

Michelle Law hair loss is something to be embraced.

I've had alopecia for a long time. When I was an infant, my mum started noticing bald patches on my scalp and took me to a doctor. The doctor said the patches would go away, and they did.

As a young girl, I was very hair obsessed. It was the one thing I had going for me at school, where I was the token Asian kid. People liked it because it was shiny and it made me look like Toad from Super Mario Brothers.

This obsession carried on through to my early adolescence, when I played with my hair a lot, and thought I was pretty cool when I definitely wasn't.

When my hair started falling out in my first year of high school, I didn't know what was happening. First, it started thinning. Then, it started coming out in clumps.

I started wearing a bandana and I got asked a lot of questions about it, mainly to do with cancer, lesbianism, and religious extremism. I was bullied and found it difficult connecting with people because they either avoided me or harassed me until I told them the truth, although I wasn't comfortable with the truth myself.

In grade eleven, my hair started growing back randomly, by the end of university it had grown back, except for a few patches. I got a boyfriend. I graduated. I broke up with my boyfriend. Started working. Met someone else. Found my feet.

And then it fell out again. But I was OK with it.

I've been partially or completely bald for most of my life, and in many ways I still struggle to cope with this. So I've developed a three-step guide to survival for bald women during times of crises.

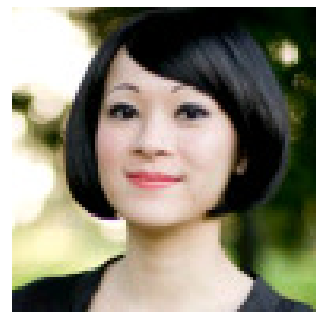
Step 1. Know Your Worth

Step 2. Embrace Baldness

Step 3. Be Visible

There's a high chance my hair may never grow back, and I don't want to spend my life believing that I am lesser than someone who has head hair. I don't want to be someone who hides when her doorbell rings. I don't want to be someone who's afraid to go outside on a windy day. I don't want to be someone who spends all night scrubbing glue off her face until her skin is red raw because wearing adhesive eyebrows was a bad idea. I don't want to be these things because I have been all my life.

I'm ready for openness; I'm ready for people to be challenged; and I'm ready for bald women to feel empowered. I don't want to spend my life merely surviving as a bald woman. I'd much prefer to live.



www.aaaf.org.au "Parts of this story were originally performed

by Michelle Law at TEDxSouthBankWomen in her speech 'A Bald Woman's Guide to Survival' on Saturday 1st of December at the independently organised event".