

GAME
CHANGERS
UNCENSORED

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ENJOY THE STORY!



REESE **RULES!**

No wonder she's America's...sweetheart? Don't even go there. Yeah, yeah, yeah—she's adorable. But she's also a bona fide game changer, championing women in ways that go far beyond Hollywood. Here, the actress and activist reveals how anyone can own her own power.

By Lori Majewski

CUTE SHIRT!

It's from Reese's clothing line, Draper James, named for her grandparents Dorothea Draper and William James Witherspoon. "We develop the prints based on antique textiles from the textile library in North Carolina and in Virginia," the actress explains. Draper James top, \$295, draperjames.com



Something is about to interrupt Reese Witherspoon's perfect day. We're at her *WH* photo shoot in the picturesque Pacific Palisades, and the Oscar winner is looking like a full-on goddess, highlighted blonde hair billowing in the ocean breeze, skin dewy and flawless, striking pose after gorgeous pose when...*look out!* A hideous insect the size of a golf ball flies into the frame. Everyone on set recoils in horror; some even shriek. But not our heroine, who reaches out her immaculately manicured hands and catches the damn thing. "I like bugs," Reese shrugs, sending the big guy on its way.

Like one of those Russian nesting dolls, Reese has depth and is full of surprises. This whole bug incident is a microexample of who she is within: a woman who knows what she wants and isn't afraid to confront problems with a direct, no-bullshit approach. Take the issue of one-note parts for Hollywood actresses. While plenty of her peers have spent years complaining about the dearth of meaty, nuanced parts that reflect the complexities of IRL women, Reese has literally flipped the script. In 2012, the now 39-year-old partnered with Australian producer Bruna Papandrea to launch Pacific Standard, a production

company dedicated to finding and developing female-driven projects. During their first two years alone, Reese and Bruna succeeded in getting two überpopular page-turners from book to big screen (Gillian Flynn's thriller *Gone Girl* and Cheryl Strayed's memoir *Wild*), which is more than some other producers accomplish in a decade.

The New Orleans-born, Nashville-raised star has also used her celebrity to remind people that women's value lies in their brains, not their looks. She's a tireless advocate for the Malala Fund, which fights for girls' rights to education, and during this year's Oscar season, she joined the #AskHerMore campaign urging reporters to treat women as more than clothes hangers on the red carpet. "We are happy...to talk about the work that we've done," she told Robin Roberts. Today, of her take-charge attitude, she tells *Women's*

Health: "I got tired of other people being the architect of my destiny. I know too much; I've done too much."

Not that she plans on doing less anytime soon. After orchestrating the optioning of Liane Moriarty's blockbuster book *Big Little Lies* for a 2016 HBO series that's being coproduced with Nicole Kidman's Blossom Films, she snagged the production rights to first-time author Jessica Knoll's dark, twist-filled novel, *Luckiest Girl Alive*, before it was even out, never mind a *New York Times* best-seller.

But as much as she's learned and gained from books, Reese will tell you there's no better teacher than real, messy life. So on this magazine's 10th anniversary—and only a few months from Reese's 40th birthday—we asked one of the world's most inspiring women exactly what it takes to harness her power...and how you can harness yours. ►

"Physical strength is important."

#TRUTH. So what does the mother of three do to stay fit? Grabs her girlfriends, for one! "There's a group of us, and I'm like, 'Okay, girls! What are we doing today?'" says Reese. Often, it's a Body by Simone class (bodybysimone.com, locations in New York City and West Hollywood). "It incorporates dance, strength training, and stretching, and it's all in an hour, which is perfectly doable for me. I do that a couple of times a week. I also run, I spin, I do yoga." Done and done.

