

S T E I L A



← Before

She had lived with her slightly wonky nose for three decades. So what made Annabel Fenwick Elliott suddenly put herself under the knife?

Why I had a nose job at 31

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a magazine editor tasked me with an experiment on beauty standards, whereby I visited five top cosmetic surgeons in Los Angeles and asked what they'd do to make my face 'perfect'. The idea? To see whether they'd say the same thing or whether their concepts of perfection varied.

Their verdicts were unanimous: my nose needed fixing. It threw the rest of my face off-balance, they said. I wasn't surprised or offended. I felt vindicated in my long-held view that my snout wasn't quite right; a little too wide, too masculine, with a bump I could do without.

It would be a gross exaggeration to say I hated my nose or it made me self-conscious. I only

noticed it in photos and even then, as someone moderately but not overtly vain, it annoyed me, but never consumed me. It was like driving a perfectly acceptable VW hatchback and occasionally wondering how nice it would be to buy a Lexus saloon.

Then something happened. In moving banks last year, I idly checked my once-dismal credit rating and was surprised to find things were looking up. I was 31, steadily employed and loan-worthy. Like the slave to consumerism that I am, I pondered my options and for whatever reason, kept coming back to my nose.

Symmetry is attractive, it just is. We all want to be more attractive, we just do. Google before-and-after photos of actors

→ After



Hair and make-up: Freya Danson Hatcher at S Management. Additional photography: Tereza Cervenova

Photography
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and you'll see what a drastic difference a tweak to the nose can make. A-listers aside, several factors convinced me to go ahead. Rhinoplasty is one of the oldest, safest, most practised cosmetic procedures in history. Unlike breast augmentation, for example, it's a refinement, not an addition, and requires no maintenance. Perhaps most surprisingly of all, it's as good as painless – swelling and bruising are guaranteed, but the nose itself will be numb, not sore.

RECOVERING FROM SURGERY

These are things I say with confidence now. Pre-operation, I was cautious. It didn't help that there was no one I could talk to about it. Nobody, except a plastic surgeon, will agree it's a good idea to change your nose.

Nevertheless, I booked consultations. Surgeons scrutinised my face and all returned with the same plan: file down the bump, narrow the sides, slightly nip in the nostrils and lift the tip. It's done by making a small incision between the nostrils, lifting the

skin to reveal the cartilage and finessing the shape with a scalpel.

I was asked by all three of them which celebrity noses I admired (Kate Beckinsale, Emma Watson), seemingly as some sort of test, since the follow-up disclaimer is that you can't just pick any shape; it has to complement the rest of your face. While near-perfect symmetry is the



aim, total symmetry is not; the latter resulting in the sort of Barbie shape popular in the 1990s.

Surgeons differed in other ways. One suggested local anaesthetic: a flat no. Another claimed to be the best in London, probably in the world, and said I'd make a grave error in choosing anyone else – gag-inducing arro-

gance. The third, Tunc Tiryaki, a sprightly specialist with a blend of creativity and technical prowess, was just right. Pricier, though – rhinoplasty in the UK generally costs between £3,000 and £5,000, while Tiryaki charges upwards of £7,000. Still, the last thing I'd scrimp on is my face.

As we pored through his portfolio, Tiryaki mentioned a stem-cell rejuvenation he could do during the rhinoplasty to boost volume and definition around the cheekbones and jawline. I

THE RESULT, SEVEN MONTHS ON

surprised myself when I said yes.

The date set, preparations begin. I'll need two weeks out of the office on account of the horrifying state my face will be in: two black eyes and a nose splint. Fortunately for me, my boss agrees I can work from home.

In the week running up to the big event, I have banal but anxious dreams, the sort that plague you before an exam. I have moments of guilt over rearranging the face my parents gave me. I watch endless YouTube videos

of patients going under anaesthesia. Every time Michael Jackson's whittled-down nose leaps to mind, I google A-listers again.

