

**DURING TORONTO FASHION WEEK**

last spring, House of Groves designer Jennifer Waters had a life-altering moment. She watched in disbelief as models strutted the runway clad in the first ever House of Groves collection—the punky anthem, “Bitch,” by the all-girl French band Plastiscines, blaring in the background. “It was bar none the most gratifying thing I have ever done,” Waters says. “I wasn’t sure if I was going to cry or burst into uncontrollable giggles.”

Waters, 37, had been living the accidental career of a professional speaker with Microsoft for a decade before taking the entrepreneurial plunge into fashion. Though the move has been emotionally and financially nerve-racking, Waters says that pushing herself beyond her comfort zone and following her passion has been worth it in more ways than one. “My self-esteem has always been decent,” she says, “But [now] I have an incredible opportunity to mould my own identity...And that is one of the best things that has ever happened to me.”

It took a lot of courage and self-assurance for Waters to make such a bold

# THE POWER OF YOU

Constantly second-guessing yourself? Deborah Fulsang offers an eight-step solution that will **BOOST** your **CONFIDENCE**

move—and she's a happier person for it. But for most women, there's usually one thing standing in the way of pursuing a dream: confidence. Or, shall we say, lack of it. No matter how smart or capable or fabulous a woman is, she'll often still have those nagging feelings when embarking on a new adventure, be it a brand new job or a blind date: What if I'm not good enough? What if something goes wrong? What if I fail?

It's time for a confidence boost. According to supermodel and Victoria's Secret angel Chanel Iman, the first step is to believe in yourself. Her advice to young women just starting out in their careers? "Whether it's modelling [or] acting—whatever [a young woman] wants to do—she has to be confident in her own skin and just go for her goals and [not] care about what people say." We couldn't agree more. Here are some more steps guaranteed to kick up your self-esteem—and mojo—just in time for 2011. Let's face it ladies, there's nothing sexier than confidence.

## STEP 1: KNOW THYSELF

What drives you? What excites you? Ask yourself these questions often, says Andrea Hopson, vice-president of Tiffany & Co. Canada, and a woman who seemingly has it all—the fabulous job, charming personality, high-profile connections—plus glowing confidence. As the French say, she seems *bien dans sa peau*.

It wasn't always so, says the exec, recalling her collegiate days. "Peer pressure was felt very strongly throughout my schooling until that moment in my second year at Queen's [University in Kingston], where I finally said no to trailing off to another street or house party that was not an environment that was true to me," she recalls. Hopson thanks her involvement in musical theatre and the arts during those days for helping her develop "a deeper and more evolved sense of self." It's a pursuit that the executive recommends to her staff. "I encourage men and women to be comfortable and confident about what they want, to not pursue paths that diverge from

either their passion or their strengths," she says. That principle stands for extra-curricular activities too, because, Hopson believes, "The happier and fuller you are as a person, the more successful you will be, ultimately." And, she implies, the more confident you'll become.

## STEP 2: HAVE A VISION

"Plot your five-year outcome," said the Bay's CEO Bonnie Brooks during a recent speech at a Women of Influence lunch in Toronto. When the executive (and former *FLARE* editor-in-chief) first took the helm at the Bay after heading up the 500-store, high-end fashion chain Lane Crawford in Hong Kong, she had all of her top-level managers write a fictional newspaper article that profiled their outstanding accomplishments and how they wished their professional lives would unfold. "The stories were amazing," Brooks said. "So write your own story. You might be surprised by what you write. Some people forge entirely new paths that take them where their >

heart wants to go and not necessarily where their head may be going."

When asked about her initial five-year plan—if it sent her off in a new direction—Brooks answered enthusiastically in the affirmative. "It's a lot like another exercise, when you list all the qualities you'd like in a partner—for example, smart, fun, energetic, financially secure. You should then do a reality check on yourself: Do you have those qualities? Would someone you're interested in be interested in you? Same with your job. Would you hire someone with your CV?"

