



**O**f the inspirational quotes that ping daily on my phone, this is the one that resonates with me most at the moment — *'Life challenges are not supposed to paralyse you, they're supposed to help you discover who you are.'* Well, all I can say is, during the last few weeks at home I've discovered who I am, and I have to say I'm pretty damn impressed.

Foolishly I had thought recovering from having screws and rods fusing the disc along my vertebrae and trying to stay focused on this new healthy regime was going to be a challenge. Hell no, as it turns out, that would be the easy part.

While the first week at home post-op was definitely the hardest in terms of getting about and dressing myself, food as it turns out was not my major concern. The medication was pretty much doing what it said on the tin and keeping me pain-free and sleepy, so my appetite was pretty minimal.

However, as one of the keys to optimal recovery is a graduated walking programme which begins immediately after your back surgery, your appetite returns quickly enough. By week two I was starting to feel a lot more like myself, I was off the heavy meds and graduated to the big outdoors for my walks and living my best post-op life.

I had also slipped into a nice routine. Wake up because himself brings up a nice cup of tea before he heads off to work. Do my turtle impression and manage to get out of bed, then gradually make my way downstairs to one very happy dog, Jessie. She would greet me with the same gusto each morning and follow me around as I pottered about the house making copious cups of tea with no treats. Back upstairs after lunch to rest on my favourite internet purchase — a U-shaped pillow that keeps me aligned.

Everyone assumes that when you're recovering you'll simply be watching TV all day, but as sitting is limited to 20 minutes at a time for the first two weeks after surgery, you can't fully commit to Netflix. The afternoon passed quickly enough and my partner would make his triumphant return as myself and Jessie eagerly greeted him at the door for news of the outside world and the promised walk he would take us both on to the end of the estate.

Life indeed was good.

#### ENTER, THE UNIVERSE

However, another unexpected turn was just around the corner — literally. Heading into post-op week three, and I was feeling great. I was sticking to the plan my trainer Daniel Meany and the *elate.ie* team had devised.

Daniel says that progress (fat loss) can slow down around this stage (I've been on the programme 10 weeks at this point) as you can start to get a little complacent, so I need to change things up a bit. I'm going for two lean days which will see my fats under 20g daily, and one day in between with my fats at 50g, and then two lean days again.

Another 6 inches and 5lbs down, I'm on fire people, and think I'm about ready to try the intermittent fasting.

Delighted with myself that I hadn't spent any time lingering around the fridge looking for snacks, I felt ready to do a solo walking venture out.

Sometimes I think the universe is having a laugh. I've gone through my share of life challenges and you know what, I've reached my quota now. Lost both parents, check, comfort ate and drank to ease the pain of it, check.

Decide to get one's life together, check, have back surgery to increase quality of life, check, fall and break wrist while out walking to strengthen up my back. Check mate!

Yep, you hear right, while out walking, just me, not me and my dog, because I'm not allowed, no texting, no distractions, just walking, slowly, because that's the only pace I can do right now. One of the many lopsided paths that adorn our walkways took me down. I won't bore you the details, but a morphine-induced hospital ride later to hospital and a couple of hours in A&E and my broken wrist

#### FOCUS ON MIDLIFE HEALTH

**Audrey Kane (47)** continues her midlife fitness kick and is ready to return to work after her spinal surgery — but another health crisis is looming ...



Journalist Audrey Kane putting on a brave face after she broke her wrist  
PICTURE: DAMIEN EAGERS

# 'Having control over food helped my recovery'

was set in a cast and I was sent back home.

I honestly don't know what reserves got through that particular week. Friends and family rallied around and helped me over the worst of it. Between the back surgery and the broken wrist, I'm amazed how I didn't comfort eat, but I managed to stay strong.

I actually think having control over food helped me enormously. My changed mindset got me through this, let's call it what it is — s\*\*tstorm. Those first few weeks on the *elate.ie* programme had obviously done their work and I wasn't reaching for a sugary treat to comfort me or a couple of glasses of red wine to drown my sorrows. For the first time in a long time, I was in control again.

You think that's the happy ending, right? Because all good things come to those who wait... Really, do they? Because a week after my hand had been set in cast, it started to turn black — as did my mood.

I had given everything I had at this point and while food was no longer an issue, I could feel myself going lower as I knew the pain and death-like colour in my swollen fingers was not right.

So what do you do?

Well, as someone recovering from back surgery I couldn't sit in A&E all day waiting to be seen. So I count myself very lucky that

*'Those first few weeks on the elate.ie programme had obviously done their work and I wasn't reaching for a sugary treat to comfort me or a couple of glasses of red wine to drown my sorrows'*

I have VHI because I was seen to in the local Swiftcare clinic and within minutes the cast that was causing so much trouble was off. Don't get me started on the two-tier health system.

So now can we have a happy ending, I hear you and me cry.

Well, with a new cast came an instant new me and my mood dramatically improved. Another week later and I had graduated to a splint and that was the game changer. I was much more mobile again and had regained my confidence.

#### NEXT STOP SIZE 12

Housebound for an extra two weeks because of the wrist, I began working from home — mainly to keep sane and also to get paid. So I thought this was the perfect time to try the intermittent fasting.

It's called 16/8, so basically you eat for eight hours daily and fast for 16 (eight of which I plan to be asleep for), or you can do 20/4, which I'm not even considering at this point, so 16/8 it is. For two weeks I try this and it gets easier. I thought I would be starving without my breakfast, as I'm a routine kind of gal. But before I know it, I'm happily starting to eat 11.30am to 7.30pm on a regular basis. So another 6lbs shifted and another 6 inches and I'm OFFICIALLY A SIZE 14, having been a size 16+ for the last couple of years.

Trust me, after the summer I've had, the back, the wrist, the black dog gently knocking at the door, I know weight is not the be all and end all of life, but for me, I feel much more confident and comfortable and that makes me happy.

I've learned a lot of lessons during my time

off, no amount of happy-clappy inspirational quotes get you through the tough times, you need good people in your life because you can't do it alone. The older I get, the more I realise this. My Mam had amazing friends that helped her through when my Dad passed away, her Ladies Club, great neighbours and her wonderful sister Phyllis were the ones who picked her up. I'm grateful to them and grateful to my Mam for showing me that you need to let people in to help.

But before I return to work, I'm treating myself and my man (the eater of crisps on the couch) to dinner. There will be red wine involved, but only a small amount, pinky promise!

Now my next target is size 12, so I really need to knuckle down as I'm a lagging a bit behind the rest of the group I started with — the pressure is on.

#### PROGRESS REPORT:

- STATS: I have lost 2 stone 4lbs (14.5kg) and 46 inches (116cm)
- The leggings I had before the operation are now hanging off me
- I've reached another milestone — size 14
- I look so much slimmer across the shoulders and there's now definitely a waist
- I sleep almost straight through the night
- I wake up more refreshed and have a lot more energy

**Before you start any diet, it's always advisable to get checked out by your GP first. Next week in Midlife Health, Barbara continues her journey to better health. Catch up with Audrey on November 4th**