



Rena Satin Oversized Long Sleeve Shirt, £45 (size 8-18), Rena Satin Wide Leg Trousers, £42 (size 8-18), and Lavish Padded Push Up Longline Bra, £34 (size 32B-38F).

MY LIFE IN HEALTH

'I'M SO MUCH MORE CONFIDENT IN BODY AND MIND'

Spice Girl Melanie Brown MBE, 48, knows a thing or two about confidence. Here, the popstar, TV personality, domestic violence campaigner and Pour Moi ambassador talks to Joanna Ebsworth about the secrets behind her mind, body, and soul transformation.

I got involved with Pour Moi's Own Your Confidence campaign for lots of reasons. One is that I come from the world of girl power: I lived it and breathed it growing up as a kid, long before the Spice Girls came along, and I just don't think we celebrate the female body enough without criticising it, or without saying, "Oh, I'm just wearing this

old thing". Every woman deserves to feel confident, no matter her shape or size, and I think it's important to get that message across. That's why I made sure my mum and eldest daughter Phoenix were involved, and why I also made sure there was no airbrushing or retouching. What you see is what you get – a bit like how I am in general anyway!

Pour Moi is all about the importance of wearing the right bra size. Funnily enough, I went into this campaign thinking I knew my size, but it turns out I've been wearing the wrong bra size for years, and so has my daughter. Now I've been measured and I'm wearing the correct size, my bras fit better so I feel more comfortable as a result, and my

WORDS: JOANNA EBSWORTH. IMAGES: JAY MAWSON FOR POUR MOI. *MEL'S FORMER HUSBAND, STEPHEN BELAFONTE, DENIES ACCUSATIONS OF ABUSE.

clothes look better on me, which makes a big difference to how I feel. I now have a newfound confidence with the clothing I wear because I feel comfortable, supported and fabulous underneath.

I've always chosen my underwear just for me. If one lucky person gets to see it, then great, but I think it's nice to wear something lovely for yourself. I think underwear is such an intimate, important thing because every woman needs it – underwear is a part of our everyday life.

Activewear is so important too and became more so over lockdown when it was all we lived in. I often put on my Pour Moi activewear in the hope it will inspire me to work out – sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, it depends how motivated I am! But at least it's supportive and stylish and really comfortable so it's not as if I'm desperate to take it off!

I've been through a lot but I'm still standing. You can be in an abusive relationship or environment for just an hour, or a day – or 10 years in my case – and those horrible words will still stick. I was humiliated and ridiculed, called fat, ugly and disgusting, and even though I'm now seven years out of my marriage*, it's taken a long time for me to rebuild my confidence because it was at rock bottom – I don't think it could have gotten any lower. I still go to my local Women's Aid shelter for therapy, or to just hang out with the women there because they've been through the same thing I've been through.

I think my personality was very extreme in the past. I was very "all or nothing". I'd either eat junk food or eat healthily, work out or do nothing, sleep for a couple of hours or sleep all day, and I knew that wasn't sustainable. So, I've had to find balance between sleep, socialising and being a hermit, which I love! My top priority right now is getting my sleep and circadian rhythm on point because when I do, everything else falls into place. It's all about – and I



Soiree Non-Padded Side Support Bra, £36 (size 34C-40J), and Soiree Deep Brief, £18 (size 10-20).

‘If I don’t exercise for a couple of days, I know I won’t feel good, so I try to do short, intense workouts.’

hate this word, but I’ve learned to love it – balance!

Being a mum for half my life, I thought I could always live off four hours’ sleep. But a good sports therapist friend of mine has managed to convince me otherwise. He tells me things that scientifically make sense, because I’m all about science and facts, believe it or not, even though I’ve probably broken every rule anyone’s ever given me! I now know how important it is to get at least seven hours of sleep for your recovery and your brain, and I wear an Oura Ring to track my REM sleep (REM is good for short-term memory), as well as my deep sleep. I have all these tools and all this knowledge now – if only I’d had it when I was younger.

