

THIS IS THE YEAR TO ...

Make the First



Count!

Making a fresh start towards a new, physically invigorating and nutritionally virtuous lifestyle is not so hard – how many times have we all done it? Staying on course is the trick. We asked *Ariane de Bonvoisin* to get us going the right way.

BEGINNINGS ARE SO seductive. What's as intoxicating as a new leaf, a clean slate or a fresh calendar? Jazzed and hopeful, you get rolling on that weight loss project or job hunt or relationship rehab. And you think, This will be the start of something big! Maybe too big, you think not long after that.

But suppose that journey were to begin with a month's worth of 24/7 guidance from experts? A few years ago, Ariane de Bonvoisin, a management consultant and former executive at Time Warner, launched a website to provide support. She's the founder and CEO of *first30days.com*, which offers advice for successfully navigating the first difficult month of a huge range of challenges, from getting married to living a healthier life.



"I'm used to coping with change," says Ariane, 33. As the daughter of a journalist mother and an international banker father, she lived in six countries before she turned 18. "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. Maybe I made the wrong decision." Then a lightbulb went on, she says. "I thought, Either I'm not growing up or this is pretty much inevitable and universal." Ariane decided to organise a bank of experts and an online support group to help people soar through the first month of a new challenge. "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." ▶



Ariane de Bonvoisin is the author of The First 30 Days: Your Guide to Making Any Change Easier (HarperCollins) and CEO of first30days.com



I Want to Start Exercising Regularly

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?

Gregory: “They overeat, under-eat, eat late, skip meals or don’t drink enough water. Those are the big ones.”

What can I expect to face in the first month?

G: “**Week one:** you’re full of optimism, new information and new feelings in your body. You’re using new muscles, following an eating plan, so you are 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 might 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 kilograms 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 the numbers, at this stage.”

“**Week four:** This is when you should re-evaluate your regimen. Ask yourself, What can I do better? What can I do differently? Now increase the challenge.”

I Want to Live Authentically

GARY KING, Lecturer on *The Power of Truth*

How does lying affect my health?

Gary: “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.”

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

G: “A couple of years ago, I came up with something that

is 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. If you speak the truth, feelings might get hurt. That is okay – humans are not weak. You do people no favours by trying to protect them from the truth. If you honour the people around you, be honest with them.”

I Want to Eat to Protect My Health

WALTER WILLETT, PHD, Professor of epidemiology and nutrition at Harvard University

What have you learnt about how we can protect our health?

Walter: “What we know is that the major causes of diseases are not genetic factors, but diet and lifestyle factors.”

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

W: “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 physical activity and healthy dietary change. We ask people to

replace unhealthy foods with healthy ones. Also, red meat and dairy fat are the major sources of saturated fat – so limiting those is a good idea.

In terms of carbohydrates:

“Unhealthy carbohydrates include sugar, which we consume in beverages, snacks, desserts and refined starches. Some focus on removing only sugar, which is a mistake, because refined starches (like white bread, white rice and white pasta) behave almost identically to sugar metabolically, and they also contain low amounts of nutrients and fibre. If we replace them with wholegrain, high-fibre carbohydrates (like brown rice, wholegrain bread, oatmeal, barley and quinoa) then you win twice.”



I Want to Get the Sleep I Need

TRACY KUO, PHD, Clinical instructor at Stanford University School of Medicine

Why is quality of sleep a barometer for good health?

Tracy: “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. The sleep debt gets bigger, eventually reaching a level that causes adverse consequences like burnout, depression or work and relationship impairment.”

How can I sleep better?

T: “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. 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.” **O**



TRY SOMETHING NEW

Go Glamping

There’s a new way to camp out. “Glamping” (glamorous camping) combines the beauty of nature with all of life’s necessities – like a soft bed, electricity and, occasionally, meals on demand. Growing in popularity, there are some local offerings like Teniqua Treetops (teniquatreetops.co.za) on the Garden Route, and Honeyguide Mantobeni Camp (honeyguidecamp.com) in the Manyeleti Game Reserve, bordering the Kruger National Park.

