

Shake obsession to fit the beach fantasy

SUMMER is in the wings. In a few weeks the curtain opens to one thing: the beach! Time to panic.

There's nothing quite like that patch of sand to bring out our most fundamental fears. Be it "Jaws" behind the breakers, finding a parking spot, or doing the "pink prawn sun bake", our mind occupies itself with endless possibilities for disaster.

And then there's the particular beach creature that strikes fear into the heart of every sun-seeking soul. The Beach Babe! Known to devour mere mortals with a flick of the head and a prance.

Be it Bo Derek, or Pamela Anderson, we all carry in our minds the perfect beach body. That hourglass, bikini-clad, bronzed body jogging along the foam edge, has us twirling in the mirror and two-stepping with the scale in a frenzy.

In our obsession to fit the fantasy, we devour the 30-day diets, burn out the step machines, slow-roast on tanning racks and then buy bikinis a size too



HAPPILY HEALTHY

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small and pray for rain!

Consider the facts.

If you're an average working person enduring Port Elizabeth's December weather, you may be lucky to get to the beach five days during the entire summer holiday. How much of that is actually spent exposing your body? A stranger may take specific notice of your body for some 30 seconds?

Thirty seconds has you breaking into a cold sweat? Really? The mirror sees that body of yours more often. Are you not your biggest critic and potential admirer?

Perhaps it's time for a personal anecdote on how others shape what we see in ourselves.

At age 18, I was dancing professionally for a Cape Town ballet company. We were weighed reg-

ularly. I'd tried all the tricks of the trade to keep my weight down (although I was never actually overweight), including smoking, starving, purging and more.

One day I was pulled aside and told I wasn't to perform in a particular dance routine because I looked like a "pudding"!

How I danced was secondary to whether the shape of my body met that producer's view on what the perfect ballet body was.

I was devastated. Had I known then what I know now about how our bodies work, I could have danced for decades more. I left the company shortly afterwards. I didn't even stop to think what kind of pudding she meant.

The "pudding" label stayed within me for years. It's been a long

journey to love myself for who I am. To feel good about the shape I'm in, not the shape others thought I should be.

My clients all have similar stories.

The "aha" moment comes when they reconnect to their bodies. When how their bodies feel becomes more important than its weight, its reflection or its label.

So, how about this summer you feel the sun and salt on your body, feel your body in the waves, feel the sand between your toes?

Put your scale and mirror into hibernation. Consign the labels to the dustbin.

Just wave and smile at the babe and know that you feel good . . . can she say the same thing?

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