

# JUST AS *Beautiful*

The UK's first free Lifestyle Magazine dedicated to the plus-size woman

FEBUARY 2007

Issue 3



From Galliano and  
Gaultier to Avida,  
***Velvet tells all***



*Innovative  
Business*



*Redefining  
**Equality***



**Feed Me!**



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Just As Beautiful  
24-26 Arcadia Avenue  
Finchley  
London N3 2JU

Tel: 020 8453 7185

e-mail: [info@justasbeautiful.co.uk](mailto:info@justasbeautiful.co.uk)  
Web: [www.justasbeautiful.co.uk](http://www.justasbeautiful.co.uk)

# BBW Limos

*We understand how you  
like to be treated.*

*We understand limousine rental  
should be cheaper.*

*BBW Limos:  
For occasions you treasure most.*



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## LINDA'S VIEW

*Size 0, err....what's that - lol!*

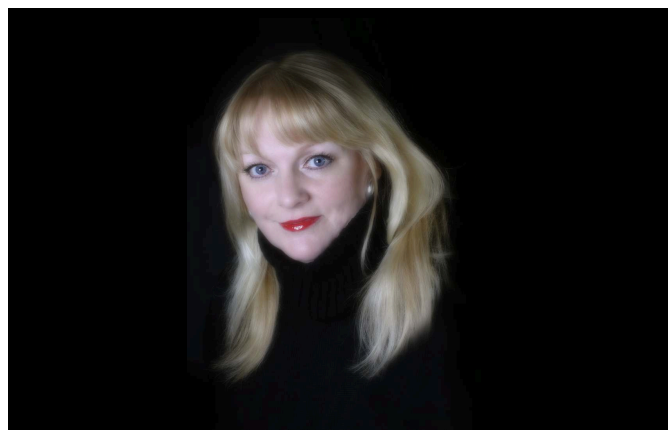
I was mortified this morning to watch a young woman (who had already been crowned Miss United Kingdom) on TV claiming that she was turned away from 3 of London's top modelling agencies because she was too fat at a size 8-10. Ridiculously she told she was too 'top heavy'.

There was a young singer who left the public eye to have a baby. Now, having made a comeback she is skinnier than ever, her legs look like they could barely hold her up. PLEASE! What is going on? Do we really need to wonder why we have such huge problems with bulimia and anorexia, if this is what our teenagers have to aspire to? What hope have they got if they want to get a job on the catwalk or in the media? Let's be honest, who ever actually looks like the models on the catwalk? Yes, you got it, anorexia and bulimic sufferers or people in the third-world suffering from starvation through no fault of their own.

I am sick and tired of being dictated to by the fashion industry. Most of the time they turn out clothes that I wouldn't even clean my car with, let alone wear (even if they were made in my size).

Real women have real curves and that's a fact!! I am not going to make excuses for my size: I am celebrating the beauty of size and I dare anyone to question my reasons for that.

Until next time...



Linda Koch is the Founder of Big Girls Paradise  
[www.biggirlsparadise.com](http://www.biggirlsparadise.com)

and BGP Dating [www.BGPDating.co.uk](http://www.BGPDating.co.uk)



# Keeping It Wrapped

Every so often people develop useful business ideas based on personal experiences, problems or relationships. Jennene Biggins, Founder and CEO of the Voluptuous Woman Company (VWC), is one of such women. It was her personal experiences that gave way to Voluptuous Bath Wraps. "As a teenager, I was what you call 'average size' but as my body began to transform into a plus-size frame, I noticed that 'average size' apparel did not adjust to my voluptuous body. For example, the average size towel that I used to be able to wrap myself in (after a shower) could no longer close over my large frame.

In order to gain complete towel coverage, I substituted my 'average' bath towel, for an abrasive beach towel with an unflattering design. As you can imagine, I looked like an oversized adolescent in a beach towel with dolphins and flower designs. Since I couldn't find a bath wrap in the retail stores, I started my internet search for a plus size bath wrap. I just knew I would be able to find my desired product on the thousands and thousands of internet retailer websites. Unfortunately, I was disappointed to find that many (if not all) of the online retailers did not have a bath wrap larger than an extra large (XL). So I decided to design one myself for plus-size women."

While many plus-size women feel

that losing weight is the root towards happiness Jennene doesn't think so. "It is important for plus size women to realise that weight loss is not the primary focus to achieve happiness. Unfortunately, many women are waiting to enjoy life when they "lose weight", but I encourage women to start living now and begin exercising to stay healthy and fit, not to lose weight to fit in the mold that society has determined is "perfect". I also close many presentations by telling women that if God wanted us all to be the same size, He would not have created fat grams," she says with a smile.

Jennene's Voluptuous Bath Wrap fits women size 14 to 30 or Large to 4X (up to a 52" bust size). "We research other clothing manufacturers for larger size clothing because a lot of apparel are not properly cut for plus-size women. Some manufacturers state that a particular item is a 2X, but



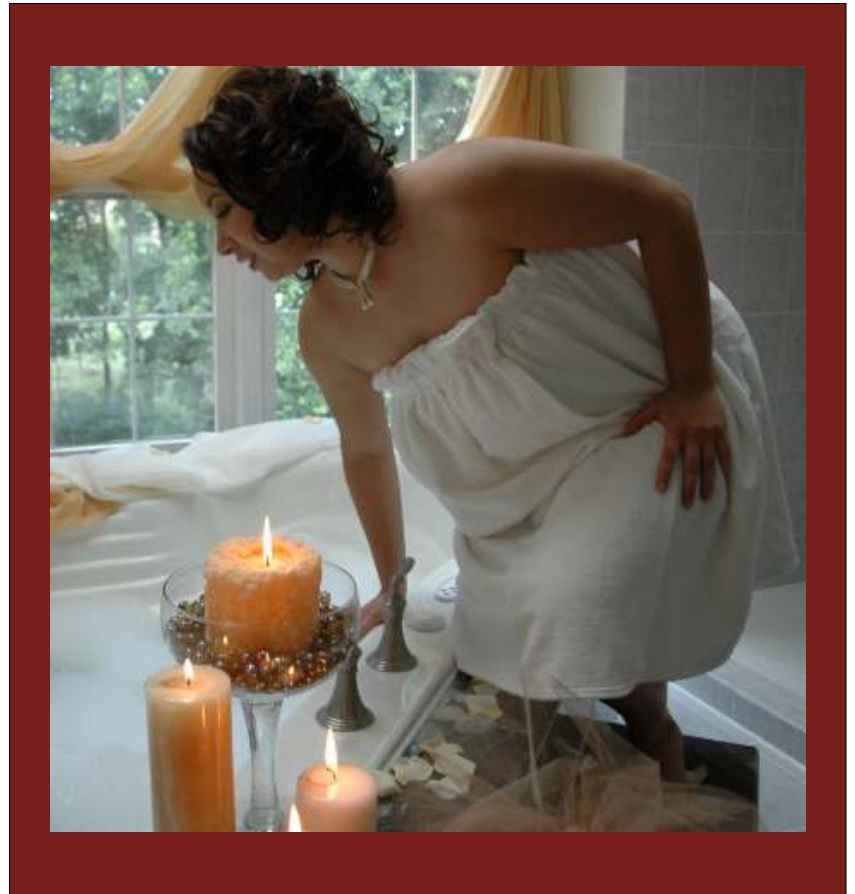
its measurements fit a size XL or 1X, which is extremely frustrating for plus-size boutique owners and buyers."

