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Oprah at home  
in Santa Barbara  
with the kids

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January 2006

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Oprah and Geena Davis  
on set, page 116.

*“Commander in Chief is entertainment—but seeing a woman as president week after week makes people comfortable with the idea.”*

—GEENA DAVIS, PAGE 116

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# january

the first **30** days

A woman's legs, wearing a black dress, are visible through a large, bold '30' graphic. Her right hand is resting on the top edge of the '3' and the '0'. The background is a light-colored surface with faint, repeating text patterns.

day 1

**Getting Healthy** Starting  
life isn't so hard (how many times have we all done it?). *Staying* starts  
people through the first make-or-break month of a



BEGINNINGS ARE SO SEDUCTIVE. WHAT'S as intoxicating as a new leaf, a clean slate, a fresh calendar? Jazzed and hopeful, you get rolling on that weight loss or job hunt or home repair or relationship rehab. And you think, *This will be the start of something big!*

*Maybe too big*, you think not long after that. *Exhaustingly, paralyzingly big.*

Nobody doubts the wisdom of the Chinese adage “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” It’s just that we can’t stop focusing on the “thousand miles” part. We start wondering where we’ll get the energy for step two. And then there we are, teetering on one foot, 999.9 miles from our goal.

But suppose that journey were to begin with a month’s worth of 24/7 guidance from experts? Ariane de Bonvoisin, a management consultant and former Time Warner executive, has launched a Web site to provide just such support. She’s the founder and CEO of [first30days.com](http://first30days.com), which offers compassionate but no-nonsense advice for successfully navigating the first difficult month of a huge range of challenges, from getting married to adopting a baby to living a healthier life.

“I’m used to coping with change,” says De Bonvoisin, 33. As the daughter of a journalist mother and an international banker father, she lived in six countries before she turned 18. “Still, I noticed some years ago that every time I started a new job, I went through an initial period of anxiety, insecurity, and confusion, thinking, *I’m not good enough for this job. They’re not giving me any work. Maybe I made the*

*wrong decision.*” A lightbulb went on, she says. “I thought, *Either I’m not growing up or this is pretty much inevitable and universal.*” Curious to test her theory, she conducted surveys at Starbucks and Home Depot, asking new employees to track their first 30 days. “They all felt the way I did at the start of a new job.”

De Bonvoisin decided to organize a bank of experts and an online support group to help people soar through the first month of a job and other changes that seemed even more overwhelming—getting fired, for example, or coping with a serious illness or making your biggest dreams come true. “Thirty days was a manageable chunk of time,” she says. “Not so long that it seems impossible, not so short that you don’t get some momentum going.” Narrowing the horizon was a way to make things doable and thus sustainable. Science confirms her intuition: Researchers have found that new habits, practiced diligently, can be cemented in three weeks; that’s how long it takes the brain to create fresh neural pathways that hard-wire the new behavior.

“I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE NEED MOST when they’re going through change,” says De Bonvoisin. “It’s information, the right resources, and inspiration from others who’ve been through the experience.” The site is designed as an interactive community, with places for people to share their mistakes and discoveries, give one another encouragement, and get advice from credentialed professionals. Because this time of year is to change what May is to golf, *O* asked De Bonvoisin to tap some of the experts featured in the site’s 30 Days to Living Healthier section. Check out, for example, methods for sticking to a fitness regimen from Brad Pitt’s personal trainer, ways to eat better from Andrew Weil, MD, and suggestions from a Stanford University sleep researcher on getting a good night’s rest—as important to health as eating well, she says.

You may find that the journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step...and a double click.

role new physically invigorating, nutritionally virtuous, mentally balanced the trick. We asked Ariane de Bonvoisin, who runs a Web site that coaches enterprise, to pick a posse of experts and get us going—the right way. ➔

photograph by fredrik broden



## This year I will exercise right....

Martha Gulati, MD

Cardiologist, Northwestern University

*Are there any myths, assumptions, or mistakes that people make about fitness and exercise?*

**Gulati:** The big mistake that we see is from the New Year's warriors, who make a commitment the first 30 days to do everything right. They cut everything out and have this impossible regimen to follow. That never works.

*What do women really need to know about exercise?*

**Gulati:** We've been studying about 6,000 women from the Chicago area since 1992. We found that there is a different optimal fitness level for everyone's age group. The simplest way of describing that level is, How hard are you working out?

