

The global superstar is all about strength: the power to find her voice, the maturity to accept her insecurities, and the confidence to let us peek inside her fridge.

RISING

VANESSA

BY
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Tna for Aritzia jacket, \$178, aritzia.com; **Eberjey** bra, \$38, eberjey.com; **Sweaty Betty** sweatpants, \$180, sweatybetty.com; **Calvin Klein Underwear** bikini, \$20, calvinklein.com; **The M Jewelers** nameplate necklace, from \$130, themjewelersny.com (worn throughout); **Sasha Samuel** locket, \$295, sashasamuel.com (worn throughout); **Mediterraneo Studio** earrings, \$70, mediterraneo.studio (worn throughout); **Isabel Lenise** bracelet (worn as anklet), \$220, modaoperandi.com



Phat Buddha hoodie, \$84, phatbuddhaweare.com; **Araks** bikini bottom, \$105, araks.com; **Tai Jewelry** ring, \$65, taijewelry.com



A month before her *Women's Health* photo shoot, Vanessa Hudgens began intermittently fasting. But her primary purpose wasn't to slim down. Her goal was simple: to feel healthier.

Sitting on the couch in her quaint Mediterranean-style Los Angeles home with her tiny rescue pup, Darla, Vanessa explains the inspiration. After noticing how vibrant a friend on the eating pattern (which involves cycling between periods of fasting and eating) was, she became curious. "He is literally pulling a Benjamin Button," says Vanessa, who turns 30 this month. "Homeboy is aging backward!" So she gave it a shot and proved to herself she could keep it up. Of course, she's not afraid to indulge in pizza and wine here and there. "You've gotta pick and choose your time," she says. "It's about having priorities."

After nearly 15 years in the spotlight, the actress-singer-designer, who stars with Jennifer Lopez in this month's rom-com *Second Act*, has taken a deep dive into wellness and self-acceptance. Consider her body philosophy as a case in point:

"If I ever get to the point that I'm not happy with my body, I'll do something about it," she says. "You will always have the power to do something. Sometimes it will take a little longer than you would like, and sometimes it may be a little more extreme. But if you honestly have a goal, you can do it. You just need to figure out the right way to get there."

A few years ago, Vanessa was on a mission to change her mindset. She'd spent years feeling inadequate—and finally realized why. "Because I'm very petite, I've always felt that women who are taller are smarter and more powerful," says Vanessa, who is 5'3". "I would feel less than because of my size. I see how women who are 5'9" walk into a room, and I am so attracted to

the space they take up. But then I started to realize that you can take up space without height—with your achievements, points of view, and opinions. Now that I've realized I can work through it, I'm like, 'How do I make myself feel more confident?'"

She's found dressing the part is one way to amp up her courage. Catch her in a suit (as in, a legit pantsuit), for instance, and know she's feeling herself. She hopes the suit line she recently designed—in partnership with Suitsupply's new Suistudio brand—inspires other women to feel powerful. Exercise, of course, is another tool. Her latest obsession: SoulCycle. "Leaving the room knowing that I'm stronger than when I got there helps boost my confidence," she says. "Working out is like moving meditation. I feel you can work through things better in movement than being stagnant. You're pushing through and surviving, and you know you will succeed and get through it no matter how uncomfortable it is. That spills into life, 'cause then you can walk into things with more certainty that you'll end up all right."

Vanessa is ready to make major waves.



BEAUTY TIP

Give your summer glow a second act. Just tap SinfulColors Face Forward Allover Highlighting Stick in Rose Glow (\$7, amazon.com) on your cheekbones and blend.

Abercrombie & Fitch coat, \$180, abercrombie.com; **Araks** tank, \$110, and bra, \$78, araks.com; **Lulus** shorts, \$30, lulus.com

Hair: Chad Wood at The Wall Group using Redken Makeup. Allan Avendaño using Flesh Beauty at Starworks Artists. Manicure: Kimmie Kyees at Celestine Agency

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Vanessa fits in at least six workouts a week, mixing cycling with Pilates, ballet, Training Mate classes (circuit-based HIIT developed by an Australian rugby player), yoga (which she and her boyfriend, actor Austin Butler, often do together), and hikes with girlfriends. “To be self-motivated consistently is almost a daydream,” she says. “I reach out to friends to hold me accountable.” When she does, they better be ready to get up at dawn, because morning workouts are Vanessa’s jam.

What she prefers to do solo is pamper herself. “I’ve fallen in love with taking care of my skin,” she says, pausing to sip from her coffee cup and gaze out the open patio doors into her backyard, as the Chet Baker Pandora station plays softly in the background. The framed black-and-white photo of Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* near the grand piano seems to stand out more now as she says, “It feels like a form of self-love every time I put on some Billie Holiday, light a candle, and apply my face mask and my serums and use my lights.” (She’s referring to her LightStim kits, which emit multiple wavelengths of light to reduce signs of aging and prevent breakouts.) “I look at that as self-care.”

Today, with her hair pulled back by a leopard-print headband, Vanessa is makeup-free and glowing. She attributes her clear complexion not only to her beauty routine but also to her pescatarian diet. She ditched meat about a year ago after watching the Paul McCartney–PETA documentary, *Glass Walls*. “I used to be the girl who ate bacon for breakfast every single morning,” she says. But when she lets me look inside her fridge, it’s clear her new practice has stuck.

Inside, there is a large container of arugula, which she says she eats “almost every day,” cans of Celsius Sparkling Watermelon energy drink, kombucha (“It’s full of probiotics, but you get a nice little buzz!”), cashew cheese, almond milk, oat milk, eggs, avocados, ceviche, shrimp cocktail (“left over from a party”), and grapes. “I love finding things that are good for you and also taste amazing,” she says. An antioxidant smoothie packed with acai berries, blueberries, banana, and coconut oil is another diet staple. “I try to get enough healthy fats, protein, and foods that give me energy.”

With 30 just around the corner, Vanessa says she’s heard stories about how her body may change with age. But she admits it started changing when she was only 18, not long after the rise of *High School Musical*, the blockbuster Disney flick that put her on the map. “We were getting ready to go on the second leg of our

tour, and it had been only two or three months, but the costume would not fit over my butt,” she remembers. “So I had to pull it on over my head, and then it wouldn’t zip up all the way, and I was like, ‘What do you mean I can’t eat Hot Cheetos and rice and beef jerky every day?’ So I had to start making changes at an early age.” Change often comes with sacrifice. “When I do a scene that requires me to not have a lot of clothes on, I definitely get very strict with myself and cut sugar and carbs.”

Sacrifices aside, now Vanessa is closer than she’s ever been to achieving her ideal level of physical and mental strength. “In my 20s, I was still trying to find my voice,” she says. “I was afraid of confrontation. The biggest thing I’m trying to implement in my life now is valuing my words and letting them be known.”

Moving forward also means establishing a new set of personal goals. “I want to get married, travel, then have kids—probably in my late 30s,” she says. At a time when a lot of her peers are getting engaged quickly, Vanessa says she and Austin are happily taking their time. “Everyone’s clock is different,” she says, acknowledging that her seven-year relationship is impressive in Hollywood. “He inspires me more than anyone,” she says of why they work so well. “We both respect, trust, and admire each other. It’s so solid now because I feel strong as an independent woman. I am very self-reliant, but it’s nice to have a best friend you can share victories with as well as losses.”

Maturity and power go hand in hand for Vanessa, who seems to be in a perpetual state of self-improvement. “It’s a constant learning process,” she says of this whole adulting thing. “But I feel like it should be.” We—and the rest of the world—can’t wait to see what she learns next.