As a confident woman, she is of the opinion that before size acceptance should come self-acceptance. "The first step to size acceptance is 'SELF' acceptance. Until a woman is comfortable with herself she will not feel desired or loved by anyone else. Once a woman is comfortable with herself she will start taking care of herself, which includes exercising, beauty treatments and the rest. We have to realise that today's average woman is a size 14-16, but unfortunately based on the manufactured Hollywood images which invade our televisions, movie theatres and so on, we are constantly shown waif like women on television and in commercials, unless it is a diet or weight loss advertisement.

"My main customers are women between the ages of 30 to 45, who love fashion and are comfortable with their bodies. Our Voluptuous Bath Wraps is the first product that we manufacture, however, our company carries fashionable and unique clothing that enhances the curves of a plus size woman."

Jennene Biggins' success has enabled her to assist the less fortunate. "Currently I conduct foundation clinics and dressing seminars for low income women. Many times these women are not aware of the proper foundation to wear that will accent their curves and give them a professional and polished look. In addition, VWC

occasionally hold clothing drives for gently used clothing and suits for donation to churches and "Dress for Success" programs. Many women in need of business suits and professional career clothing are plus-size women, and we have found that there is a shortage of this type of clothing being offered."



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## FRESH MODELS WANTED!

Would you like to be a model?

Do you think you have got what it takes?

If you do, we would love to hear from you.

Email 3 clear pictures with your contact details to:

[info@weightlovingpr.co.uk](mailto:info@weightlovingpr.co.uk)

[www.weightlovingpr.co.uk](http://www.weightlovingpr.co.uk)

**\*\*Please note that we are looking for new faces, models that are not signed to any agency.**

# Velvet: Breaking Barriers

*"I won't do anything that would degrade fat people"*

If you ever get the chance to speak to her, you would know why she's called Velvet. That unmistakable voice – so striking, yet so comforting – connotes the impression of a warm hearted yet sophisticated woman. From exclusive runway fashion shows for Jean Paul Gaultier and John Galiano, to the starring role in the feature film *Avida* and a deal with Entertainment Tonight (yes, that one on the E! Channel!), Velvet has done what very few plus-size models have been able to do. By that we mean 'cross over' into mainstream recognition. Last year pictures of Velvet made it into numerous fashion savvy publications and newspapers, which pictured her on the catwalk led to becoming internationally recognised as the plus-size model that caused a storm at Jean Paul Gaultier's 30th anniversary show.

Just As Beautiful caught up with Velvet (thankfully she tore herself away from her hectic schedule) for this exclusive interview, which shows that some big girls are making very big moves and successfully challenging the mainstream's interpretation of beauty. "I wanted to diversify and that started with me having some of my friends take pictures of me and putting my images out there. I wanted people to have an open mind," she told us. "I was kind of playing with people's mind and what their idea of beauty was – what they think is beautiful and why they think it is beautiful."

Although born and bred the U.S., Velvet is based in France, and her busy life sees her shuttling between Europe and America among other places. "I have been living in Paris for 11 years now. Whenever I need to go to New York and I can't afford it I go to London," she jokes. "All my friends are English and my dearest friend moved back to London, so I'll be coming more often."



Velvet's road to modelling was not an easy one, despite looking as beautiful as she does. "When I was about 18 or 19 I had always wanted to model. I did the 'necessary stuff' like starving myself and I got down to 120 pounds and that was still not enough for the modelling agency

that was interested in me. It killed me to get to 120 pounds because I'm naturally a big person. That led me to yo-yo dieting, which is how I ended up gaining the weight and I was never able to sign up with the modelling agency, which was very frustrating to me." Velvet then turned to photography, which is very close to her heart. "I was always interested in photography, especially fashion photography. I moved to Manhattan where I was for 10 years and worked as a fashion photographer for the Wilhelmina Modelling Agency and other notables.

"I then thought that Paris would be better for me in terms of fashion photography and moved over there. While I was there, there was an agency, that was opening the first plus-size section that the country [France] had ever seen and I thought that this would be a good opportunity for me to explore. I emailed them an image of myself and told them that I am a plus-size woman shooting other plus-size women. At 39 I wasn't thinking that I was going to start my modelling career. But I had always had a presence online because I've found it very powerful for myself to promote my own image. They got back to me saying that I was bigger than their average plus-size model, but they had another division and actually wanted to sign me up as a model!"

That spelt the beginning of her foray on modelling, movies and





# Ask Vicki

I have received a number of questions regarding 'Weight Loss Surgery'. Here I will attempt to cover the most requested areas of interest. Please seek medical advice if you are considering undertaking surgery of any kind.

It's difficult for me to leave my own prejudice aside on this subject. I vehemently disagree with Weight Loss Surgery – it is my belief that long term health is best served by on-going activity, behavioural change, peer support and therapy; all of which will promote a healthy mind, thus promoting a healthy body. But you've asked the question and so I have done some homework to try and find some answers for you.

In the first place it must be pointed out that Weight Loss Surgery is not a cosmetic procedure. Bariatric surgery (the clinical name for Weight Loss Surgery) changes the anatomy of the digestive system. This is invasive surgery. Without scare mongering, there are risks to having any surgery at all. Can the risks of being overweight outweigh the risks of surgery? I think this is entirely a matter for each individual to decide. There are other methods of keeping fit and decreasing weight is not always going to increase fitness. Lets look at some of the weight loss surgeries available to us. Each person's case is individual therefore requirements and options should be discussed first with your GP. Sometimes these surgeries are available on the NHS.

## Gastric Bypass

Also known as malabsorptive surgery or restrictive/malabsorptive surgery.

