



Your Best Body Yet

'24 months to a new body!'

Let me ask you a question – how likely are you to purchase a magazine with the above tagline, as opposed to one that reads 'Lose 20 kg in four weeks'? I'll tell you right now – not very likely at all.

The truth is, sculpting an athletic body takes time and effort, depending on what condition you wish it to be in and what condition you were in when you started. It has to be earned, but this is also what makes it so rewarding. Your body becomes your very own Oscar statue; something that money cannot buy and that no one can ever take away from you. It becomes a source of great confidence and, unlike a trophy, it is very useful and will enable you to get ahead in life and create some well-deserved momentum. And even if you won't achieve your desired end result tomorrow, it will gradually build – every small success will make the journey easier and that smile on your face a little wider.

The program that follows has been designed with you in mind – a busy, multifaceted woman, whose body has undergone a major transition as a result of giving birth. It is real, it is honest, and it works. Be kind to yourself as you approach this wonderful turning point in your life, knowing that time and effort can take you anywhere you want to go – but you must allow enough of both if you ever hope to reach the end goal.

Be easy about it all and enjoy the ride!

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU





Flab to Fab in *Just 12 Weeks!*

Jodie's 12-week challenge

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

In the next section you can read what happened when I met acclaimed health and fitness trainer Kelli Johnson, and began a 12-week intensive program designed to change the way I approached nutrition and exercise forever. I will share every aspect of that journey, the highs and the inevitable challenges ... and ultimately the wonderful long-term changes that I have enjoyed ever since.

My goal in working with Kelli was to use myself as a human guinea pig – to test out Kelli's strategies and tools and see if they could *really* work for a normal mum like me. I wanted to help other mums avoid wasting precious time and money and instead hop on the fast-track to guaranteed success ...

It is important for you to know that Kelli trained me and gave so generously of her time and extensive knowledge during this period and she did so for free. I didn't

even discuss the details of writing a book with her initially. I just asked her if she would be willing to work with me towards creating something powerful for mums that could change their relationships with their bodies forever, and without any need for further convincing she said 'YES!'

The very next day, we were on our way ... Nobody was more surprised than me at the speed of all this. I now know that Kelli is not one for sitting around and talking about results – she just gets on with it and creates them.

I wanted to make sure I worked with someone who would invest the time and energy in this collaboration because they genuinely wanted to help other mums ... not because of the money. That was my litmus test if you like, and Kelli passed with flying colours.

She, like me, really just wants to help you. It's that simple! So join me now as I share the first tentative (and at times scary) steps towards my new reality.

My journey begins ...

Have you ever wanted to experience something but realised that what you wanted was so far removed from your reality that you didn't even know how to articulate it? That's how I felt at this point. I knew precisely what my body wasn't, and I had become very good at camouflaging parts of it that I wanted to hide and emphasising my better aspects.

In a former life I had been very involved in the design and marketing of plus-size women's fashion in the UK – conducting focus-group research with plus-size women and working alongside the design team to help translate the women's desire to look and feel beautiful into clothes that made them feel great. Although I had never been plus-size myself, I had learnt all the tricks of concealing and revealing in all the right places – to the point where I had begun to use that skill as a reason to avoid getting up a sweat at my local gym!

Good is the enemy of great.

JIM COLLINS

The saying 'Good is the enemy of great' (from the wonderful book by Jim Collins, titled *Good to Great*) certainly applies to matters of health and fitness. Although I was *okay* in terms of my physical size and my ability to run and jump about – I wasn't feeling *great*. As my life became busier (who would have thought that becoming an author would be so hectic?) I started abusing coffee to the point where I would reach for a caffeine fix to give me the energy I needed to keep going at the pace I wanted. I would wake up feeling sluggish, and at times feel as if a bulldozer had run over me. 'Nothing a coffee can't fix,' I would say, and I would continue to rely on my positive attitude and my faithful friend coffee to get me through another day.

I probably would have continued that way feeling pretty average about my body shape and energy levels and believing that walking around with a cloudy head and foggy thoughts was 'normal' if it hadn't been for a rather gorgeous little boy called Josh, who at just two years of age received an important health diagnosis following an extended period of being very poorly. My son's diagnosis of coeliac disease sent my world into a spin and resulted in my embarking on a search for 'optimal health', something I wasn't sure I had ever truly experienced.

