Grab a piece of string in the same length as your height, then try this quick, easy (and inexpensive) trick to find out if your waist-to-height ratio is at a healthy level. "Discuss: Weight Loss," p.24

#### 5 MINUTES

Use an exfoliating cleanser then slather on a little more sunscreen than usual in the morning: Trust us, your pores will thank you. "Why Your Pores Look So Damn Huge," p.31

#### 10 MINUTES

Take stock of what you've eaten today and make sure you're getting in adequate calories: Not having enough could actually hinder your weight-loss efforts. "Big Fat Lies," p.76

#### 15 MINUTES

Perfect that peach with this quick yet effective workout a few times a week: All you need is a super-portable resistance band and a go-get-em attitude. "Sculpt A Better Butt," p.57

#### 30 MINUTES

Whip up one of these easy-to-make, delicious and fiery meals for dinner and reap the rewards of flavour packed with antioxidants and plenty of nutrients. "Hot Damn," p.69

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