FASHION EDITOR: JACQUELINE AZRIA; HAIR: LONA VIGI FOR NEXXUS; NEW YORK SALON CARE CELEBRITY STYLIST/THE MAGNET AGENCY MAKEUP: MAI QUYNH FOR LANCÔME/STARWORK ARTISTS; MANICURE: AMY RUIZ; PAM & GEL DRESS: SYDNEY EVAN NECKLACE: DAVID YURMAN BRACELET (LEFT); EF COLLECTION BANGLE (RIGHT); DRAPER JAMES TOP, JOE'S JEANS, ZOE CHICCO NECKLACE, MELISSA KAYE RING, DRAPER JAMES TOP, CITIZEN OF HUMANITY JEANS, ARIK KASTAN BRACELET, RINGS (FROM LEFT); ZOE CHICCO, CARRIE HOFFMAN, JEANNIE KWON

1. PURPOSE

“Having a daughter and wanting her to see real women reflected on film is so important to me. People say, ‘Oh, you’ve got to talk about [gender-inequality in Hollywood].’ Talking about it has never been that effective. I like when people *do* something about it. I realize I have a finite amount of time. I want to facilitate opportunities for other women by buying the books that have female leads and choosing to hire female interns. I refer to it as finding the right space and being aware of what’s missing.”

2. AMBITION

“How wonderful it would be for our culture not to see ambition as an ugly thing within a woman’s personality! In our society, when we see women who want to succeed or who view themselves as leaders, it’s like, ‘How arrogant!’ Well, I think it’s fantastic. I knew when I was looking for a producing partner, I wanted somebody whose skills were completely different from mine but [whose goals were] just as lofty. Bruna’s a powerhouse. We both wanted to show women doing different things. Women aren’t always good in our movies; sometimes they’re not very trustworthy. *Gone Girl* is a good example—it’s an interesting study of female nature.”

3. SUPPORT

“While I was making [2010’s *How Do You Know*], I met this great coach, Sue Enquist—she guided the UCLA softball team to four national championships. She said, ‘Thirty percent of the people you meet every day are going to lift you up; 30 percent are going to be neutral; 30 percent are going to bring you down. Don’t spend your life with the bottom third.’ Successful women don’t have a lot of time for people who don’t lift them up. There are a lot of people in life who want to tear you down or get you involved in their drama. That’s a big life lesson that is

hard to learn when you’re young, but as I get older, I see women weeding people out of their lives. This is healthy. You don’t need to be a good friend to someone who’s not a good friend to you. You don’t even need to be a good daughter or sister or wife to somebody who’s not good to you. It goes that far.”

4. CHARITY

“When I started [my new lifestyle and clothing company] Draper James, it was so important to me to give back to women who are entrepreneurial. Girls Inc. has created incredible programs all over the U.S. that empower women economically. This month, Draper James is going to

start funding a Girls Inc. initiative: It’s about economic education and financial education, so moms and their daughters can learn [things like] how to invest, what a mortgage is, how you start a business.”

5. GRIT

“That pit in your stomach, like you’re going to be asked to do something you can’t accomplish? I still haven’t conquered that. Every time I start a film, I’m terrified. But the worry isn’t helping, you know? Run the worst-case scenario, like, ‘The worst thing is the movie’s not going to do well, and I’m going to get bad reviews.’ That’s already happened in my life, and I didn’t die.” ■



REESE ON DENIM
“Embellishments like frayed edges or gold buttons elevate it a bit, so it’s more grown-up.” Ditto thin lines of white piping. Draper James shirt, \$150, draperjames.com

Reese’s Must-Reads

The self-proclaimed “book dork” and lover of female authors from Alice Munro and Aimee Molloy to Ann Patchett and Anna Quindlen (and that’s just the A’s!) names three titles every woman should have on her shelf.

Tiny Beautiful Things: Advice on Love and Life from Dear Sugar, by Cheryl Strayed

“It’s an advice column, and it pretty much covers any question you would have. She’s insightful and loving and kind, but very direct and honest.”

The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours, by Marian Wright Edelman

“This book really changed my life. It’s a letter she wrote to

her sons for their 18th birthday on how to be a good person. She’s an incredible advocate for children’s rights in our country, and she also worked with Dr. King.”

Birds of America, by Lorrie Moore

“It’s a slice of all different kinds of women in our country at different stages in their lives and different places. Lorrie just writes with humor and intellect; she’s been one of my favorite writers all my life.”