If you have ever seen a person completely transform their health, and alongside that, their personality, you will understand how incredibly inspirational it is to those around them. Josh had reached such a low level of health prior to his diagnosis, with a distended stomach and unexplained weight loss. He had all but given up eating food except for dry crackers and the occasional apple slice. He was chronically lethargic and clung to his mum like a koala bear to a tree – offering delicious cuddles that were soured by the worry I felt at every moment regarding his health.

By eliminating wheat and gluten from his diet, within a matter of weeks Josh was like a different kid. His energy levels were soaring, he was putting on weight and his stomach was slowly returning to its normal size. Most fascinating, however, was the fact that his moods had improved beyond all recognition. Gone were the severe mood swings that seemed to accompany his deteriorating health, replaced by a happy, giggly boy who delighted in simple games and pulling funny faces once again.

I began to play around with the notion that if Josh's moods and energy levels could be transformed so radically, could it be possible to do the same for an adult? A homeopath I had been visiting with Josh planted the seed in my mind for the idea of pursuing *optimal health*.

‘But I think I *am* pretty healthy,’ I said to him one day, to which he replied, ‘What if you don’t even know what good health feels like? What if you thought you were okay simply because you had never actually experienced optimal health before?’

I started to see how relative this whole notion of health really is. Healthy relative to what? Fit relative to what? We are all coming from different starting points and with completely different conditioning in terms of what we think constitutes good health based on our unique family history and the influences of those around us.

I decided that optimal health was something I wanted to achieve, and Josh was to be my biggest inspiration – I had never before seen someone’s health transform so radically before my very eyes. It changed my belief about what was possible and allowed me to open up to the idea of achieving a state of optimal rather than just mediocre health.

All I needed was the right person to help me. How hard could that be?

Finding Kelli

It’s one thing to *want* a great body and another thing to *get* one. I had spent years of my life on and off searching for the elusive ‘solution’ or trainer that would make my goal of a fit, toned, strong body a reality. Some trainers had given me results while I was focused on working with them, but nothing had morphed into the kind of lifestyle solution that I was looking for – something that was fun, addictive and easy to follow for the rest of my life.

A critical moment for me came about after a less than enjoyable dental experience when I ended up being seen by a junior dentist as the principal dentist to whom I had been recommended was no longer taking new patients. I made a decision that I believe led to my eventually finding Kelli Johnson. I know it seems a rather large leap, but stay with me because this point is very important. In fact it was a major defining moment in my life.

I was so mad that I had allowed myself to go from requesting the ‘best dentist around’ to accepting what I thought was mediocre treatment (at best) from someone much less experienced. So from that day onwards I declared that I would never allow myself to accept anything less than the best when it came to professionals, mentors or people assisting me in life in some way.

A couple of days later as I was pondering the idea of getting myself off to the gym

and wondering how I could create the kind of serious results I was wanting (and that for some reason up until now had been eluding me), it hit me!

I would seek out the *best* trainer in Australia – someone who understood what it meant to be a mother with limited time and a body that had been through childbirth and the physical changes that entails. I didn't know how I was going to find this person, but I decided that when I did I was going to ask them if they would use me as a guinea pig, design a program that incorporated both exercise and nutrition, and hold my hand until the results became a visible reality. Oh, and by the way, I decided that I would ask them to do this for free!

I recalled meeting a mum some time ago who, although heavily pregnant at the time, had discussed how after having her first son she worked with a trainer and went on to enter a 'figure competition'. Being relatively naive to this new world in which the fabulously fit move, I decided to get in touch with her and find out what exactly she had done to get into that kind of shape and who she had worked with to make it a reality.

Vickie, the mum in question, graciously met me for a coffee and proceeded to tell me that despite having recently had her second son she was once again working with her 'amazing' trainer Kelli Johnson. And not only that, but she was going to compete in an upcoming IFBB (International Federation of Body Building) championship in the 'figure division'. I told Vickie that I was about to conduct a personal experiment, and that if it worked I would be writing a book to share my journey with mums everywhere. Did she think Kelli would be interested in meeting me?

A week later I am sitting at former Miss Australia and Miss Australasia Figure Champion Kelli Johnson's house, drinking coffee (sweetened with honey, not sugar) and explaining my guinea pig concept. As I share my desire to inspire mums to take action so they feel great in their physical bodies and have the energy they want to create a phenomenal life, I see Kelli's eyes light up with excitement. But she sits calmly, as if drinking in my enthusiasm. Eventually I announce that I want to work with someone who will take me on as a kind of 'project' with no monetary reward.

With a simple but determined 'Yes!' Kelli is on board! Not only that but she proceeds to tell me her own story, which only adds to my conviction that the two of us are perfect to work together on this special assignment. I can hardly believe my ears ...