The morning comes and I teeter into the clinic, hungry (nil by mouth), but on autopilot. I stand before a mirror as my modern-day Michelangelo traces crayon dots on my face to guide his scalpel. A last farewell to the



bump on my nose, and I'm ready.

I'm wheeled into theatre. It's cold and seven faces hover over me. Tiryaki takes my clammy hand and, as the anaesthetist readies his needle, performs the charade of distraction all doctors do before they operate: 'What cocktail can we serve you today – martini or bellini? Off we go...'

I'm awake suddenly, cast on nose, nostrils packed with cotton wool, high as a kite and full of energy. Tiryaki tells me it's gone well and of a discovery: it's likely I broke my nose as a child as I had a deviated septum, which had been limiting airflow ever since. This has been corrected.

I'm soon sent home with strict instructions to stay in bed, ice my rapidly bruising face and sleep propped upright, as if in a chair, to lessen the swelling. Within three hours, both eyes are purple, with one sealed shut, and I sound like Donald Duck. No cold can prepare you for the sensation of an entirely blocked nose. If you'd taped my mouth shut, I'd have suffocated. But I'm pain-free and hyper, until finally succumbing to sleep, upright.

I wake the next morning, flat on my back, throat dry, eyes puffed up like ping-pong balls and a head the size of a watermelon. My nose is the only part that doesn't hurt.

With a scarf over my ghoulish face to avoid frightening any children, my mother bundles me into the car and drives me to the clinic for my follow-up. Tiryaki tuts as soon as he sees me. I

clearly hadn't rested enough and had slid into a horizontal position during my sleep. He tugs the packing out from my nostrils, stems the gushing blood until it stops, and sends me home. From then on, I take it easy.

The next nine days present a tedious cycle of icing my puffy eyes, reapplying arnica to bruises, going to sleep sitting up and waking on my back with a massive head. There's no pain, only boredom and cabin fever. Days pass, the swelling subsides and

I challenge an old friend to guess what's changed. After much squinting, his hypothesis is that I've had a haircut

my black eyes pass through the bruise gradient from red to dark purple, blue to green, then yellow. By day 10, it's time for the cast to come off: the most nerve-racking bit of the process.

Tiryaki had already sent me a photo of my new nose, taken as soon as he'd finished the surgery and before the bruising had started, and I'll be honest, it looked all wrong – the tip far too large, the slopes too narrow. There's no running from my re-

flection as I sit before the mirror in his office for the final time, and he gently pries off the cast. The verdict? I couldn't be more delighted. The bump is gone. My face has fallen into balance.

Day 11, I'm back at work with the remnants of the black eyes, which draw far more attention than the nose. In fact, as Tiryaki predicted, no one I hadn't told about the surgery notices anything different, except for my phone: I have to rescan my features for face ID. A month later,

I have dinner with an old friend and challenge him to guess what's changed. His best hypothesis, after much squinting, is that perhaps I've had a haircut. I hadn't told my father I was having the procedure, nor my grandmother, and to this day neither are any the wiser. Unless they read this, in which case it's too late to talk me out of it.

Looking back at those first photos, I can see my nose was a little *too* symmetrical, too 'off

the shelf'. That settled over the next few weeks and months, and – Tiryaki informs me – it will continue to for around a year.

Given that these changes proved so unnoticeable, you might say the whole 'transformation' was pointless, and you'd have a valid point. But I was never hoping to look obviously different. Equally, I used to think people were lying when they insisted they'd had cosmetic surgery for themselves, not anyone else. Now I'm one of them.

It's been seven months since my operation and it's had no bearing on how others perceive me. I don't have a newly eager queue of handsome suitors at my door, but the personal novelty of having a straight nose hasn't worn off. When I catch my side profile in a photo, a little jolt of satisfaction ensues.

It's not unlike straightening a wonky picture on the wall. Whether or not anyone notices is irrelevant. I feel, in a small way, corrected. For my own reasons, that feels satisfying. ▀

If a friend wanted cosmetic surgery, would you support them? Join the conversation at [instagram.com/telegraphstella](https://www.instagram.com/telegraphstella)