

Sibling Rivalry or Healthy Motivation?

My sister is two years older than me and until recently, has always carried a bit more weight than I have. She was never athletic, didn't participate in any sports when she was younger and avoided working out throughout most of her adult life. Despite her complete lack of physical activity, she still possessed what I like to refer to as "freakish" upper body strength. I played tennis, rowed, cheered and even was the center on my high school field hockey team. I worked out, ran and lifted weights and yet to this day, I am slightly afraid of my sister. Her unique talent has come in quite handy over the years. She has beat up my boyfriends, threatened to hurt people who have scorned me and has scared me into my best behavior on many occasions. She is a multi-dimensional blessing.

But in recent years, as we both neared, entered and settled all too comfortably into our forties, something very odd happened. She maintained her curvy and subtly strong figure, while I blossomed into a future contestant on *The Biggest Loser*. I don't know exactly how it happened, but I'm blaming it on hormones. I think it is due to a volatile combination of depression, parenthood, self-medication, self-pity and fad diets. Yep, that's my story and I'm sticking to it. You see, my sister and I couldn't be more physically different. She has curly blonde hair, mine is brown and straight. Hers catches the sunlight in natural hues while mine has been gray for 20 years. She has an evenly proportioned body and can buy bras off of the rack. I have a rack that even after reduction surgery is more ample than I would like.

Last year my sister decided to join a gym. I was shocked when she told me because I hadn't ever heard her say that word before. When I regained my composure, I realized that she was serious. So with her in Connecticut and me in Florida, I wished her well and checked in every week to hear her sordid gym stories. After a few months she called me in a bit of a panic. "Jen, I have this weird lump on my stomach," she said. "Well, is it sore?" I asked, just a tad worried that perhaps she pulled a muscle working out. She paused and then answered, "No." I asked her if it was on both hips or just one. "Oh my gosh! It's on both hips!" I asked her several more questions and tried to deduce what it could be. But in spite of my incredible super powers, I was unable to diagnose her from 1500 miles away. "Take a picture with your phone and send it to me," I said.

Three minutes of laughter, two gasps for breath and one box of tissues later, I finally got the words out. "Those, my dear sister," I said, "are your hips!" After another good laugh, a few Atta Girls and Love You's, I hung up. I walked into my bathroom, lifted up my shirt and looked longingly at where my own hips should be. I walked into my closet and rifled through my entire collection of Beach Body videos, resistance bands and work-out outfits and finally decided on P90X. I love my sister. I'm finally okay with her being blond and me being a mousy brunette. And I've even accepted that she may always be stronger than me. But I'll be damned if I'm gonna let her look hotter than I do! I don't think of it as sibling rivalry. I prefer to call it healthy motivation! Wish me luck!