Kelli shares with me that she only began training professionally after becoming a mum herself. She was in her early thirties and had experienced postnatal depression

after the birth of her daughter. She had always been quite active but motherhood had made training and eating well more challenging and she was struggling to keep it together as a newly single mother with a small child to support.

Bingo – that was it! I had always blamed ‘time poverty’ and having had children as the reason why I had not felt totally connected to my body. Here was probably the fittest-looking woman I had ever met, telling me that she only started to consider competing at national and international level after becoming a single mum. Kelli was the one – the perfect woman and mother to share with me everything I needed to know in order to change my relationship with my body forever.

Suddenly every excuse I had ever used to postpone my best life and procrastinate about doing the work required floated out the door. In one hour, Kelli had hijacked my excuses and buried them alongside my limiting self-beliefs forever.

Life would never be the same for me from that meeting onwards.

Talk about defining moments!

First-day memoir

This is what I wrote after the first day working with Kelli. I vividly remember stopping off at a local café to sit with my journal and reflect on all the emotions that were flooding through my body.

Today was the first day of my body reinvention with the delightful and very down-to-earth Kelli Johnson – figure champion, mother and personal trainer. Although we do not know each other very well yet, we share a mutual fascination with the transformation process and helping mothers to achieve positive change in their lives. I wanted to work with someone who was the best in their field – who had the answers, but at the same time a deep understanding of the fundamental reasons why a mother might not stick to a plan, or in fact never start thinking about health and nutrition for herself in the first place.

A strong memory for me growing up was hearing my mother talk about how ‘your body is never the same after you have kids – so enjoy it while you can’. My mother, although gifted in many other ways, was not born

with the gym-junkie gene, shall we say – so I did not have the luxury of learning what I know now at a young age!

Many women of our parents' generation were brought up to believe that we should just accept the body that motherhood gives us (yes, pelvic floor dysfunction and all!) and essentially ride out the remainder of our journey here on planet Earth in a less than optimal physical vehicle. I never really accepted this theory and always rebelled against the idea that my best body (and life) ought to be the one I had prior to becoming a mum!

I walked into Kelli's home gym today with a size-12 body that looked pretty okay in clothes, but I was not surprised when Kelli described me as being 'skinny-fat'. If you have never come across the term before, it offers an accurate description of people like me who although not 'large', are not actually toned and fit. It's one thing to look good in your clothes, but quite another to have the kind of toned, tight body that looks great in a swimsuit. I feel reasonably confident about my body but for a long time I have wanted to experience a level of strength, fitness and energy that up until now has eluded me.

As a writer and researcher, I invariably spend a lot of time at the computer or sitting in meetings. My life, by the very nature of my work, is relatively sedentary. I do try to get out and run around with the kids as much as I can but it is not consistent enough to create the kind of improvement I am looking for. I am excited at a personal level about what working with Kelli will achieve for me in a physical sense, but more importantly I am excited to see how the strategies I employ to get there will be able to work for mothers everywhere. In this way, I can let go of my past conditioning, and state with conviction that your best body is possible at any time in your life. I fully intend to have a better body at the end of this journey than I did at 25 or 30. I am more conscious now of my lifestyle choices and how they impact on my energy levels and general well-being. I am probably more motivated to look and feel great too as I now have kids and a husband who rely on me to be at my best. By letting myself down, I am inadvertently affecting those I love also. How motivating is that!

Another rather confronting aspect of my first training session with Kelli was the full-length mirror that runs down one side of her home gym. I admitted to Kelli that there aren't any full-length mirrors in my house and I am not used to looking at my body as honestly as this. I had also not weighed myself for years, and even stepping up on the scales felt scary. I also admitted to Kelli that I have carried this image of myself around as being 'a natural, low-maintenance kinda girl' for so long that it was acting as a cop-out and preventing me from creating the kind of fit, strong and toned body I secretly longed for. I had wrongly associated being fit and healthy with being obsessive and vain ... Meeting someone like Kelli was just the motivation I needed to reassess my attitude to fitness and shake up those erroneous stereotypes that had done nothing but keep me in a holding pattern and distanced me from the happiness and joy I was truly seeking. Talk about self-sabotaging behaviour!

The other important issue that came up for me today was the idea that as mums we can often accept second-best, or settle for less than we truly want and deserve. Kelli charges the same as many other trainers in my local area, yet most of them have never competed at a national or international level and do not have her proven track record in getting results for clients.