I’ve tried going vegan and I’ve tried being pescatarian. These days, I’m more of an intuitive eater, so if I fancy a steak, I’ll have one. If I fancy eating just vegetable soup for two or three days, I’ll do that. My main thing is to make sure I’m filling my body with lots of nutrients and drinking lots of water, because when you feed your body good stuff, it reflects on the outside and you have so much more energy and positivity.

I’m very into meditation and NSDR (Non-Sleep Deep Rest). I do it daily, and it’s helped me learn how to stay in control of my breath and any stressful situations I put myself into. You know, if you threw me into a cold swimming pool, I’d probably scream and hyperventilate, but when I put myself into an ice bath, I can control it because I’m choosing to put myself under stress. I listen to neuroscientist and podcaster Dr Andrew Huberman a lot because he talks about how the body and mind are meant to work together and how you can control things that are in control of you. Back in the day, I wouldn’t have listened to a podcast by a neuroscientist from Harvard because I would have said, “That’s too posh and too complicated”, but listening to him has helped me gain knowledge and understand myself more.

The benefits of ice baths are amazing! I take one every other day but I don’t do the Wim Hof method of breathing in and out really fast because that makes me feel dizzy. I prefer slowly breathing in and out to send a signal to my brain that everything is under control and I’m not in fight or flight. That sounds so contradictory to what my life was like



Mel and Phoenix both wear Energy Strive Non-wired Non-padded Lined Full Cup Sports Bra, £34 (size 34D-38H). Mel wears Energy Side Pocket Cycling Short, £24; Phoenix wears Energy Panelled Full Length Sports Leggings, £34 (both size 8-18).

Mel is an ambassador for Pour Moi's new Own Your Confidence campaign, with lingerie, clothing, nightwear and sportswear. To shop Mel's favourite confidence-boosting pieces head to pourmoi.co.uk/own-your-confidence.



Mel wears Dusk Satin & Lace Revere Collar Pyjama Set, £45 (above and right); Phoenix wears Dusk Satin Frill Playsuit, £34 (both size 8-20). All clothing featured is from Pour Moi.

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for 10 years because I was in fight or flight mode every day. But ice baths completely reset your nervous system, so you feel calm, relaxed and invigorated all at the same time and get a better night’s sleep.

These days, I do weight training at home three times a week. I’d never done weight training but now it makes me feel so good afterwards and my body’s changed shape a little bit too. I’ve got areas that are firmer and more pumped up, and ones that are flatter and more toned than I ever could have achieved doing aerobics classes or swimming or running, so I’ve found what works for me. If I don’t work out for a couple of days, I know I won’t feel that good, so I try to do short, intense workouts rather than saying, “Sod it, I’m not going to exercise now until next Monday”. I’m much more realistic these days.

Fitness definitely helps with my mental health. I was diagnosed with ADHD, ADD, dyslexia, dyspraxia – a bunch of things! – a few years ago, but exercise helps me to focus on one thing and get it done, instead of 500 things and not finish any of them. When I first got diagnosed, it sent me into a bit of a panic, but then I realised those conditions have served me well. One of the upsides is I’m able to react and get on with things if something goes wrong on stage. The downside is I can end up feeling burnt out, fried and exhausted. Now, I’m glad I was diagnosed, otherwise I would be torturing myself thinking: “What’s wrong with me?!” I know my weaknesses and strengths now, which means I can work on them. That’s what I’ve been doing in every area of my life – physically, mentally, and emotionally – and it’s lovely because all that hard work has come together.

I believe that knowledge is power. So, apart from releasing an updated version of my book *Brutally Honest* [£10.99, Quadrille Publishing] with new chapters, I wouldn’t mind doing a book on fitness, wellbeing and mental health using all the information I’ve gathered over the years – just putting it out there! I’ve tried and tested everything from water fasting and meditation to every kind of workout, and I know what scientifically and clinically works.

A lot of what I do is about following basic, simple rules. Try to get enough quality sleep, stay hydrated, feed your body with nutrients, get a sweat on at least once a week, and do low impact weightlifting to avoid the risk of getting osteoporosis. Oh, and don’t forget to be kind to yourself. Avoid focusing on trying to look a certain way, or fitting into those jeans you bought that are two sizes too small in the hope you’ll eventually get into them. Instead, try to own your body, and own your confidence. That’s what I’m trying to do.

