

HOW TO BEAT A MIGRAINE
GAME-CHANGING RESEARCH

JENNIFER LOPEZ

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The Transformers

How much can you *really* change about your mind and body? Three writers find out. Photographed by Mario Sorrenti.

CAN YOU ADD CURVES?

BY MARCIA DESANCTIS

I was once an athlete—tennis player, basketball forward, and, God help me, a cheerleader, with a kick that could slice granite. And I've been quite content to coast on my former glory. I've long taken for granted some metabolic good luck and scaffolding that, dressed, makes me look fitter than I am. So I hardly noticed that with each passing year, my once-muscular frame was morphing into a chopstick. Until my son, a ridiculously fit quarter-miler, challenged me to a single push-up. It resulted in a face plant on the carpet.

I wish I could say that the desire to be stronger, healthier catapulted me into action. But it was sheer vanity—a photo of myself in a backless Issa—that startled me into submission. The pointy scapulae, the scrawny arms—the message from my clattering bones was *Give this girl some kettle bells!* So I decided to attempt a body transformation with the following specific goals: to sculpt my upper body and

FANTASY OR REALITY?

Sculpting muscle can alter your silhouette. Doutzen Kroes, in a Dolce & Gabbana bodysuit and Rochas mirrored platforms. Hair, Oribe for Oribe Hair Care; makeup, Rose-Marie Swift for RMS Beauty. Set design, Philipp Haemmerle. Details, see In This Issue. Fashion Editor: Phyllis Posnick.

thighs, and to restore some toned flesh to my bony behind, all to add (or replace) curves to my pencil-straight frame. How tough could it be? Celebrities change their bodies all the time. From Cameron Diaz's chiseled biceps to Scarlett Johansson's catsuit-ready thighs in *The Avengers*, these perfectly cut specimens make it look easy. Maybe *too* easy. For those of us without live-in personal chefs and trainers to monitor our every step and bite, I couldn't help wondering: Is such a transformation really possible?

Yes. And no. Many of our moving parts are predetermined. "If you have 36-inch hip bones," says trainer Joe Dowdell, owner of Manhattan's Peak Performance, who in the past has worked with Natalie Portman, Anne Hathaway, Eva Mendes, and Claire Danes (and lots of real people, too), "it's physiologically impossible for them ever to be 35, and the trainer who says he can do it is an idiot." Same with short necks, long torsos, and Grandma's thick ankles, where the calf muscle is attached low on the shinbone. But for a woman who says, "I want to add contour to my twig arms"? "That's a different story," he says. Women may be pear-shaped or apple-, stocky or beanpole, but the right exercise plan can alter the size and definition of muscles to change your overall appearance.

"Will Kate Winslet ever look like Kate Moss? No, because genetically they are different," says Loretta DiPietro,

Ph.D., professor and chair of the department of exercise science in the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. “But within your genetic confines, you can lose body fat and gain lean muscle in such a way that yes, you can change your silhouette.”

My resolve led me to Debi Fitzgerald, a trainer at the Mayflower Inn & Spa in Washington, Connecticut, conveniently located close to my house. Day One, she whipped out a tape measure and jotted down some numbers. Among the lowlights: One biceps was nine and a half inches around—slightly less than the circumference of a York Peppermint Pattie. My chest was a paltry 33½ inches, and my thighs measured 36½ untuned inches.

There was no escaping these statistics or the wimpy flesh behind them. And so we began. Our sessions started with functional moves like squats and lunges, which target big muscles like quads and glutes. Lunges, it turns out, are ideal weight-bearing exercises for sculpting smooth curves

dips, for example. “One, the muscle has to work differently for both exercises,” she says. “Two, you don’t get bored doing the same thing every day over and over. Three, you have less chance of injury because you’re not working the joints in the same way.”