**STEP 3: FIND A MENTOR** Linda Babcock, co-author of *Ask For It: How Women Can Use the Power of Negotiation to Get What They Really Want*, says role models are crucial in attaining confidence and achieving success. "A mentor can give sound career advice and be a sounding board for ideas, help you see the forest as well as the trees and help you [move] up in your organization." But Babcock also recommends a reality check. "Powerful, high-profile women are not necessarily the right role models. Choose a woman from your organization who is where you want to be in 10 years," she says, adding that you can find one simply by asking people to lunch or out for a drink. "Whatever seems appropriate."

Laura Lovasik found a mentor in a 40-something marketing colleague at her L'Oréal Canada Montreal office. That relationship has proven invaluable, especially when the 28-year-old transferred to the company's head office in Paris to assume the role of media relations manager. "About three months into my experience abroad, I still hadn't mastered the French way of working, socializing or simply existing," says the expat. The mentor came to Paris on business and took Lovasik under her wing. "Over a lovely French dinner and champagne, she managed to encourage me in her soft yet stern way," recalls Lovasik. "She talked about the importance of immersing myself into any and all aspects of French culture and gave me tips on successfully working in a French environment."

**STEP 4: PRACTISE MAKES PERFECT** Preparing for a job interview? Babcock, who's also a professor of economics at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, is a proponent of mock interviews. "Practise with someone who can give really detailed, honest feedback," she says, such as a trusted colleague, sister or best friend. "It's so important to get comfortable with the process."

For Barton Goldsmith, psychotherapist and author of the recently released *100 Ways to Boost Your Self-Confidence: Believe in Yourself and Others Will Too*, visualization and imagining "what if" scenarios are similarly useful confidence-building tools. "The first thing I would [imagine during a job interview] would be to walk in, see myself shaking everyone's hand, seeing them like me, watching them nod their heads, and then at the end of the meeting, see everyone shaking my hand again and giving me an offer—an unsealed envelope—because they want a response right away," says Goldsmith.

**STEP 5: TAKE CHANCES** When Toronto-based publicist Katherine Bower was contemplating leaving her senior position at Givenchy to launch her own business,

her father, David Hamilton (a former publisher of *FLARE*), encouraged her. "Trust in yourself," he said. "If you jump, a parachute will catch you."

"I knew I wanted to do something on my own, but I was so scared," admits Bower. "What if I fail at this? What if I don't get clients? I was worried about the unknown [but] decided I would rather try, even if it didn't work out, than to never have tried at all." Four years later, Bower has almost tripled her previous salary—and discovered newfound freedom—as founder of Devon Consulting, which services a range of high-profile brands such as Prada, Nina Ricci and Burt's Bees.

Take Bower's example and go for it. Believe in yourself. As Babcock explains: "We tell our students that if they always succeed then they're not risking enough. You learn a tremendous amount from failure. Not just what you did wrong, but what you can do next time to have success."

**STEP 6: BOOST YOUR ENERGY** A recent report from the University of Essex in the U.K. shows that just five minutes of outdoor exercise is effective in boosting mood and self-esteem. So, rather than reaching for the communal office bowl of Hershey's Kisses during the 3 p.m. slump, lace up your runners for a quick power walk around the block. Your mood (and your waistline) will thank you. Just ask Lovasik. She buys her confidence with her morning commute—a 15-minute walk through the heart of Paris. "It has a perfect view of Sacré-Coeur up on Montmartre," she says. "It invigorates me and helps get my thoughts in order for the day [and] brings me tranquility in the middle of a fast-paced city."

And don't slouch: "Confident posture will display that you are a person who is sure of herself, someone that can be relied on to get a job done and even someone who can be trusted," says Stacy Irvine, exercise specialist, chiropractor and co-owner of Totum Life Science in Toronto.

**STEP 7: SET REALISTIC GOALS** Achieving small successes can be a powerful way to boost your confidence. When you put too much on your plate, you're just setting yourself up for failure, so be realistic about what you can accomplish in 24 hours, and plan accordingly.