This operation will make your stomach smaller and your bowels (intestines) shorter meaning that you will absorb fewer calories from the food you eat. The most common type of gastric bypass is called a Roux-en-Y bypass where a band or staples will be used to divide your stomach into two separate parts. Your small intestine, which carries the food from your stomach, is then cut away from the lower part of your stomach. Your small intestine is then attached to the pouch left in the top part of your stomach.

*"I think this is entirely a matter for each individual to decide."*

This operation can be done as open surgery with one cut across your abdomen or as keyhole surgery using several small cuts. The operation usually takes about 1 hour but may take longer if you have more fat on your abdomen for the surgeon to cut through initially.

Given that your "new" stomach will only hold around 1 ounce or 28 grams of food, you will need to stick to a special diet probably starting with liquidised or pureed food for the first few weeks. A dietician

should be assigned to you to give advice. You will obviously feel full much more quickly than you used to. The idea being that you will eat less than you used to therefore you will lose weight. Because your food has less of a journey to travel through your body, there will be less time for the body to absorb fat and calories from the food you have consumed.

14 days after the operation, any staples or stitches will be removed.

People who have had gastric bypass surgery have experienced "dumping syndrome" where food travels too fast through the system making them feel sick, dizzy, suffer stomach pains and/or diarrhoea. Also reported are cases of painful or bleeding ulcers, open sores, ulcers in operated areas of the stomach, heartburn and on-going vomiting. There is also the danger of decrease in bone-mass, making bones more likely to fracture. Deaths from gastric bypass continue to be reported. These facts are in addition to the known risks of general anaesthesia and the known risks of general surgery, which include thrombosis, wound infections and respiratory tract infections. Further to this, secondary surgery sometimes has to take place following problems that began after the first surgery.

## **Gastroplasty – vertical banded or horizontal**

Also known as restrictive surgery.

It is an operation that takes place under general anaesthetic, where the stomach is divided (using staples and possibly bands) into two parts with a small opening in-between. The top part of the stomach becomes a small pouch. The band may be used on the lower part of the pouch to stop it stretching. Food then proceeds more slowly through your stomach and leaves through your intestine as normal. As your “new” stomach is smaller, it will only hold a few ounces of food which means you should feel fuller sooner.

Like the gastric bypass, this surgery will last around an hour but could be longer depending on the amount of fat carried on your abdomen as cutting through this area and closing up afterwards can increase the length of time you are in surgery.

Post-operatively, behaviours will need to be similar to those following a gastric bypass. Dieticians will recommend ways of gaining the necessary calories for survival once your “new” stomach capacity has been determined. Liquidising and pureeing food may be necessary to begin with, followed by an on-going intake of very small portions.

Ideally you will feel full more quickly thus ensuring a continued reduction in calorific intake.

***“As you become used to eating less, the surgeon will tighten the band.”***

## **Banding and Gastric Balloons**

Also known as, Gastric Banding and Lap bands.

These can be used alone to reduce the size of your stomach without the need for stapling.

Your surgeon will divide your stomach in two using a tight band. The top part of the stomach becomes a smaller pouch. The band is adjustable. An access port is made in your chest at the time of surgery through which the surgeon can tighten or loosen the band by adding or reducing the amount of salt water in the band. In addition, the band can be removed should problems be experienced. As you become used to eating less, the surgeon will tighten the band to further reduce the size of your stomach.

Keyhole or laparoscopic surgery work equally well. It seems more likely that you will experience fewer complications with the smaller wound, plus you will need to spend less time in hospital following keyhole surgery. Again, the desire is that by feeling full more quickly you will eat less. The portions you can take in are much smaller. You will almost certainly need some advice from a dietician.

As with all surgery there may be complications. All the usual risks apply. Further to this there have been people who have experienced splenic problems where the spleen has had to be removed. There are cases where the band and/or access port have migrated or moved and in this case further surgery has been necessary to retrieve and/or reposition the device(s). Infection is always a possibility. Sometimes the “new” stomach pouches slip or dilate. Certainly if you overeat following restrictive surgery you are likely to feel ill and vomit etcetera.

## **The Gastric Balloon**

This is another restrictive method where a balloon made of soft silicone filled with a saline solution is inserted into the stomach to “fill” the stomach space thereby making you feel full so that you will eat less. It is most often used to “start you off” before taking further steps in weight loss surgery as the balloon is removed after a certain length of time. It is a temporary solution. Each balloon will last approximately six months before the natural acids in your stomach start to break down the silicone causing the balloon to deflate. This balloon will eventually need to be removed. A fresh balloon can be inserted after the six-month period. In some cases the hospital fitting the balloon will prescribe tablets to reduce your stomach acids.


***“As you become used to eating less, the surgeon will tighten the band.”***

The balloon is inserted through the mouth into the oesophagus and down into the stomach. A light anaesthetic will be used. The surgeon will make sure that the balloon is filled with enough solution; so that the balloon floats within your stomach and is therefore not able to pass through your system. The balloon has a self-sealing valve and can be seen on an x-ray.

Generally the insertion takes 20 to 30 minutes. Invariably a topical application of anaesthetic to the back of the throat will make insertion a more comfortable procedure and the risks are not as high as with invasive stomach surgery. However, there are cases

## **Laparoscopic Adjustable Gastric**





where the balloon has deflated prior to the scheduled removal. You may or may not be aware of this happening and whilst the balloon is small enough to travel through the intestine to the bowel and leave your body naturally, there have been cases where surgery has been necessary to remove this product. Nausea and vomiting have been recorded most often in the early days of having the balloon being inserted.

#### How Much Does All This Cost?

It is difficult to find a standard charge for all of the above. Private clinics in the UK are unwilling to disclose their charges until I am willing to put myself forward for the surgery. The NHS make some or all of these procedures available to some or all of us. We are often encouraged to travel overseas for such surgery and I have been lucky enough to find a price list for a clinic based in Europe. Their prices are fully inclusive of return flights for two, medical insurance, hotel accommodation and looks rather like a holiday – I think they are suggesting that only one of you is going to have the surgery though!

**Gastric Balloon just under £4,500**

**Gastric Banding just under £6,500**

**Gastric Bypass just under £9,000**

#### Conclusions

Each of the methods available help you restrict your intake. Sure, they will help you to do that by making you feel full but ultimately it is up to you. The most successful cases are when the client is highly motivated to change. As we know, change can take place very simply and very quickly by increasing your activity IF change is what you really want.

You will always need to make sure that you have done your own homework and researched each method and hospital as carefully as possible. These are not decisions to be taken lightly. Discuss your intentions with your Doctor, with your family and with your friends. Think of the old adage that "Forewarned is Forearmed"!

