

ELLE

first
hint
of
spring

ISAAC'S
NEW
SPIRIT

RALPH'S
RELAXED
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THE
MESSAGE:
SIMPLY
LUXURIOUS

improve
me!

HOW 5 EXPERTS
WOULD MAKE
YOU BEAUTIFUL

SUCCESS IN THE '90s
WHAT REALLY COUNTS

THE SCIENCE OF
SKINNINESS

CAN A SHOCKING
NEW STUDY BE TRUE?

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improve

Used to be that changing your looks—whether through surgery, a dye job, dental work, makeup, or even obsessive exercise—was a woman's dirty little secret, the kind of personal subject that should be seen but not heard. Rita Hayworth discussing her hairline electrolysis? Unimaginable. Katharine Hepburn sharing her swim regimen? Preposterous. These days, however, Joan Rivers not only talks about her face lift, she does it on national TV; Linda Evangelista becomes a superstar precisely because she changes her hair color and cut more often than Elizabeth Taylor changes husbands; and Demi Moore gives entire interviews devoted to her fitness routine. The drive to physical perfection has become as American as apple pie, self-improvement as imperative as self-awareness. The question is: What's the best way to do it, and at what cost?

It's easy to look in a mirror and think, Well, my nose is too big, or Those bags are disastrous, or I suppose I ought to lose a few pounds. But seeing transformative possibilities—figuring out that you may actually be a redhead waiting to happen, or a muscle-bound Amazon trapped in the body of a runt, or a cropped, mod tomboy under a Rapunzel-length braid—takes the practiced eye of an expert. It also takes, in varying degrees, financial and emotional commitment, and possibly even basic lifestyle modification. So I discovered, anyway, when I looked in the mirror one day and saw what I was (a woman with one foot and the ball of the other out the door of her twenties, a woman with three lines etched unmistakably into her forehead and the makeup and haircut of many moons ago) and decided to find out the most I might become.

The Surgeon Speaks

"In proportion!" says **Sydney Coleman, MD**, plastic surgeon, inventor of Lipostructure (a new aesthetic technique that

involves injecting fine filaments of fat under the skin to create new structures or fill in old ones), and **blond Kevin Kline look-alike**, as he blinks at me from behind small wire-rim glasses. "You have a fabulous jawline and a strong nose, but your cheeks are relatively diminutive, so that makes your nose look larger and humpier than it is." He draws back and ponders my bone structure, warming to his topic. "You could also build up around your brow line and fill in the beginnings of your undereye trough. We could harvest the fat from your stomach and add it to your face. That would take an element of sadness out of your expression, which is kind of endearing now but might be career damaging in a few years, and would help flatten the tummy."

Dr. Coleman and I are sitting in his wood-paneled, marble-fireplaced conference room, and he is telling me what he envisions, procedurewise, for my face and body. (I figure I might as well start my self-improvement odyssey at its most radical, and dangerous, point.) He is telling me how he uses blunt needles instead of the usual pointy kind to inject the fat, and as a result no blood vessels are broken and there is no bruising, only swelling, and that there is no hospital stay involved, and that after two weeks I can go back to my normal life. I am having blinding visions of jutting Dietrich cheekbones and bright, job-snagging Shirley Temple eyes, of a small nose and a flat stomach. I am, in fact, transported by my own possibilities. "... \$6,500 if you do both procedures."

I know plastic surgery doesn't come cheap, but it occurs to me that I'd have gray hair before I finished paying off my Visa bill. I decide to go topical instead of invasive.

The Dermatologist Prescribes

"You could look younger," says the extremely young-looking dermatologist Patricia Wexler, MD, Donna Karan's anointed skin-care guru, as she stares into my trying-not-to-be-shocked face (on a recent trip I had spent hours insisting to several new acquaintances that, first impressions aside, I was not actually in high school). "You have some irregular pigmentation under