Aspiring novelist Katie Dupuis did exactly that. The 28-year-old Torontonian has been penning stories since she was 10, and is currently shopping her most recent work, a young adult fantasy manuscript, to publishers. To complete the book, Dupuis set up mini-goals: "Every week, I would try to have a minimum of eight hours committed to writing. Even if you have a crazy-busy week, you have to set aside the hours," says the writer.

**STEP 8: ACCEPT IMPERFECTION** Professional life coach Murray McEachern understands the appeal of perfection, but urges us to cut ourselves some slack. "Perfection is not only impossible to achieve, but its blind pursuit can also result in career suicide: missed deadlines, compromised quality, frustrated team members and dashed self-confidence." Not to mention the stress, which he says is a killer of creativity and critical thinking. Adds McEachern: "It is the confident person who recognizes his or her imperfections." □





# Debbie Travis, unwrapped

Passion and hard work have made this British-born ex-model a design and TV star. Here's where she gets her chutzpah.

by Deborah Fulsang photographs by Manon Boyer

**D**ebbie Travis isn't one for diplomas. "If you look at the most successful people worldwide, many left school early and many did not have professional training," she says. So what does she figure is the secret? "You need a special type of energy mixed with constant childlike enthusiasm and a great eye. Everything else can be hired."

It's enough to drive design intellectuals crazy: Travis is a straight-shooting high-school dropout who's created three television series, eight decorating books, an internationally syndicated newspaper column, a 1,000-piece line of furniture, paint and accessories for Canadian Tire and, most recently, Debbie Travis Condos and Homes, set to launch in spring 2008. No sign anywhere of elitist black eyeglass frames, sweeping philosophical statements or highfalutin attitude.

Travis was raised with two sisters and a brother in working-class Lancashire, in northern England. Her father, Bill, died young, at 39, of colon cancer, so it was her mother, Valerie, who instilled a strong work ethic.

"I left school at 15 and did everything from the

ground up, learning and pushing," Travis has said (though she later returned to the classroom to finish her A-level exams and to study art). Her early experience, of course, inspired her apprentice-themed show *From the Ground Up*, in which Travis humbled a group of proteges by putting them through their paces.

Travis's working life took shape when she became a freelance editor, first with the BBC. At age 28, while pitching a documentary at Cannes, she met Hans Rosenstein, then a television distributor. They fell in love and quickly married. She settled with him in Montreal, where they raised two boys, Josh, 20, and Max, 19, and currently run two thriving production companies, RTR Media and Whalley-Abbey Media.

As Travis tells it, hers is something of a storybook tale: How a fast-talking, self-diagnosed ADD character with as much impetuosity as passion became a self-made designer brand.

**CHATELAINE:** So the story is that you met Hans at Cannes and married him three weeks later. Is that typical Debbie behaviour?

**TRAVIS:** Cannes is a very strange place. I was coming >

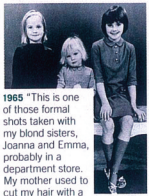


Debbie Travis preps for the holiday rush at home in Westmount, Montreal.



Debbie will host 16 for Christmas dinner – a happy mix of friends, family, neighbours and the occasional uninvited fireman. (Blame the candles.)

### My life in pictures



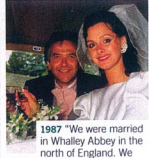
**1965** "This is one of those formal shots taken with my blond sisters, Joanna and Emma, probably in a department store. My mother used to cut my hair with a bowl on my head."



**1967** "Here I am at nine, on my grandmother's boat in the south of France. She was my mentor. She was larger than life, glamorous and more fun to be with than any of my friends."



**1982** "I modelled for about seven years, and shuttled between Tokyo, Hamburg, Milan, Amsterdam and London. This was the cover of an Arab magazine – that's why my head is covered."



**1987** "We were married in Whalley Abbey in the north of England. We named our main TV production company after it. It has always brought us good luck."

from London at the time, but I was still a north-of-England kind of person, and I found Cannes very glamorous: lots of parties and lots of bullshit.