I have finally come to the realisation that the difference between paying for the best person in their field to teach and guide you, versus a very average person, is usually relatively small. The difference in the results you will see in your life, however, is major. We need to demand the best for ourselves and seek out the best coaches, support people and mentors we can find. There is always a way to get what you want, and even teaming up with one or more friends in order to pay for the expertise of the best trainer you can find is going to get you a far better result than doing nothing or shopping around on your own for the cheapest option.

Kelli also said that most people believe they need to be mega-fit already before they can train with her, and many are embarrassed to ask if she would train them because they don't think they are 'good enough' or 'slim enough' to work with her. I guess it goes back to what one of my favourite holistic health authors, Louise Hay, writes, that most of us do not think we are *good enough* or *worthy enough*, and that is what holds us back in life.

I am working with Kelli for one hour every Tuesday, but because of her passion around creating transformations for her clients, she will be emailing me nutrition and exercise plans for the week so that I feel supported every step of the way. I feel like I am heading to a place I have never been before. I was not the sporty girl at school but rather the 'good student', so I know that whatever I can achieve, you can achieve. I am starting from a place of relative ignorance – I feel strongly that this is the start of something very profound for me, and I am sure that by achieving my health and fitness goals I will create the self-confidence and momentum I am looking for, to go on and achieve phenomenal results in every other area of my life.

Stay tuned!

Week 1 – a newfound clarity

After being warned by Kelli that I might feel a little out of sorts or foggy during the initial five-day detox program, I was pleasantly surprised when after just two days of eating 'clean' my head felt clearer than it had for many years. I was waking up feeling sharp and ready to jump out of bed, and I loved the contrast with my former reality where it would take a shower and a plunger of coffee to get me fully into gear in the mornings.

I was changing from a very sporadic, haphazard eating pattern to a very structured routine and my body seemed to be loving it. Kelli explained that our bodies love rhythm and routine. They like to know that food is coming on a regular timetable, and that way they don't feel a need to store food as fat in case of a potential famine in the future. Kelli had me eating every three hours from the time I got up, and the hardest thing for me at first was actually eating the amount of food on my program. I wasn't used to eating so regularly, and I started to realise that perhaps I hadn't been eating *enough* food up until now. There were times when I would have breakfast and then nothing but a coffee and a chocolate biscuit until well into the afternoon – no wonder my energy levels had been failing me.

Could it be true that I hadn't in fact been eating enough? How many other mums, I wondered, were eating too little (and probably the wrong stuff) and wondering why

they didn't have the energy (or the body) they wanted?

'Energy gets energy,' Kelli told me, and I repeated that like a silent mantra all week. 'If you want energy, you've got to exercise to get it. It doesn't work the other way round. Don't wait for the energy to come before you start exercising, it just won't happen and you'll end up sabotaging your chances of health and vitality forever.'

'Muscles need to be fed,' Kelli instructed, and so I had to adapt to incorporating a little protein into most of my six meals throughout the day. This proved to be a bit challenging at first as I was used to reaching for a chocolate biscuit or a piece of fruit with my morning cuppa – so the thought of having rice cakes with cottage cheese and sliced chicken breast just seemed odd! I persevered, however, and loved the feeling of being full and the energy that came from eating something substantial like that early in the day.

To say the transformation in my energy levels that week was remarkable is an understatement. By the end of the first week I was turning to my husband and saying incredulously, 'I don't even feel like I need a coffee today!' Which for me at that point was amazing. Both Kelli and my naturopath had expressed a desire to get me to a place where I could drink coffee because I enjoyed it, not because I needed it.

Whether your crutch is coffee, Coke, sugary foods or salty crackers, lots of us rely on unhealthy pick-me-ups to get us through the day. I wanted to learn the strategies to enjoy a full, fun life without that crutch, and I saw very early on that this wasn't just a real possibility – it was something that I could achieve very quickly.

The biggest challenge for me lay in the training side of the equation. I already had a gym membership that up until now had been doing very little except collecting dust. I now found that getting to the gym to run on the treadmill was one thing, but committing to a 30-minute weight-training session three times a week was proving to be my biggest challenge.

I reached the end of the first week and had to congratulate myself on my dietary changes and the soaring energy levels I had experienced. I was honest with Kelli and told her that the weight-training had held me back, although I had managed to fit in three additional cardio sessions since we last met. She agreed that this was a 'process', and praised me for not beating myself up over the weight-training and instead focusing on the positive changes I had made regarding my eating.

And with that little boost and a wonderful feeling of 'I can do this!' rising up inside me, I concluded the first week on a total high.