

Recently my best friend told me that her daughter (my goddaughter), who also has curly hair, had started wanting straight hair. That really upset me and made me think of how insecure I used to feel. I sent over a picture of myself with curly hair, and my friend told me that her daughter was so happy to see my curls and had gradually stopped asking for straight hair.

She is so beautiful, but she doesn't see that, and it reminded me of myself when I was younger. I didn't see the beauty in my natural state, but now I do. —*as told to Simone Kitchens*

Leona Lewis is coauthor of *lee-loy.com* and an MTV *Staying Alive* Foundation ambassador. Follow her @leonalewis.

“My face told me to stop partying.”

—Anna Breslaw, 30, writer

In my early twenties, my skin care regimen involved pounding vodka, dancing to Lady Gaga, bumming cigarettes, and forgetting to moisturize. But somehow I still rolled out of bed looking glowy and well-rested. People often assumed my younger sister was older. (Sorry, Beth!)

As time went on and the ragers decreased, booze found its way into my regular adult routine: a few fish-bowl-sized glasses of Riesling during *Bachelor*-viewing parties, a few beers at my desk when working late. But it was getting harder to handle. Hangovers knocked me out of commission for a full 24 hours. My work productivity, energy, and sex drive decreased. This led me to look up the official healthy drink count for women my age: seven drinks per week. Conservatively, I drank double that.

I set various boundaries: *Only red wine, like a French girl! No drinking on weekdays! No beer! Only clear liquor!* Each one inevitably failed for various reasons: *Red wine is weird with fish! My friend is free only on Tuesday! I am literally in a beer garden! Clear liquor is also weird with fish!* Alone at home, I'd take my empty bottles to the recycling before I passed out, so that the next morning I could pretend it hadn't happened.

Then, a few months into these half-hearted attempts to cut back, I met up with a former coworker. She threw down her card and ordered us a bottle of rosé. She's about 10 years older than me and was as funny, smart, and cool as I remembered. When we went outside to smoke, however, I noticed she looked a little puffy, her cheeks smattered with rosacea and her eyes a bit bloodshot. After we



parted ways, I wondered if I'd just gotten a glimpse of my own future.

The next morning I staggered to the office bathroom, hungover. Under the fluorescent lights, my face was blotchy, with tiny burst capillaries all over my nose. The whites of my eyes were more like pinks, and I had a new patch of rashy acne on the right side of my face. I took a selfie, returned to my desk, and spent the rest of the morning frantically googling (“blotchy skin alcohol,” “best clear skin products,” “30 year old scaly face help”).


Almost as horrifying as my face was a sudden awareness of my own vanity. Feeling like hot garbage after a bender was par for the course for me, and even the health risks had always felt too remote for me to worry about. Nothing had kicked me in the ass quite like the prospect of losing my looks. For years I'd privately been judging friends who'd splurge at Sephora on creams with names like “Cold Plasma.” I thought

obsessing about looks was shallow, linked to a *Real Housewife*-esque fear of aging. I'd inherited my mom's good skin, so I'd never had to worry about it before. But looking in that mirror, I finally got it: Skin care is *self-care*—treating yourself right, because you deserve to look the way you feel. I had been so judgmental.

This time, instead of relying on old wives' tales or advice on the Internet, I tracked my drink count on my phone. I found that I was still putting away twice the recommended limit, and that half those drinks were white wine, enjoyed solo in sweatpants. I wasn't only vain; I was basic too. Which led to Rule Number One: Stop buying wine for the house.

As for social drinking, my Kryptonite was a handful of party-girl Thelmas or my shit-faced Louise. These were acquaintances I had little in common with but who had figured out I was a sucker for a late weeknight meet-up at a dive bar. Even when I'd set a two-drink max, I'd end up staggering home at 2:30 in the morning. I could never resist their 11:45 P.M. texts—until I set that heinous bathroom selfie as my phone background. Rule Number Two: Decline these invitations with a text—*Sorry! already in my PJs*. Both rules, unlike the previous ones, didn't require me to say an absolute no to drinking; they just made it harder to say yes.

These may seem like small changes, but there was an almost-immediate effect on my skin. It turns out that when you're not passing out before the pizza delivery guy arrives, you have a lot of free time on your hands for new evening routines: toning, exfoliating, moisturizing, even masking. The new regimen, plus better sleep and more hydration, has made my skin clearer and brighter.

I'm not perfect. I still have crazy nights out, but they're only on special occasions with my closest friends—in other words, nights I've decided it would be worth waking up the next day looking like shit for. 

Anna Breslaw is based in New York. Follow her @annabreslaw.