

“Company”

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HEALTH SPECIAL

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'I paid £5,000 for a bigger bum'

While most women dream of losing inches off their bum, Sharon Brown, 32, from west London, took out a bank loan to make hers bigger

"I was never happy with my body when I was a teenager. I always felt as though I was waiting to develop curves, but it never happened. I had a boy's figure: thin legs, no hips, no bum, no boobs and broad shoulders. It was especially hard, as all my friends were getting a womanly shape. It seemed unfair that they could wear the latest fashions and I couldn't, because the clothes just hung off me.

There were other reasons for my insecurity. I was brought up in a strict environment by my very traditional, buxom, Jamaican grandmother and four uncles. My grandmother, who is dead now, was from a different generation and culture

and I always felt she favoured my uncles over me. I was stuck in a stereotypical female role in the household: doing the cooking and cleaning, and I felt overlooked.

I was also a very sickly child and developed asthma when I was six. It became so bad, I would have weekly attacks and often spent my weekends in bed, or even in hospital. Looking back, I'm convinced being ill made me even thinner and, as a result, I associated a voluptuous figure – like my grandmother's – with being healthy and my thin body with being ill and spending time in hospital.

As I got older, I transferred this insecurity onto the rest of my life. I began

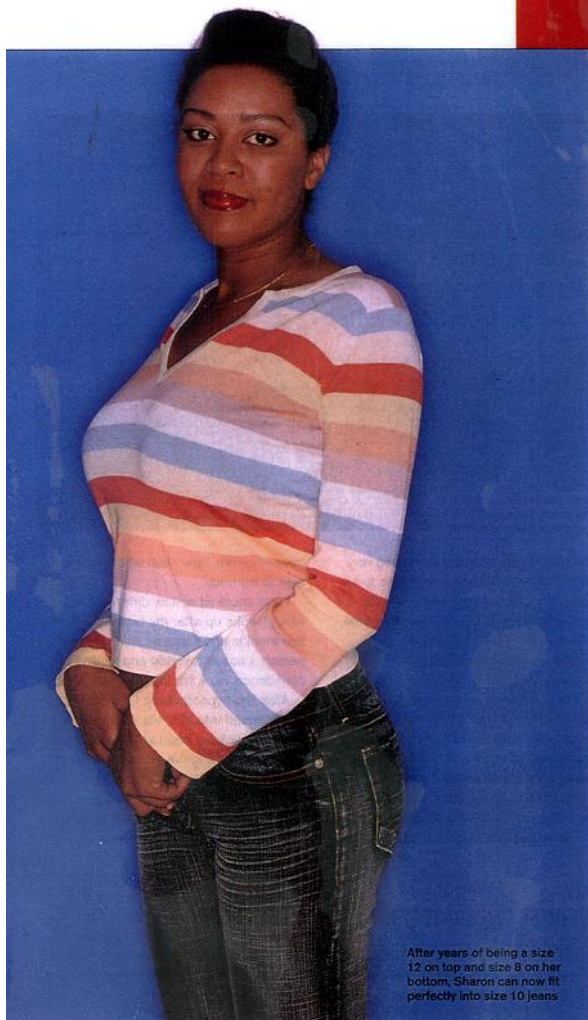
to feel as though I lacked the charisma everyone else seemed to have. Even though, as a teenager, I wasn't particularly interested in boys, I also knew I didn't want to be ignored by men for the rest of my life.

I tried to use food to create the curves I was desperate for, but that didn't work. Although I put on almost 2st between the ages of 18 and 21, it was in all the wrong places. Instead of being a skinny girl, I became a thin girl with broad shoulders, a chubby face and a round stomach and inner thighs. I still had to wear a size 8, or even 6, on my bottom half, but now I was a size 12 on my top. To even things out and make my legs look bigger, I would often wear two pairs of trousers.

I was so miserable about the way I looked, I went to see my GP to ask if I had a real problem with my development and if I needed to take hormones. As I told my doctor how I felt about my body, and bawled my eyes out, he explained that taking hormones wasn't what I needed. He said I probably had a lot of growing to do and should wait a few years and see how I developed. By the time I left the surgery, my spirits had lifted.

I was still determined to change my body, though. Whenever a programme about plastic surgery came on the TV, whoever I was watching it with – my





After years of being a size 12 on top and size 8 on her bottom, Sharon can now fit perfectly into size 10 jeans

family or friends – would be disgusted and accuse people who had these operations of being vain. But, secretly, I'd be thinking, This is what I'm looking for! I decided that, as soon as I could afford it, I would have plastic surgery.

By my late twenties, I had started exercising fanatically, going to the gym three or four times a week, to try to reshape my figure. Because I was lifting really heavy weights, my body became very athletic and I felt happier with myself. I thought I had solved my problems. Then, one day, a close girlfriend said something

about my bottom and commented that I didn't have an arse. Immediately, all my old anxieties came flooding back. I thought I had created this nice fit bottom thanks to exercising, only to be told that it was actually non-existent!

Around this time, I was also reaching crisis point at work: I was temping and, although I was desperate to set up my own home cleaning business, I just didn't have the confidence to do it. All of this, combined with what my friend had said about the size of my bottom, meant all my unhappiness became directed at my body

again. But this time, I decided to do something about it.