We measure that by metabolic equivalents, or METS. The equation you'll need to find your age-predicted fitness level is  $METS = 14.7 - (0.13 \times \text{age})$ . Although METS used to be quite a foreign term, nowadays METS readers are on almost all cardio equipment. We're hoping women will begin to recognize that number, because it has huge implications for their long-term health.

We found that if you're performing at 100 percent of your age-predicted fitness level, or at least 85 percent, in ten years you're more likely to be alive than those who don't hit that level. In fact, those who are performing at less than 85 percent are twice as likely to die from any cause and, actually, two and a half times more likely to die from cardiac causes.

*So if I'm on the treadmill, what number should be my goal?*

**Gulati:** For example, a 60-year-old woman would have to reach about seven METS to achieve 100 percent of her age-predicted fitness level. So if she sees a seven on the METS area on that treadmill, she should feel pretty proud of herself. If she is not there, she should be trying to achieve it; and that, of course, requires an exercise prescription from your physician or your trainer. A 30-year-old woman who is doing seven METS is achieving only 62 percent

of her age-predicted fitness level. I'd hope she would work on improving her fitness level. The following is a chart of various METS goals:

Age	100 percent METS	85 percent METS
30	11	9
35	10	8.5
40	9.5	8
50	8	7
60	7	6

*What can people reasonably expect to change within 30 days?*

**Gulati:** From my clinical experience, the first 30 days are the hardest—particularly the first two weeks. Making exercise a priority, a pattern, and a part of your life is really a long-term commitment. But if you can keep with it for a month, you can keep with it forever. The first two weeks people usually feel tired, sore, and exhausted, and some feel like they are gaining weight because they are getting muscle—they're always jumping on the scale and getting discouraged. I want people to get hung up on the right numbers, like METS.

## I will give up guilt....

Gregory Joujon-Roche

Certified personal trainer whose clients have included Brad Pitt, Rachel Weisz, and Demi Moore

*What do people do wrong when they start a new fitness regimen?*

**Joujon-Roche:** They overeat, undereat, eat late, skip meals, don't drink enough water. Those are the big ones. People also carry a lot of guilt. Nothing is worse than eating a bad carb and then feeling guilty about it. If you are going to have the cake, have it with both hands—go in there, roll around in it, love that cake. I can't tell you how many people will drag that cake issue so it ruins their next day. If you fall off the wagon, let it pass.

*What can people expect to face in the first month?*

**Joujon-Roche:** Week one, you're full of optimism, new information, new feelings in your body, and you're using new muscles, following a new eating regimen. You're

starting to see some results. Life hasn't taken over your schedule yet—you've postponed parties, business dinners, and other commitments.

Week two: You're doing...okay. Clothes fit a bit better already, but the nutrition aspect is hard to maintain because social obligations creep in.

Week three: Expect a plateau—you won't likely be dropping pounds now. You might start feeling negative, but this is the time to keep your head down and show up. Focus on how you feel, not numbers, at this stage.

Week four: This is when you reevaluate your regimen. Ask yourself, *What can I do better? What can I do differently?* Now increase the challenge.

## I will be realistic with my exercise plan....

Carol Espel

National director of group fitness for Equinox Fitness Clubs

*What do you tell people who show up in the beginning of January and say, "I have had this same resolution for a year or two or three, but I always seem to fall offtrack. What can I do now?"*

**Espel:** I ask them, "How many times a week can you realistically participate in 20 to 30 minutes of exercise?" Almost everyone says they can do it five or six days. I'll say, "Wow, back up a little. Let's look at your lifestyle—what's a typical day for you?" My job is to help them make a reasonable commitment to fitness so that when their life gets even slightly turned around by the unexpected, they still have time in their week to squeeze in physical activity.

*How does someone get started?*

**Espel:** It's essential to have social support—your husband, mom, friend—someone you feel comfortable with who will be there to encourage you when you are tempted to fall off your routine and who can even be your workout partner. You're less likely to cancel your workouts if you know your friend is going to be standing there waiting for you. I also recommend three to five sessions with a certified personal trainer. People often fail because they do not have a plan. A trainer can give you a



safe, manageable, personalized routine. You can work out on your own and schedule periodic checkups with your trainer to ensure proper technique, adjust the amount of weight, and learn when to increase the number of reps and sets you do.

*What kind of activity do you suggest people start with?*

**Espel:** Anything! It could be as simple as walking the dog around the block once or twice a day. I generally recommend walking—everyone can do it, it's a full-body exercise, it doesn't cost anything, and it can be done anywhere. Do it as many days as you can—even ten minutes one to three times a day can help. Ultimately, people should work up to doing something moderately intense three to five times a week for 20 to 60 minutes.