My Mayflower regimen was in tandem with what Dowdell prescribes for people like me who want to add some contours to their frame. But other factors also come into play. “Seven to eight good hours of sleep and diet are the other two pieces of the puzzle, with diet being the key,” he adds. It’s true that when my son is in full training mode, I stuff the fridge with livestock for the meat he craves. Like Dowdell, Sims believes that extra protein is crucial to reshaping—both for the overweight and for skinny-fatties (people who look lean but actually have high body-fat percentages). “You need sound nutrition, especially protein, to lose body fat,” she says. “If before exercising you have about fifteen grams of protein from, say, just a cup of yogurt,

Have you ever met the TRX? It’s no wonder that the name of this suspension-training apparatus sounds vaguely like a dinosaur: I’d rather chew lightbulbs than suit up against this beast

and don’t actually turn your legs into giant redwoods. “When done properly, lunges activate hamstrings more than glutes,” says Stacy T. Sims, Ph.D., exercise physiologist and nutrition scientist at Stanford University’s Prevention Research Center. “Women may think they’re ‘bulking up’ when actually they’re building muscle before they lose their lower-body fat.” Technique is everything. Fitzgerald taught me to press on the heel of the forward leg to give my hamstring a satisfying tingle. And have you ever met the TRX? It’s no wonder that the name of this suspension-training apparatus sounds vaguely like a dinosaur: I’d rather chew lightbulbs than suit up against this beast. I learned the hard way about engaging the core while swinging haplessly from the straps.

My program was centered on resistance training—push-ups, lifting weights, and stretches with bands. “For body transformation, that’s going to give you the biggest bang for your buck,” says Dowdell. He recommends performing fewer repetitions with as heavy a weight as you can easily handle, rather than more repetitions using lighter weights. Aim for three sets of eight to twelve repetitions, with long rest periods at first—up to 75 seconds if you’re really out of shape (at first I took two minutes, usually on the floor in fetal position). This applies to push-ups and squats, too, where you should complete as many repetitions as you can execute perfectly. As you get stronger, Dowdell advises either increasing the weight or decreasing the rest periods to as little as fifteen seconds by the fourth week.

Traditional cardio (like jogging or the elliptical machine) wasn’t an emphasis of my routine, because that can burn muscle along with calories, but my heart rate was raised plenty from increasingly complex weight-bearing exercises. Fitzgerald and I would play catch with an eight-pound medicine ball while I was in a squat or I’d perform biceps curls with lunges to engage as many parts of the body as possible. Also, Fitzgerald focused on working the same muscle groups in various ways—triceps lifts and triceps

and within 30 minutes afterward have a cup or so of low-fat chocolate milk—which, because of its protein-to-carb ratio, is one of the best foods for muscle recovery—you’re going to get so much better and faster results.” (Some of the medical professionals I spoke with, however, maintain that serious dietary changes are really necessary only for the Lance Armstrongs among us; if you eat healthfully, you need simply add a few more calories.)

Whether you’re starting off slender or voluptuous, Dowdell recommends keeping it realistic with three strength sessions per week of no more than an hour—including warm-up and cool-down. Of course some women firm up by just looking at a kettle bell, and if you’re not one of them, it may take longer to attain your goal. Likewise, older women. Each year you age, it becomes that much more difficult to get results, so you will have to work a good deal harder than when you were 20. Because of hormonal changes that come with time, women should regularly lift heavier weights to boost testosterone (which is a fat-burning hormone) versus estrogen (which is a fat-storing hormone). Once you’ve reached your goals, 30 to 45 minutes of intense strength exercises three times a week for maintenance, ideally on nonconsecutive days, is plenty.

After three months, I had proof that you *can* change your body. Muscles were popping from my former bird arms. I stood taller (posture is a downstream benefit of a muscular back and shoulders), and looked and felt more confident in my bare workout tank tops. (“You’re almost another woman” was my husband’s comment.) I wear the same size dress, but turn me sideways and my silhouette is rounder and curvier. And I have the numbers to prove it: My biceps increased to eleven inches, and though no one will mistake me for J.Lo, my bottom is more muscular (and higher) by an inch. My thighs are an inch more defined, my upper back three quarters of an inch more sculpted, and my chest (hello, pecs!) is one and a half inches more contoured. And want to see a push-up? I can crank out eighteen. □