If you have any questions you would like Vicki to answer, send an email to:

[vicki.swinden@justasbeautiful.co.uk](mailto:vicki.swinden@justasbeautiful.co.uk)

## BBW Limos

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**We understand how you like to be treated.**

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consequently celebrity. "It has been good. The very first thing that I got through the agency was a movie, Avida and after that was John Galliano, Jean Paul Gaultier and the rest. It was amazing for me to shoot with Nick Knight and the French Vogue. When we did the Galliano runway show, the photographer said 'we want you to write your dreams'. I thought 'Oh, who knew that catwalk runways had homework assignments?' So, I wrote down my dream and he had some of us read out our dreams on video to Nick Knight. It was really cool because he had this project at [www.showstudio.com](http://www.showstudio.com). He later asked some of us that were at the Galliano show to do the French Vogue and I was lucky that I was one of them."



Reminiscing on her Galliano fashion show Velvet said: "It was really fun. It was funny because the thing is that I don't practise runway modelling on a regular basis. We were all just standing in line and it was just getting very exciting. We thought it was going to be a run through but he said 'no I don't have time for a run-through, this is the real thing.' It was quite surreal. The thing that was amazing about both Galliano and Gaultier was that as soon as I stepped onto the runway, people were screaming and

shouting! They were being so positive about it. It was very encouraging and I think that people are screaming for diversity. That's what it's about."

Avida, directed by Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern was her first major role in a film, and she hopes to do many more in the near future. "I went to the school of visual arts in New York, which is known as a very good school and I was always in people's films there. But I never really pursued a career in acting. What I'm about is diversifying media, so if a film comes along, or a magazine I will do it because it's all about putting imagery out there. I won't do anything that would degrade fat people. I've been offered things that I've had to turn down. But in Avida I played the lead role in the film. It was important to me not just because I played the lead character, but because it was not a negative role. The fact that the producers of the film looked for a fat woman to play the lead role instead of a typically slim actress was amazing to me. I spent about two weeks on set."

It was her role in the film that enabled her to grace the Red Carpet at the Cannes Film Festival - an experience she loved. "It was really cool because it was my first film and I never thought that I would be going places, least of all to Cannes. But when I got the phone call I went. It was good to meet people and attend the parties, and I was very happy that I met Mathieu Kassovitz (who also directed Gothika which starred Halle Berry)."

But despite her own achievements Velvet is not blind to the fact that plus-size women normally tend to get a rough deal in mainstream society. "There is a grassroots effort in the BBW world. You can see groups, forums and magazines, but the rest of the world is not getting it. I think that people in the media and in the fashion industry are partly responsible. We watch a lot of television and in television if a personality gains 100 pounds would

they keep their job? They wouldn't! People underestimate how powerful it is to ban an entire group of people, (which is a growing group of people because obesity is growing every year) from being included in any kind of imagery. People said that I promoted obesity by being on the runway and I thought; 'you must be joking!'



"If we promote what we see on the runway we'll all be emaciated, so I think that we should keep doing what we are doing which is to build confidence and let people know that they have the power to do whatever it is that they want to do - positively photographing bigger women, promoting their beauty and promoting diversity of the media with people like Just As Beautiful. I think that this could come, not just from men and women who are big, but also from admirers who can do a lot. I think it is important for us to keep moving forward because realistically, the world is a capitalist place. The more fat people there are, the more money that they can make off us. I don't think that they'll be able to shut us up really," she says laughing.

Velvet's growing popularity also led to her land a stint on one of the most watched entertainment programmes, Entertainment Tonight. "I was signed on to an exclusive contract with Entertainment Tonight. After the



catwalk show, they signed me up for a month, so I wasn't able to go through with a lot of the television deals that were offered to me at the time. They're still interested in me. It's good because Entertainment Tonight is one of the most watched television programmes worldwide as far as entertainment goes." And this is certainly not the beginning and end of her television as she says: "Tyra Banks has contacted me, Monique and others, so I'm sure there'll be more of me on television coming up."

Velvet has teamed up with Just As Beautiful to offer three (3) lucky BBW models from the UK the opportunity to have a professional photoshoot in Paris. If you are interested in taking your modelling career to the next level, email three (3) pictures of yourself together with telephone contact details and information about yourself to [info@justasbeautiful.co.uk](mailto:info@justasbeautiful.co.uk). Models must be new and not be signed to any agency or have such prior professional commitments.







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### **Bria**

Bria is a beautiful dress for evenings. A low cut mock-wrap bodice in beautiful black and gold fabric is complimented by tiny rouleaux straps. The close fitting top flares out beautifully to a full skirt of shimmering black satin.

Flattering and gorgeous for any occasion!

---

### **Helena**

Stunning full length stretch velvet dress, darted to give a beautiful smooth fit over your curves. Long narrow sleeves have inserts of lace at the cuff to give a feminine touch - and the fishtail inset into the back seam is also in our beautifully soft, non-scratchy lace.





- ♦ Cap sleeve, wrap front, floral print dress.
- ♦ Drop waist; ruching detail and string tie detail on side.
- ♦ 40" chest, 45.5" long, 39" waist (size XL).
- ♦ Poly/spandex. Hand wash. Domestic.



- ♦ Short sleeve jersey dress with rhinestone waistband.
- ♦ Ties in back
- ♦ 37" chest, 46" long, 32" waist (size 1X).
- ♦ Rayon/lycra. Hand wash. Domestic.

# 20

## NON-WEIGHT RELATED REASONS TO EXERCISE!

By Emma Britton



Many people automatically associate exercise with weight loss, which is actually a myth as successful, and more importantly maintainable weight loss requires much more effort than a gym membership! So, as I am very happy with my size 18/20 body, I love my curves and the fact that I ditched dieting years ago - I prefer to concentrate on the many other far more important benefits to our physical and mental health that regular moderate physical activity brings:

1. Exercise reduces the initial risk of disease e.g. heart disease, hypertension, stroke
2. Exercise can help in the management of existing disease e.g. diabetes, arthritis, backpain
3. Exercise helps to lower bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol in our blood
4. Exercise promotes regular and good quality sleep patterns
5. Exercise increases bone strength and reduces the risk of osteoporosis
6. Exercise improves your muscle tone
7. Exercise increases your stamina
8. Exercise improves your strength
9. Exercise can increase your flexibility making everyday tasks easier
10. Exercise improves your balance
11. Exercise can reduce depression and improve your mood
12. Exercise can boost your self-esteem and body image
13. Exercise promotes a healthy immune system and helps ward off coughs, colds and infections
14. Exercise encourages social interaction
15. Exercise can reduce stress/anxiety and promote relaxation
16. Exercise boosts your energy levels
17. Exercise promotes better posture
18. Exercise maintains independence in later life
19. Exercise can be fun

However, The most important reason to exercise is to do with the most essential muscle in our body. We only have one, it works as a pump, it has been working for us 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year since before we were born and hopefully for many years to come and without its constant and regular pumping action we don't live!