I mean, Hans told me he had a Ferrari. But I rode the bus for our first 10 years together. And it nearly didn't last; I was so homesick. My mom died about six months after I came here. I didn't know she was that ill or I probably wouldn't have moved. I also got pregnant straight away. So I was coming from the centre of London with my free life and my very own sports car, and suddenly I was in a strange country with a new baby, going, What have I done?

When I started to design and build things, I did it because I was lonely. I didn't really need the money. I had done my own house and people started to say, "Oh, can you make that for me?" Soon my phone was ringing off the hook.

But then I got really tired. My overalls would stink with the oil-based glazes and paints. I started to think, This is nuts. So I said, Why don't I do a video to show people how to do this themselves? I got a cameraman in, made him lunch, and I did each room of a big house myself. The video [*Decorative Paint Finishes Made Easy*] went to No. 1. Then, I started getting invited on TV shows here and in America [and began thinking about the next step]. I remember talking to a friend of mine who said, "Nobody's going to watch a show about painting your house, Debbie." I said, "You're probably right," but we created 13 shows of *The Painted House*, and not only did they do very well, but we sold the series in 14 countries. [*The Painted House* had aired in more than 80 countries by the time Travis wrapped it in 2001, after 13 seasons.]

#### Where did the design talent come from?

I always loved colour and shapes. My favourite pastime as a child was rearranging my room and making

furniture out of anything I could find. And when I was 14, I refused to go on holiday with the family, so I was left at home with my granny. I did my first "facelift." We wallpapered my parents' hall and staircase. We thought we had done an amazing job, and I will never forget the feeling when I surprised my mother. After all the screams of delight, she put my grandma on the bus home, then told me to rip it all off. That's where I got the idea for the TV show *Facelift*.

#### Thirty years ago, if someone had looked into a crystal ball and said this is what you'd do, what would you have thought?

I really thought I was going to marry the farmer down the road, or be the dumpy girl who never got married. My sisters were very blond, tall and pretty. I was always the ugly duckling. My mother used to say, "You know, Debbie, you're not very pretty. All you have is your brains." If you don't laugh, then you have to cry.

#### But you modelled?

Not a lot. I couldn't walk. But I would always book shoots for catalogues because I was fun to have around, and the girls who were sleeping with the assistants or not showing up were considered a pain on these jobs.

I made a lot of money at about age 22 and I bought a flat in London. That gave me confidence. I kept every cent of what I earned. It was my back-door money; I think every girl needs some. Even if it's \$1,000, it gives you the freedom to say, "I'm outta here."

#### How long do you have to be married before you don't feel a need for back-door money?

I really don't think you ever do. I mean, Hans and I have a great marriage and we work together all of the time and you have to be friends, but it's also your duty to create an interesting life. If your whole life is >



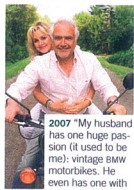
**1997** "The Painted House was my first series, and one of the first design shows in Canada. It was all about experimenting. So much went wrong, which made everyone comfortable to try new stuff."



**2004** "The *Facelift* gang was quite unique. This was mad, guerrilla-style TV. We literally 'followed the puck' of a huge renovation. We worked night and day like crazy people, but it was one big party."



**2006** "My boys are the happiest, coolest kids. And they still seem to want to come on vacations with us! I hated being with my parents at that age, but I wasn't as nice as they are."



**2007** "My husband has one huge passion (it used to be me): vintage BMW motorcycles. He even has one with a sidecar, which I refuse to go in."



going to yoga and meeting your friends, then soon [he] won't want you. It's boring.

#### Are you afraid of being alone?

I quite like being alone because I never am, but I think if anything happened to Hans, I'd pack it in.