In April 2002, I began doing some research on the web and put together a small list of plastic surgeons that did buttock uplifts. But most of them were in America and after some enquiries, it became apparent I wasn't a candidate – after all, my bottom didn't need lifting, it needed increasing! I was fobbed off by my GP, who told me that buttock implants weren't done in the UK, privately or on the NHS, but he was wrong. I managed to find a surgeon based in Harley Street who could help and booked a consultation.

A life-changing decision

I told the surgeon, Mr Prakash, about my concerns; in particular, that I had broad shoulders and small buttocks. He agreed that I was out of proportion and assured me he could help by fitting my bottom with silicone implants. I felt happy that at last somebody was listening and understood my concerns.

At the second consultation, I was shown all the different sizes of implants available. Mr Prakash fitted different ones into my trousers, so I could see what size I wanted. Of course, I made a bee-line for the largest ones, which I decided wouldn't look out of proportion – after all, I'm fairly tall at 5ft 6in, and have 33in hips.

I was now totally convinced that having surgery was the right thing for me and I couldn't wait to go ahead with the procedure. But I wasn't able to have it immediately, as Mr Prakash needed time to look through my medical records and make sure I was fully aware of all the pros and cons. He explained that, like any surgery, things could go wrong and that, post-surgery, the worst-case scenario would be that the implants could go hard or burst; the incisions could get infected, might stop healing, or not heal at all.

Mr Prakash stressed the importance of following the instructions he would give me, to the letter. I would have to bathe the incision areas – which wouldn't be >



bandaged – twice a day and keep them clean and dry; I wouldn't be able to move very much, sit or lie on my bottom for six weeks and would need someone around me during that time to help me. When I explained that I didn't plan on telling anyone, Mr Prakash was so concerned, I thought he was going to tell me I couldn't have the operation. But when I explained I had a lodger who could help if need be, he agreed to go ahead. In the end, I didn't tell my lodger, as there was no need.

I had the operation on 6 June last year, about four weeks after my first consultation. It lasted for an hour and half and during it, two 7cm incisions were made just below

'WITH MY NEW CURVES, I WAS GETTING MORE ATTENTION FROM MEN, WHICH FELT INTRUSIVE'

my bum-line and the teardrop shaped implants were positioned towards the sides of my bottom, to give me bigger hips. When I woke up, lying on my front, I wasn't in too much pain. I stayed in hospital over night and left the next evening.

New figure, new life

I was still temping at the time, so I was able to take six weeks off work easily, and while I was healing, I didn't really leave my house. I had to train my new bottom to get used to certain movements. After a few weeks, I was able to bend over slightly, but very gradually. This meant the skin had a chance to stretch over the implant. If I bent over too much, or too quickly, I had been warned that the wound might re-open, so I had to spend six weeks

sleeping on my stomach and being very careful. After six weeks, I was able to sit down, on a rubber ring, but it was still incredibly painful. Around the same time, I went back to the clinic to have the bandages, which were holding the implants in place, removed.

The operation cost me almost £5,000 and I had to take out a loan to pay for it, but it was worth every penny. As soon as the bandages came off and I saw the result, I was really elated about my new shape. Although, having said that, it took a while for me to feel entirely comfortable with the change. I didn't rush out to buy loads of clothes, because I finally fitted into the

ones I already had. But it did feel absolutely fantastic to fill out my trousers properly.

Although I didn't want to have any more surgery, I still felt as though something was missing. And now I had the curves I'd always wanted, I was also getting a lot of attention from men, which felt really intrusive. I wasn't coping and I realised that it wasn't just my body that had to deal with the effects of my transformation.

A friend of mine told me about hypnotherapy, so I decided to give it a go, in the hope that it would help me gain some self-confidence and adopt a more positive self-image. And, this was the icing on the cake for me. During the sessions, I'm put into a trance and told general confidence boosting things, and given suggestions that address certain

behaviour, like, how I feel when people look at my body.

I was shocked at how different I felt when I woke up after my first session. A few months ago, I was a totally different person: I was introverted and lacking in confidence. Now, I'm the total opposite.

After the hypnotherapy, I felt I could throw myself into all kinds of situations I would never have been able to cope with before. Everything I've done has helped change my life, and has even given me the confidence to start my own business. Last September, I launched my own cleaning agency, which I now run successfully from home. I also started going out a lot more and really putting myself 'out there'.

I've also got a new boyfriend and although I haven't told him about the implants, I might when I get to know him a little better. I still haven't told many of my friends and family about the surgery. This is because I did this for myself, not for anyone else, so I don't see the point in telling people unless I have to. But recently, I have noticed that people treat me slightly differently and that's probably a result of my increased confidence. They definitely pay more attention to me.

These days, I feel as though I've got a new outlook on life. The combination of hypnotherapy and surgery has given me that charisma I always craved, and I now feel more womanly. I don't think this is just to do with having changed my body – that would be too shallow – but that, along with the hypnotherapy, has been part of the whole process. I've got a new shape and a new life and I couldn't be happier. ■