



life lessons

JOANNA ROMANOWSKA APPEARANCE MEDICINE SPECIALIST

When I was 8 my parents decided to leave Poland. Because Poland was communist they couldn't tell anybody and it was difficult to get passports for the whole family. It took a year. All that my sister and I knew was that we were going on holiday to Switzerland. Then we were told, "no, we're going to Africa". It was very different and exciting. From then on I wanted to travel. I meant to stay in New Zealand for only a couple of months. That was 16 years ago.

One of the toughest things I did was working as a GP in South Africa in a rural area. On one memorable night I had a man brought in with a stab wound, in shock. Then a woman came in bleeding profusely. The electricity went out, so there I was with the nurse, resuscitating by candlelight.

I enjoy the flexibility of doing general practice in a really low socio-economic area like South Auckland and appearance medicine at Clinic 42 in a very different socio-economic area. It's very hands-on and practical, so it keeps me balanced.

I do work long hours but I balance this by trying to get some outdoor exercise. I love sailing and windsurfing. I walk when I can. Meditation calms me down when I'm rushing around like a mad thing. I try to get outdoors whenever I can.

I did a very small procedure on a lady who was quite upset about the lines on her upper lip. She said it made her feel so good she was inspired to go on a diet and start exercising. She lost eight kilos in five months and she looked fabulous. She also changed her work hours so she could spend more time with her family. I still get goosebumps thinking that I was privileged enough to be associated with this huge change in this lady's life, making such a tiny change to her appearance.

It's what animates a person's appearance that is critical to how they look. There was a guy in my class at med school who was absolutely drop-dead gorgeous but not very interesting. After a while I stopped seeing him as attractive.

I'm very comfortable with how I look. We all have flaws but I don't focus or obsess about mine. I'm also very aware of how making a small change for the positive can have overwhelming benefits. So I do look after my skin and love the benefits of the procedures at the clinic.

One of the biggest misconceptions about what I do is that it's about vanity. I often see people who are going through a bad time in their lives, a break-up for example, and these procedures make them feel better, it aids their healing. That's what I love about this job. I make people look and feel good. ©

Rebecca Barry

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