**KEEPING OUR HEART HEALTHY IS THE MAIN REASON WE SHOULD ALL BE EXERCISING!**

We are constantly bombarded with the message that obesity is reaching epidemic proportions in this country, but many people are unaware of the many other benefits of regular exercise that all add up to a happier, healthier person - regardless of their weight, size or shape!

Emma Britton is a dress size 18/20 freelance group fitness instructor who specialises in classes for ladies who are size 16+ only in the community she also offers achievable, fun, realistic classes for all shapes and sizes, older people and those with mental health issues and additional needs. She has appeared on several national television programmes speaking on the issues around weight, features regularly in the national press and is the resident fitness instructor on her BBC local radio where she is affectionately known by listeners as XL Emma! Emma is renowned for her unique approach to being a larger size but fit and healthy and her ambition is to spread this unusual, but increasingly researched and proven concept to larger sizes around the UK.

Emma can be reached by sending an email to:

[emma.britton@justasbeautiful.co.uk](mailto:emma.britton@justasbeautiful.co.uk)

Her website is address is [www.xlemma.co.uk](http://www.xlemma.co.uk)



# Activist

Marilyn Wann Author of *Fat!So?*: "I don't write for dollars or for publishers, I write for people like me"

When Marilyn Wann had two bad experiences relating to her weight in a single day, she decided to fight back at society's view of fat people. Best known as the author of *Fat!So?*, she has continued in her campaign to encourage people to be more confident and accept themselves for what they are.

"I've been a writer all my life, but getting a book published seemed like an impossible goal, so I never considered it. I started a magazine (a small, self-published, independent magazine) in the mid-90s because I needed it. I needed to publicly state my opposition to the notion that anyone should be excluded from anything in life based on what we weigh. I was inspired to take this action because I had what I call my Really Bad Day. One evening, I was having dinner with a fellow I liked and in the middle of the evening he said, "I'm embarrassed to introduce you to some of my friends because you're fat." I was hurt and outraged. But like so many of us (all sizes of us) who face some crushing moment of exclusion for who we are, I thought I would try to forget about it. (That was years ago, and I still recall every detail of that moment.) I went home, opened my mail, and headed for bed. But in the mail, I had a letter from Blue Cross of California (a major health insurer). They informed me that they would not sell me health insurance at any price, due solely to my weight, what

they called my 'morbid obesity'.

"That double whammy of social and institutional exclusion (discrimination, really) woke me up. Up until that Really Bad Day, I had been getting along by avoiding the topic of my weight. I didn't mention it, I hoped no one else would, and if they did, I pulled away from that interaction as much as possible. I didn't try out for cheerleader, didn't date as a teen, didn't wear sleeveless or above-the-knee fashions, didn't really consider myself fully human, but a kind of second-class person...because, despite my intelligence and good personality and cute looks and accomplishments, that was the way people treated me. I was living in a kind of closet, putting everything weight-related in a black hole, no-go zone. It was, I realize now, no way to live. Because of my Really Bad Day, I came out as a fat person. I realized that if I was silent on the subject of weight-based discrimination it would imply my consent. And I knew, indelibly, that I could no longer consent, not even passively. So I found a way that I could speak out and publicly disagree."

Marilyn's magazine eventually caught on and led to much bigger things, including the book deal that increased her popularity. "I started the *FAT!SO?* zine. It had a hot pink cover, photos of naked body parts in the centrefold (called Anatomy

Lesson, because we need to relearn the beauty of body diversity), people's comebacks and stories of overcoming, cut-and-paste projects, and every possible fun way I could think of to rebel against the stupidity of weight prejudice. I sent copies to a few dozen independent bookstores, with no idea that anyone would actually read them.

Now, 13 years later, I'm still speaking out against the hateful stupidity of anti-fat prejudice because I got handwritten notes from other fat women who read *FAT!SO?* and took the time to tell me things like, 'this is the first thing that made me feel okay!' I knew that, despite how it feels, when you or I have a really bad day because people's narrow minds can't comprehend our fabulousness, we're not alone in that awful moment of exclusion, but in fact we're sharing an experience that is nearly universal. I have yet to meet any woman, of any weight, who has not felt deeply alienated from her body at some point in life. My struggle — our struggle — is absolutely not fat people vs. thin people. It's all of us against a system of thinking that makes it nearly impossible for us to feel at home in our skins. And really, this is the deep question: Where else are we supposed to go, to live our lives with happiness and health and joy and pleasure and everything human beings can experience? So the meaning of *FAT!SO?* is body

liberation. It's for every body. Women and men. Short and tall. Young and old. Thin and fat.

"A book agent invited me to create a FAT!SO? book because the magazine had gotten tons of national media attention. (She saw me quoted in USA Today.) Then a book publisher decided to publish the FAT!SO? book, which came out in late 1998, early 1999. The book is still in print today, because people continue to buy it, I continue to give talks around the U.S. and sometimes overseas. I hear from teens who tell me the FAT!SO? book changed their lives, from women who say they've given copies to all their friends, from daughters who shyly but firmly hand a copy over to their dieting mothers. One woman carries the book between the front seats of her car, so she can open it and read while waiting for stop lights to change. The book is full of fabulous, fat pride images. Several people have gotten tattoos based on art in the FAT!SO? book. I'm proud and grateful that, by telling my story of oppression and how I refused to accept it, others are refusing to accept mistreatment in their own lives."

Remaining true to her cause, she is more concerned with making a difference than with commercial appeal. "I don't make decisions based on market analysis. I make my decisions based on what I feel passionate about. I never dumb down. I refuse to create work that assumes other people are not as smart or cool as I am, or that their desires are less important or meaningful than my desires. I prefer to imagine a reader who is like me, or rather, my best version of myself. I write whatever I think I this extra sassy version of me would enjoy. I got this excellent advice from renowned children's book author and radio commentator Daniel Pinkwater, who has been a wonderful and generous mentor to me since the second issue of the FAT!SO? 'zine, for which he kindly granted an interview. I don't write for dollars or for publishers, I write for

people like me."

