

What's the point?

I know I'm fat. I avoid looking at myself in mirrors, but our hall has a long mirror just by the front door and if I don't look away quickly enough, I catch a glimpse of a short fat girl with chunky thighs and abnormally wide shoulders. I look especially hideous in my school blazer, which I wear all the time to cover my boobs. They appeared out of nowhere two years ago and just seem to keep on growing. I buy minimiser bras two sizes too small and squeeze into them to try and hide these hideous mountains of fat but rolls appear in odd places like under my arms.

My Mum doesn't understand.

'You are becoming a young woman and we've talked about the changes your body is going through and will continue to go through for a few years. It's all perfectly natural and totally normal, just remember you are not fat. You are perfect.' I suppose she means well but it's been a considerable time since she was young. Mum once told me she had given up on becoming a mother and I was a surprise baby so I suppose her joy clouds her judgement. Even if I had two heads, she would think I was perfect.

My best friend Zoe agrees with me about my body shape. She is really supportive and together we study all the celebrity diets in Closer magazine. The 'before' and 'after' photos are inspiring. We research online exercises spending hours in my bedroom each attempting more sit ups than the other to get that firmer leaner stomach the articles promised.

The thing is, Zoe doesn't need to lose weight. She isn't fat. She is tall and slender and has tiny boobs. We have been best friends for 5 years. We met in beginners' ballet class when I dropped my outdoor shoes on her foot. I remember going bright red and muttering an apology but Zoe just laughed and said 'It's ok. I have two feet. Let's just be friends.' We were inseparable from that first lesson.

I love ballet and happily practised for hours, learning the correct arm movements and feet positions easily and I couldn't wait to go 'en pointe' in the shoes with hard toes. Zoe didn't seem to pick up the moves as quickly as me and soon I moved up to advanced classes, leaving her behind. My Dad put up a Barre in the garage and I love practising there as I made sure he didn't add a mirror. It was bad enough seeing myself in all the mirrors in the studio where we had lessons. Worse, everyone else is slim and I know they are watching me, judging me, and laughing at my thighs.

Zoe became bored with the constant repetition of Barre work. She was happy to watch me practice and started to give me advice on how I could improve.

'If you lost some weight from your tummy, you could stretch over the Barre more easily. Your thighs are rubbing together and won't look so good in pink tights. I'm just saying this because you are really good and you could be even better if you were thinner.'

The minimiser bras had been Zoe's idea too. I am so lucky to have a friend like her who is always there for me. I can talk to her about anything and she always understands.

I can't remember how I found out about Bulimia. You know, where you can eat whatever you like and then throw up afterwards. It sounded like an excellent idea with all the fun of eating chocolate but with no guilt and no weight gain. Initially, I wasn't keen on making myself sick but Zoe said she would hold my hair up out of the way if I wanted to do that, as that's what friends did. She said she was lucky as she could eat what she liked and never put on weight. I've got used to sneaking off after a meal and throwing up so Mum just sees me eating a meal and doesn't know I get rid of it. It has started to work and my clothes are already baggy.

But, when I look in the mirror, I still see a fat girl. Zoe says I must do more exercises, eat less, and throw up more. She will help me to look like her and be more like her. As Zoe says 'If you can't improve your body, which is the only thing you can totally control, what's the point?'

I know it's for my own good so I can be a better dancer and friend. I feel a bit weak and tired all the time but I'm sure that's normal, right?