#### On to brighter topics: The holidays are around the corner. Who's going to sit at your Christmas table?

Well, our family, and then my brother from New York – he has two small girls. We always have some neighbours. It's usually about 16 for dinner. Two years ago, we had a major fire just before dessert. The whole living room went down. So we had the firemen, too. When they put out the flames, everyone sat down and tucked into the plum pudding. The tradition in England, when I was a girl, was to find the threepence bit in the pudding. Here, I guess you put in a dollar. And of course everyone forgets to do it until the last minute, so you have to run back to the kitchen, stick it in, mush the pudding together, and present it to your guests.

#### What other traditions do you celebrate?

When I was young, we went to church and you weren't

allowed to open up your presents until later. Not that I do [church] today, but it's the waiting. I make the kids sit down. I make everyone have breakfast, so you do get that "Can I open my presents yet, can I, can I . . . ?"

And we always have champagne starting at 11 o'clock. I do the big traditional tree. Every year, we get more decorations. We gather them from school projects; some are leftovers from my TV shows. Our fairy looks like she's been [molested]: Her knickers are coming off; after all those years of the boys looking behind the tree to see her bottom, she's looking a little tatty.

#### What was your favourite Christmas present ever?

Two years ago my youngest son took all this old footage we had of the boys as kids and made a video with all of this great music. There wasn't a dry eye. Then my other son realized, "Where am I?" He'd cut him out.

It was really, really precious. I carry it with me on the computer, on the plane, and weep.

But really, to me as a mother, it is just important having everyone around the table. My mum used to say that. It's only when people are gone that you realize what they meant to you.

Just enjoy every minute. I live for today. •



## Debbie's top 10 Christmas survival tips

### 1 BUY FRAMES

"You can get miniature frames at a craft store, frame a fun picture of every family member and hang it on the tree, or use it as part of a Christmas-dinner place setting. The kids can get involved in the decorating. Even your grumpiest old aunt will love them."

### 2 INVEST IN FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

"I nearly burned my house down in the middle of Christmas dinner when I left candles on the living-room mantel. They ignited the Christmas cards and the tree was next. The upside was the kids thought the firefighters were part of the entertainment."

### 3 BE AWARE OF THE TIMELINE

"Knowing that a slew of guests is coming always kick-starts me into freshening up the house. Give yourself plenty of time. Remember everyone else is thinking the same thing, so orders are often delayed and tradespeople get very booked up."

### 4 CHECK THE BED

"If you have guests staying over, take a look at your bedding. I don't mean your linens; I mean what lurks underneath or inside those pillow covers and duvets. When did you last replace your old pillows? It should be every six months. Yes, I can see you blushing."

### 5 MAKE ODD ORNAMENTS

"One of the most inexpensive and fun decorations is snowflakes made from pipe cleaners. Grab six white pipe cleaners, then take a seventh one and wrap it around the centre of the bunch. Now twist the ends out and there is your funky snowflake."

### 6 HAVE A BOXING DAY PARTY

"My mother always had a Boxing Day open house and I've started doing that, and it's a highlight. People are traipsing in, the booze is flowing and the stress is over. Boxing Day is perfect, by New Year's, you're fed up and you just want to go back to work."

### 7 SEND HOLIDAY CARDS

"Sending a card to someone you haven't spoken to in years can rekindle or validate a friendship. I even give a card to my garbage collectors and they always seem thrilled. Though it might also be the bottles of Scotch I give them."

### 8 REDO THE POWDER ROOM

"If you're thinking of a little decorating for the holidays, try the powder room. Everyone takes a peek at it. Try an oversized wallpaper, spectacular in a tiny room, or a brilliant jewelled paint that you may be too nervous to use elsewhere."

### 9 BUY KRAFT PAPER

"Wrapping paper is the biggest waste of money. The cheap stuff ends up in shreds before the big day and expensive sheets often cost more than the gift. I buy white kraft paper and dress it up with a red wax seal and a velvet ribbon."

### 10 VOLUNTEER

"There are so many organizations that are desperate for an extra pair of hands over this stressful time of year. Involve your kids in some form of volunteering that is age-appropriate and I can guarantee that you will cherish the holidays so much more."