While Marilyn believes that it is good that there are other books out there, she is very unimpressed by those she sees as pandering to society's stereotypes of fat people and the need to diet. According to Wann: "It saddens me, although I understand it's inevitable, that other authors try to please everyone, and thus fail to uphold true body liberation. They still perpetuate fat-hating concepts like a desire to diet (or seek any weight-loss goal) and self-deprecating humour. In my view, anti-fat discrimination will continue to flourish as long as people can justify being mean to fat people by thinking, 'well, those gluttons could all just lay off the donuts and lose weight, if they want to avoid discrimination.' As long as we look to dieting or mutilating surgeries or dangerous pills as a way to avoid prejudice, we'll only be adding to anti-fat attitudes. Until we get past hoping to be thin, we'll never be able to celebrate weight diversity genuinely. I don't care what anyone weighs. I know that there will always be fat people, because that's part of human diversity. I encourage good nutrition and joyful exercise because — fat or thin — we're worth it, not because any of us should seek to make less of ourselves. I don't care whether I gain weight or lose weight in the course of living my life; I care that I take good care of myself so I can feel good and continue to stand up for myself against hateful attitudes. I also believe that there's already been more than enough deprecation of fat people, thank you very much. We really need to stop making fat-hating jokes at our own expense."

"So while I'm glad that people may come across body liberation concepts for the first time in other self-acceptance books, like Wendy Shanker's *Fat Girl's Guide to Life*, I find it disappointing that she still writes about dieting as if it's in any way beneficial. What's worse, but perhaps inevitable (given that they've exhausted every other

ploy to sell diet books), is when diet book authors co-opt a body liberation approach to sell the same old fat-hating, self-hating weight-loss mentality. Susannah Jowitt's recent UK book, *Fat, So?* (where have I heard that title before?!?) is a wholly unoriginal diet book trying to grab people's attention by pretending to be anti-diet. Kind of like using a civil rights argument to sell a book about how to lighten one's skin tone...eew! I say: Accept no substitutes! Demand fat pride from authors who purport to love fat readers. I can understand how our very own wishful thinking makes us resist noticing the simple fact that there are thousands and thousands of weight-loss products and books for sale, which leads to the obvious implication — given the crushing levels of fat hatred that people face — that if any single one of those diet products or diet books could actually produce lasting weight loss, everyone would have already flocked to it and the rest would have gone out of business. The very existence of a widespread (and lucrative! — \$40 billion in the US every year, enough to house all our homeless in the US or feed all our hungry!) weight-loss industry proves their products don't live up to their promises, a fact that all the medical data support. It's not just 'fad' diets, but all weight-loss 'cures' that fail to cause permanent thinness, which to my mind suggests that perhaps we should stop messing with nature and learn to be healthy whilst loving our bodies, fat or thin. I will be happy when — and I know this day will come — the shelf of body liberation books is longer than the shelf of diet books."

Marilyn continues to work on several other projects and is heavily involved in public campaigns and speaking. She also part of a group that led to a change in legislation in her state. "I live in San Francisco. In 1999, a health club there had a billboard that showed a space alien and the slogan, "When they come, they'll eat the fat ones first." It's funny, it's also hateful. A colleague of mine in fat activism, NAAFA

board member Frances White, gave an interview about this billboard to local television reporters. She said, "If this billboard made fun of any other group of people, Asians, women, or gays, for example, it wouldn't be funny and it wouldn't be okay." Now, I work out regularly at a health club (not the one with the billboard!). I enjoy the health benefits and feeling good, because of this practice. I know, both due to medical studies and the experience of so many people, that regular exercise keeps people healthy, it doesn't make us all thin. So I was extra annoyed at the thought that this health club was selling something so good for every body based on hate and fear. I e-mailed all the cool kids in San Francisco who participate in fat pride community (people of all sizes and ages and genders). I said, "Wouldn't it be funny if we stood outside their gym, exercising and having fun and waving signs that said, 'Eat me!'" Well, everyone thought that was so hilarious, we did it. About 25 people showed up on a Monday morning.

"We hung around for two hours because the local print and broadcast media kept showing up.

Evidently, happy, healthy fat (and thin) people exercising and not trying to lose weight, just refusing to be made fun of, is newsworthy. As a result, a local legislator took an interest in the issue. Board of supervisors' member Tom Ammiano introduced legislation to add height and weight to the city/county of San Francisco's anti-discrimination ordinance. I worked with fat activist and attorney Sondra Solovay, NAAFA board member and attorney Carole Cullum, and Frances White, to organize people to testify about our experiences of weight discrimination in housing, education, employment, access to public accommodations like restaurant and theatre seating, and to medical care. We told great stories! We reassured the business community that refraining from discriminating based on body size would not incur huge costs. The legislation passed unanimously in 2000, making San Francisco one of only a few jurisdictions to protect people of all sizes from body-based hatred. (Other locales include Santa Cruz, California; Madison, Wisconsin; Washington, D.C.; and the state of Michigan.)

"My story, both with the FAT!SO? book and with this historic legislation, is proof that a chubby child from the cul-de-sac in Southern California can definitely make a difference in the world. I used to buy into those fat-hating limits, that I wasn't as important as other people, or as influential. It's just not true. I hope that my example reassures you that whatever you weigh, you can create the world you want and celebrate your own unique self and body in the process," she said.



To purchase copies of  
FAT!SO? visit:

[www.fatso.com](http://www.fatso.com)

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# BBW Gossip

with Carin

What does a Chilean shock artist who lives in Australia and our very own disgraced Celebrity Big Brother evictee have in common? Well, Marco Evarissti and Jade Goody share a common interest with Liposuction. Jade, allegedly lied about losing weight for her recent fitness DVD and has recently been accused of having a high-tech operation to extract fat from her body. In Marco's case, he served up meatballs and pasta cooked in his own fat (taken from his recent liposuction operation) to his guests at the Santiago Animal Gallery last month! His last words on the subject were: "You can't be a cannibal if you eat art". Defiantly food for thought wouldn't you say? (I am seriously never going to consume another meatball aghhh! Here's hoping someone will fry crisps in human fat that may save me a few calls...

The 'goss' in the ladies powder room at Biggies last month was where to get your corset from for the corset competition in the summer. The powder room was buzzing with ideas and excitement over this particular night out. What a way to show off our assets...

The lovely Fern Britton came out on top (in more ways than one) last month in a men's weekly magazine poll for 'Women who men secretly adore'. Followed by the likes of Judy Finegan and Coleen Nolan, are men cottoning on to big is 'just as beautiful'? I hope so. All of these women are intelligent hard working celebrity mums. Mumsy types too with big boobs and hips. Maybe the readers of Nuts magazine and the like need re-educating in order to understand that it is not only OK, but natural to adore big women. There are a lot of us out there guys, and the average size for a woman is getting bigger every year...