## I won't be weighed down by lies....

**Gary King**

Lecturer on "The Power of Truth"

*How does lying affect health?*

**King:** Telling even an inconsequential lie weakens the body. David R. Hawkins, MD, a noted scientist, tested the correlation between lying and human strength on thousands of patients and demonstrated that the body remained strong when participants told the truth and weakened when they told even a small lie. Now, if the muscles in the body test weak in an inconsequential lie, what do you suspect is going on if in the course of a week you tell up to a dozen small lies? You're conditioning your body to be weak.

*What do you recommend people start doing in the first 30 days?*

**King:** I believe that lying is a form of addiction. Tell the average person, "For the next 30 days, be honest and authentic in everything you do," and he'll be overwhelmed. A couple of years ago, I came up with something that's more doable: the 24-hour truth challenge. For one day, you decide to tell the truth. You don't lie to yourself or anyone else. This causes a shift in consciousness; you are now paying attention.

But once you get past the initial discomfort of being completely honest, you

start to feel something in your solar plexus, a sensation of strength. A lightness and energy and freedom arise. You'll notice a difference in your courage, the way you walk, the way you stand, the tone of your voice, the communication you have with people you love, the depth of connection with those close to you and with people you don't even know. If you speak the truth, feelings might get hurt. That is okay—humans are not weak. You do people no favors by trying to protect them from the truth. If you honor the people around you, be honest with them.

## I will eat to protect my health....

**Walter Willett, PhD**

Professor of epidemiology and nutrition at Harvard University

*What have you learned about how we can protect our health?*

**Willett:** We have collected dietary data on more than 250,000 men and women for a period of 25 years now. What we know is that the major causes of diseases in our country—cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes—are not genetic factors, as so many people believe and use as an excuse, but diet and lifestyle factors. We have documented that unhealthy diet and lifestyle account for more than 80 percent of heart disease, 90 percent of type 2 diabetes, and more than 70 percent of stroke and colon cancer.

*Based on your research, what do you recommend people change first?*

**Willett:** It obviously depends on what they are doing at the moment, but at the top of the list: Stop smoking. After that, some combination of increasing physical activity and healthy dietary change.

We ask people to replace unhealthy fats with healthy fats, and unhealthy carbohydrates with healthy forms of carbohydrates—basically eliminate or at least decrease margarines containing trans-fats, commercial deep-fried food, and commercial baked goods. Also, red meat and dairy fat are the major sources of saturated fat—so limiting those is a very good idea.

In terms of carbohydrates: The unhealthy carbohydrates include sugar, which

we consume as a nation in huge amounts in soda, beverages, snacks, desserts, and refined starches. Some people focus on removing only sugar, which is a mistake because refined starches (like white bread, white rice, white pasta) behave almost identically to sugar metabolically, and they also contain very low amounts of nutrients and low amounts of fiber. If we replace those with whole grain, high-fiber carbohydrates, which include brown rice, whole grain bread, oatmeal, and less familiar kinds of carbohydrates such as barley and quinoa, then you win twice because you are getting rid of something bad and replacing it with something that has health benefits.

## I will not fight the aging process....

**Andrew Weil, MD**

Author of *Healthy Aging and Eating Well for Optimum Health*

*What would you tell people about nutrition if they came to you on January 1 and said they wanted to live healthier?*

**Weil:** I'd tell them to eat more fruits and vegetables—a wide variety of them, a rainbow of colors: blueberries, raspberries, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, kale, broccoli, carrots. To ensure your intake of omega-3 fats, eat more salmon, sardines, walnuts, and flaxseeds. Resolve to eat as little processed and refined food as possible, especially chips, doughnuts, and snack foods. If you did these things, your health would improve immensely. But to get there, I suggest taking small, incremental steps. You don't have to make global changes overnight. For instance, instead of eating a bagel with cream cheese every day, try some whole grain bread with a nondairy spread on it, such as hummus or a soy spread, a few mornings a week.

*What is the worst myth we buy into about living healthier?*

**Weil:** Resisting aging. That's a huge mistake. The goal is *healthy* aging. This means letting nature take its course while doing everything in your power to delay the onset of age-related diseases like cancer, heart problems, and Alzheimer's. Most important, age CONTINUED ON PAGE 179



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### THE FIRST 30 DAYS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 139

right while you're still young. Develop healthy lifestyle habits, things like not smoking, eating properly, exercising regularly, and learning methods of stress reduction, such as breathing exercises. Women in particular need to build up their bone density and muscle mass by participating in physical activity, avoiding soda and processed foods, and limiting the excessive consumption of coffee and alcohol.