Vinyl and PVC clothes are making a comeback this year along with lace and light tweeds. Well, I can (maybe,) just maybe live with a touch of lace or light tweed on the odd item of clothing, but to wear PVC as a SSBBW... am I being boring here or just getting old and more cynical?? Come on lets be honest am I saying what others think or would like to say? Be brutally honest in your own mind not to please anyone else. Does PVC look attractive on an SSBBW? Or a BBW? I think the odd bit of PVC can look very raunchy and sexy

and a sexy pair of FMB's or a Basque looks gorgeous. I can not get my head round the idea of big women looking good in PVC from head to toe. I am all for individuality and be who you are, but spare a thought for yourself when taking off the PVC frock especially when you've had one too many drinks'. You will either give yourself two black eyes in the process or it will roll off (If you remembered the talc when you put it on in the first place).

And finally lets leave the Vinyl for coats or that record collection...



Carin is Co-Owner of the hugely popular website, Curvy Chicks

[www.curvychicks.co.uk](http://www.curvychicks.co.uk)

**Just As Beautiful magazine has teamed up with Velvet to offer 3 of our readers in the UK the opportunity to have a professional fashion photoshoot in Paris.**

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# I'm a Feedee *so what?*

In every society there will always be those with different tastes. So it should come as no surprise that while mainstream society is in favour of weight loss, there is an active subculture involved in just the opposite – weight gaining. As our editorial policy is to cover as many relevant issues concerning the plus-size woman as possible without bias, it was inevitable that at some point Just As Beautiful magazine would have to cover (at least to some extent) the subject of feeding.

It must also be pointed out that Just As Beautiful (by publishing this or any other interview) is not encouraging, or discouraging this practise. It is entirely at the discretion of those concerned. However, what we would advice is that before embarking on a such life-changing activity, it would be wise to find out from experienced parties, groups or organisations such as The Gainers Club.

Generally speaking, feeding (as featured in this story) involves the relationship between two people – the 'Feeder' and the 'Feedee'. As the terms suggest, the 'feeder' gives the food, while the 'Feedee' eats it. Unlike people who want to loose weight and say so publicly, people tend to be quite secretive about feeding. However, one couple in the UK are far from shy when it

comes to this topic. They are Rosie and Mike, who run The Gaining Club.

Rosie is a Feedee while her partner Mike is her Feeder. "I had been fascinated and turned on by the idea of weight gain, since at least the age of 8 years old, when I used to play 'fat games' with my younger Sister. We would pretend that she was my Mistress, and I was her slave, and she would force feed me pretend donuts, to make me grow fatter and fatter for her. At the age of 12, I remember going to town and buying a large chocolate cake with my pocket money. I took it home, up to my bedroom, and then sat there and ate the whole cake; believing that I was then going to get fat by doing so! I grew up thinking that I must be quite unique and strange, because I enjoyed the idea of gaining weight - until I found the internet, and discovered that there was in fact a huge community of people living in the world, that also enjoyed weight gain. It was then that I discovered a name for what I enjoyed. I was a 'Feedee', and the people that enjoyed feeding and fattening a partner, were called 'Feeders'."

Rosie feels that people who think Feedees are forced to feed by their partners are misinformed. "This is not true at all as far as I'm

concerned. Just about all the couples I am aware of, who share a Feederism lifestyle, consider themselves to be in very loving, close relationships. Not abusive or oppressive relationships. Remember, the Feedee wants to gain weight, they enjoy the experience, and they want a Feeder to help them to do so. Therefore, a Feederism relationship is very much a consensual relationship, with both partners doing what they do best - and enjoy the most. This in turn gives pleasure and satisfaction to both of them. If the Feedee had to be 'forced' to feed by their partner, it wouldn't be much fun for either in the end, and the relationship wouldn't last. Couples may choose to play at force-feeding, as that can be a lot of fun, but again, it is consensual, with both partners willingly taking part. I have never come across a single case of a Feedee being 'forced to feed' against their will."



She continues: "Feedees want to gain weight, it's what they get their kicks from, and if they choose to have a partner, then they generally want that partner to be their Feeder, and to feed, enable, encourage and help them put on weight. Likewise, Feeders want to feed, enable, encourage and help Feedees to gain weight. So, for them, if they choose to have a partner, they generally want that partner to be a willing Feedee. I have had it explained to me by Feeders. They need a Feedee to want them to help fatten them. They also say that it wouldn't be any fun to try and do it dishonestly. Feeders generally get their kicks from enabling a Feedee to achieve their goals and desires of becoming very obese. They like to hear the Feedee ask them to feed them, and ask them to fatten them. In short, it is, I believe, a shared, close, consensual relationship for both the Feeder and the Feedee."

So, does Rosie encourage Feederism? "That's a difficult question to generalise on really, as everyone is different, and everyone's situation is unique. But what I would say is if they enjoy gaining weight, have a good self-image about their body and weight, then I see no reason for them not to do the same. Having said that however, it is important to point out that becoming very obese is both debilitating and can be harmful to your health. For these reasons I wouldn't advise anyone to do it until they feel that they have lived their life to the full, and done everything that they want to do first, as they may not be able to do so after they have gained a lot of weight and become very obese."

Before such relationships begin, it is necessary for both parties to be open enough to discuss important issues they feel might arise. According to Rosie: "They need to know, and establish from the outset,

what each other's limits are. For example, do they want to gain say 50lbs to 100lbs only? Or is their ultimate aim far higher? Also, they need to discuss living conditions. For example, deciding to move to a bungalow without any stairs, to make life easier for the Feedee as they grow larger and heavier. They also need to ensure that the Feeder has an income large enough to sustain a Feederism lifestyle, as it can be quite expensive to take care of a growing Feedee. For example, an ever increasing food bill and the need for possible specialist equipment to aid the Feedee with both mobility and comfort as they grow larger and become less and less agile and able."