## I will learn to shift my focus....

**Joseph McClendon III**  
Retired UCLA instructor and coauthor  
of *Unlimited Power: A Black  
Choice* and *Ebony Power Thoughts:  
Inspirational Thoughts from  
Outstanding African-Americans* ▶



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## THE FIRST 30 DAYS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 179

*What makes people stick with a New Year's resolution?*

**McClendon:** Psychology is very simple—wherever you put your focus is what you're going to think, whatever you think is how you're going to feel, and however you feel is exactly what you're going to do. People need to write down their goal ("I will weigh this much," "My energy will be better," or "I will be able to do X"). By finding pictures in magazines that inspire you and by saying what you want out loud, you are reminding yourself of the way you want to be.

People fail because they forget this. When hunger starts and they see food that tempts them, their prior conditioning—the years of giving in to the wrong foods—will win out. But if people do a preemptive strike, so that every morning they look at what they really want, they will start to think differently.

*What's the best way to make a New Year's resolution?*

**McClendon:** Most of us are obsessed with the hows—the workout routine, the foods to eat or cut out, the time it's going to take to exercise. *Why* is a much more powerful motivator—to be a role model for my children, to have more energy to work and pursue my dreams, to feel good within my body, to be healthy and rested all the time, to finally feel I have what it takes to attract a partner, to support a friend for whom it's critical to overcome a health challenge. People accomplish more by answering the question "Why am I doing this?" than "How am I doing this?"

## I will make smart changes....

**Dominique De Backer**  
French psychologist

*How does our brain help or hinder us during the first 30 days of living healthier?*

**De Backer:** People need to know that the brain will accept new information only if it doesn't jeopardize or harm the coherence the brain is trying to maintain. The easiest and most comfortable way to introduce new information or a new habit is to take into consideration the three

parts of the brain discovered by the neurologist Paul MacLean.

1. Is this new information/action dangerous in any way? (reptilian/primitive brain response)
2. Will this new information/action bring me pleasure or pain? (limbic/emotional brain response)
3. Does this have a meaning for me—why am I doing this? (neocortex/reasoning brain response)

To succeed, you must make it safe for the brain to proceed with this change.

*What do you mean by "make it safe"?*

**De Backer:** The change must not be overwhelming, scary, stressful, too difficult, or too much like something you did in the past that didn't work. It must have a part that brings you joy, excitement, pleasure, happiness, something new. For the brain to accept change, three things need to happen: (1) The information needs to be clear, simple, and easily accessible, (2) the objectives, goals, and outcomes of this new information/action need to be achievable and attainable, and (3) the result of this change will bring about something positive and pleasurable.

The brain wants an overall goal to achieve but also needs a plan, with intermediary steps that will be smaller victories. It needs to know very specifically what to do, the steps to take—whether those are physical or nutritional. Make it easy for the brain to win. Do one new thing a day or a week. Cut out one bad food at a time. We want to feel that we are getting closer to the goal. The brain needs to have excitement and pleasure associated with change.

## I will get the sleep I need....

**Tracy Kuo, PhD**  
Clinical instructor at Stanford  
University School of Medicine

*How common is sleep deprivation?*

**Kuo:** The data from the National Sleep Foundation's annual surveys show that substantial percentages of American adults (as well as children and teens) are chronically not meeting their daily sleep need. For instance, in its 2005 poll, the NSF found that about 22 percent of surveyed



adults said they get less than the amount of sleep each weeknight that they need to function at their best. How much a person needs to sleep a day is individual. Most people center around seven and a half hours a day. That same survey found that 40 percent of respondents said they get less than seven hours of sleep each night.

### *Why is quality of sleep a barometer for good health?*

**KUO:** Sleep is usually the first thing to go when a person is not well, physically or psychologically. Not sleeping enough on occasion isn't disastrous. It's the cumulative effect of sleeplessness over a long period that can negatively affect health. Most people do have some reserves in their "health and well-being bank account" for withdrawals. But if a person keeps drawing on the account and doesn't put back, the account will be depleted. The sleep debt gets bigger, eventually reaching a level that causes adverse consequences (burnout, depression, work and relationship impairment, accidents).

### *How can we sleep better?*

**KUO:** We need to give sleep the same degree of priority that we give to eating well and working out. Be consistent with your sleep routine—generally, go to bed and wake up the same time every day. Also, your sleep should have very few interruptions. A consolidated sleep, even a short amount, is more restorative than a long, fragmented and light one. (If someone's sleep problem has been chronic, however, we send her to a sleep disorder specialist. Sometimes poor sleep is not just caused by poor habits; it could have a medical etiology or psychological components. Both are treatable.)

### *How do you eliminate a sleep debt?*

**KUO:** The good news is that sleep debt does not work like loans or credit cards, where for every dollar you owe you pay one back. If you have missed 5,000 hours of sleep over the past ten years, you do not need to sleep 5,000 hours to make it up. Sleep debt can be eliminated by matching your sleep need every day, plus maybe a tiny bit more to pay back the debt. If you can do that, there's a high likelihood that you can make up your sleep debt in 30 days. ●

## ASK THE BUNNY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 161

documented in a pilot survey of heart patients conducted by Columbia University's Integrative Medicine Program. Research has shown that in the aftermath of heart surgery, people commonly feel helpless and dispirited. But among the 20 heart surgery patients who listened to a guided imagery tape on cardiac recovery, 83 percent reported a greater appreciation for being alive, 75 percent felt less depressed, and 68 percent said that guided imagery "helped me increase my commitment to reclaiming my life."

So far, it may seem as though guided imagery is all about popping a tape into a player and visualizing the change you're after. But for those who want to delve more thoroughly into a medical or personal issue, there's a newer option: working with your own guide in a process called Interactive Guided Imagery. In every state in the United States as well as ten countries worldwide, nearly 800 health professionals have been certified by the Academy for Guided Imagery to help people experience their own, self-created imagery. The distinctive element is an encounter with an "inner adviser," that deeply intuitive part of yourself with whom you explore goals, hopes, and avenues for change. Of course, I'd already tried this on my own with Woody, but he and I had been winging it. I was intrigued by the idea of getting some expert help in communing with my unconscious.

A week after my session with Woody, I found myself in the spacious therapy office of Bob Schoenholtz, a Philadelphia art therapist and academy-trained guided imagery practitioner who believes that imagery is "a way to be in conversation with the wisest part of you." Tall and rangy, with curly gray hair and a warm, informal manner, Bob made clear to me at the outset that his role would be to facilitate that internal conversation, not to supply solutions. "You're in charge," he emphasized.

With that, I lay down on the couch, where Bob tucked a multicolored afghan around me and gave me a soft, plushy eye bag to shield my eyes from the afternoon sunlight. (He offered each of these comforts as options; I could have chosen instead to sit up and simply close my eyes.) Bob suggested that for this initial session,

I not focus on any specific health or emotional issue but rather just "work with whatever emerges." He explained that such an open-ended exploration often unearths surprising—and surprisingly useful—knowledge about the self.

After leading me through a relaxation exercise, Bob asked me to imagine a "safe place" where I felt peaceful and secure. Almost immediately, I found myself perched on the edge of a dock overlooking the northern New Jersey lake where my family used to vacation when I was a kid. In my imagination, I watched the morning sun dance on the lake; I heard swallows and nuthatches twittering; I inhaled the scents of wood and water. Within a few minutes, I felt quietly happy.

"Now," said Bob, "why don't you invite an inner adviser into your safe place?"

Within moments, from behind a grove of trees at the lake's edge, a serious-looking man emerged. He was dressed in robes of pale blue and cream, and his dark, rather stringy hair framed a bearded face. I noticed that his feet were bare.

My heart sank to my toes. I was pretty sure I knew who he was, and I didn't like it one bit. "I'm not ready for this," I told Bob, who was sitting in a chair a few feet away. "I think I've got Jesus."

Bob was unfazed. "Just welcome him in," he advised. "Ask him what he'd like you to know."

"You don't understand," I protested. "I'm a survivor of Catholic schools, and I haven't been to church in 20 years. This will *not* work."

"Try and see," urged Bob.

I took a long breath. "Okay," I silently communicated to the man in robes. "Come on in. So what do you have to tell me?"

In my mind's eye, the man continued to stand at the edge of the grove, as though not wanting to invade my space. Then he said: "Love."

At that, my body went on red alert. My chest began to pound and I trembled all over. I was still lying under an afghan in Bob's office, but I was really somewhere else—someplace very dangerous, and I didn't know where or why. I told Bob what was happening. "What should I do now?" I asked him anxiously.

His response was simple: "Ask your inner adviser what you should do."

When I did, the man told me to put ▶