She also sees society's negative attitude towards larger people as the reason for the relative secrecy of people 'feeding' when compared to those on a diet. "It's because of the social stigma I think. We are all brought up to believe that thin is best, moderation with regard to food and what we eat, is the right and acceptable way to live, etc, etc. I would like to change that (of course) which is why I'm so impressed with your magazine and what you're trying to achieve. But I don't see it happening any time soon unfortunately. Most importantly, I would love to help overweight women and girls to stop feeling obliged to be thin, and to start feeling good about their

bodies, regardless of their size! But men are the crucial key to changing the way women feel. They have to be; because as long as men hide their feelings in the closet and refuse to 'come out' and admit to actually liking larger, fuller figured females, most women are going to continue to feel ugly and undesirable -with poor self esteem and body image - if they carry a single ounce of fat on their bodies! I feel this is very sad. I know of many men, who are currently living in very unhappy marriages, because their wives are slim women, which is not the kind of lady they really desire at all. But they admit that when they got married, they just couldn't face the stigma of dating or marrying a fat girl, as their friends may have teased them about it.

"Our community -the feeding community - is every bit as diverse as any other group of people. So, what suits one couple may not suit another. What gets one couple's hearts racing may completely turn another couple off! Feederism is simply a form of body transformation, and how that transformation takes place and is achieved, is a personal journey for each individual couple. Just as body builders transform their bodies in many different ways -some using natural methods of diet and exercise, others preferring steroids and drugs etc - so too do we transform our bodies in many different ways. Are we wrong to do what we do? Some will argue 'yes' to that question, mainly due to the health issue. Even the government is now beginning to crack down on obese people in a very unfair way, by refusing to treat them for certain medical conditions. But the choice we make to be obese and gain weight, is no more risky (health wise) than the choice that thousands of people make every day to smoke, drink or take illegal drugs. Do the government penalise those people for risking their health by the type of lifestyles they choose to follow? The

answer is 'no', they don't. We are no longer a minority, obesity and Feederism are both on the increase, as more and more people are discovering the many joys of fat, and I believe that the trend will continue."

When a couple decide to embark on feeding it is often necessary to set targets. Beyond this point could be detrimental to the health of the Feedee. At what point should one stop feeding or isn't there a limit? "Everyone is different, and everyone's situation is unique," says Rosie. "But it could be because the Feedee has reached their goal, their 'ideal' weight or size that both partners agreed on at the beginning. Or it could be because the Feedee's health becomes compromised. On the other hand, some couples may decide that they

don't want to stop feeding at any point, regardless of the consequences, because they agreed from the outset that they didn't want to place any limits on their relationship at all."

Rosie appears to be quite content: "I am proud to be who I am, and so too is my partner. Why should we be made to feel ashamed of who we are and what we do in the privacy of our homes? We are not harming anyone else, and there are far worse things in this world that we could be doing, she concluded.

Now what's your opinion?

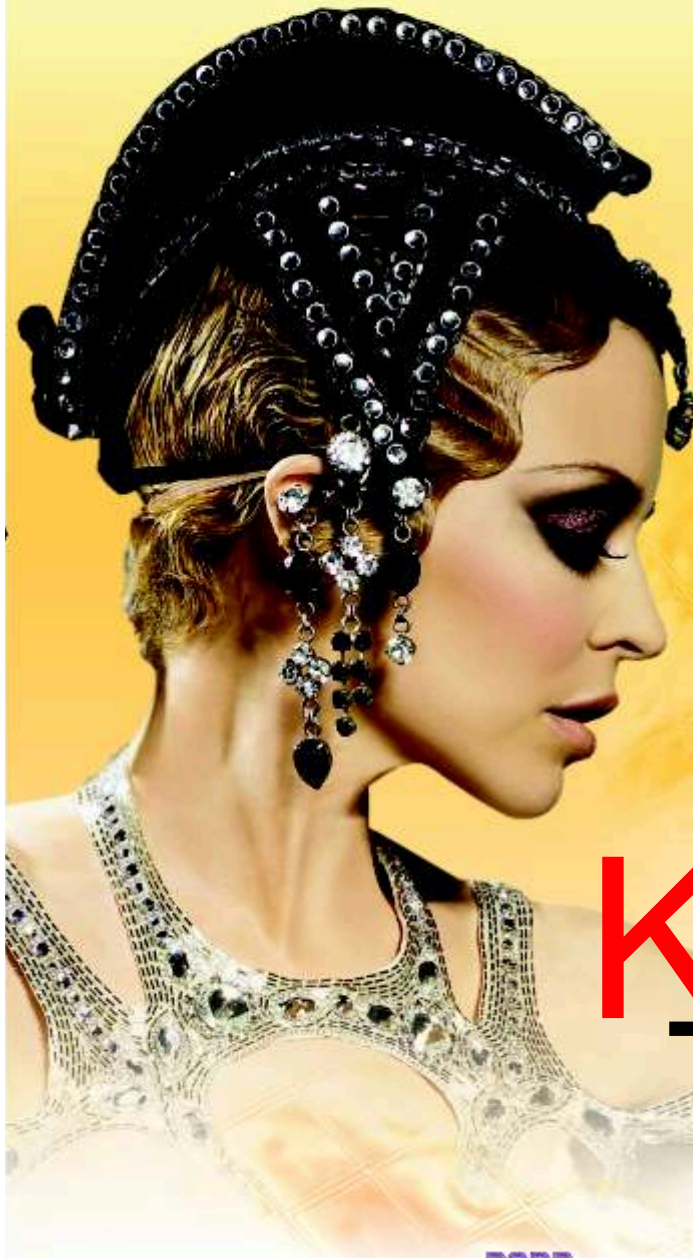




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# BUY

# LET



**Here are some top tips for those of you planning to buy property to rent out - otherwise known as 'buy-to-let'.**

- ♦ Buy now! Landlords looking to establish a portfolio may be able to negotiate prices and don't forget, rental yields are increasing and void times decreasing.

- ♦ Fine-tune the finance arrangements to ensure the transaction is commercially viable. Low interest rates over current bank rates are now achievable for buy- to-let borrowers. This can be cheaper than an ordinary home loan rate with a building society.

- ♦ Don't expect to make money on the rental. Monthly income usually covers the loan and maintenance.

- ♦ However, do expect to make an income from the capital appreciation of the property. Location is key. There will always be the demand for property and it will have long-term capital appreciation potential.

- ♦ Successful landlords tend to be aware that they need to supply a good quality product and associated services. Beginners should also follow this principle.

- ♦ Look into rent agreements with housing associations. These provide a 3 or 5 year guaranteed lease, with property maintenance and eliminate the potential of long voids.

- ♦ Don't forget to market your property. Establish good links with local property agents, manage a waiting list by using the grapevine and referrals effectively, and think creatively.

David is a full time property investment coach and also invests in residential and commercial property. He has also recently climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa (5865 meters). He can be contacted by sending an email to [david@davidjsalmon.co.uk](mailto:david@davidjsalmon.co.uk).

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