

# O

THE OPRAH  
MAGAZINE

**WEIGHT LOSS**  
**IT'S NOT FAIR**  
What women are  
really up against

**HAVE**  
**MAKEOVER**  
When good things  
happen  
bad dye jobs

**HOPE!**  
**JUST WHEN YOU  
NEED IT MOST**  
Inspiring stories and  
brilliant strategies for  
making peace at home,  
at work, at large—at last!

**WHAT THE HAPPIEST  
PEOPLE KNOW FOR SURE**  
(page 87)

**OPRAH** talks  
**CHARLIZE THERON**  
about looks, love, and  
the twist of fate that  
made her a star

**HOLIDAYS:** Bring back the fun!

- Give great presents without going broke
- Enjoy your own party
- Get a kick out of your family  
(even if they're nuts)...



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**“A woman whose son died in Fallujah said to me, ‘Cindy speaks for us. We are all Cindy.’”**

—“MY SON BROUGHT ME HERE,” PAGE 215

## Seasonal Sanity Special

### “You Never Enjoy Your Own Party” & Nine Other Holiday Myths .... 230

Be of good cheer! From assembling the great party outfits already hiding in your closet to whipping through your gift list with minimal schlepping and spending to actually having fun at your own party, we have ways of putting the partridge back in your pear tree.

## Advice, etc.

### Dr. Phil ..... 73

Handling a rude acquaintance, a wary daughter, and an unfriendly bride.

### Suze Orman ..... 76

Lending your boyfriend cash, organizing your postdivorce finances, and helping an aging parent take care of her debts.

### Martha Beck:

### Oh, This Old Thing? ..... 83

Dealing with your friends’ (real or imagined) jealousy.

### Are Your Goals Holding

### You Back? ..... 87

DAWN RAFFEL explores a new theory of success.

### Jeanne Safer’s Aha! Moment .... 92

The psychotherapist remembers her last conversation with her mother.

## Anticipation List

### What We’re Looking Forward to in November ..... 57–66

Mary J. Blige’s soulful sounds, fabulous ornaments, a violently funny musical, Mr. Darcy’s return, an unforgettable screen gem, and more.

## Style

### The O List ..... 105

A few things Oprah thinks are great.

### Comfort Zone: The Big Dish ..... 131

The season’s best platters are essential when company is coming.

## Fashion

### Belts: Bound for Glory ..... 113

Seven women learn the power of buckling up—to enhance curves, add polish, or give clothes a rich, ethnic twist.

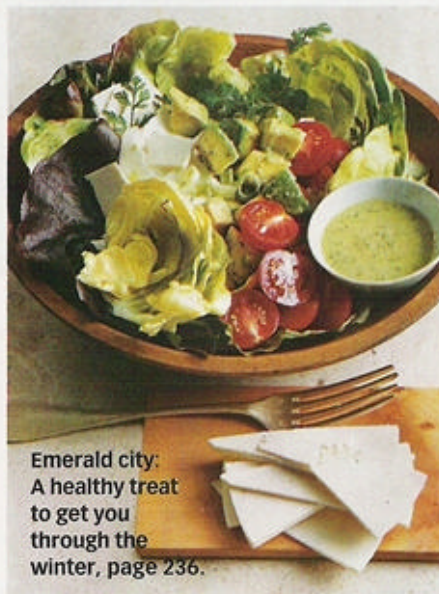
### Color: A New Leaf ..... 120

Pick new greens and browns—subtle ways to freshen up for fall.

## Beauty

### Look What We Found! ..... 125

Sweet-scented miniature balms, a supreme lip gloss, a couture fragrance...



Emerald city: A healthy treat to get you through the winter, page 236.

### Ask Val ..... 128

O’s beauty director, VALERIE MONROE, on the germs lurking in your mascara, the perfect cleanser, and when hair loss is nothing to worry about.

## Food

### Steeped in Tradition ..... 139

Her tearoom is causing quite a stir in Patrice Clayton’s Harlem neighborhood. TAMASIN DAY-LEWIS stops by.

## Connections

### Playing It as It Lays ..... 197

On the eve of the publication of her stunning memoir, Joan Didion talks about love and grief with SARA DAVIDSON.

### The Hero-Driven Life ..... 207

Here, from an inspiring new book, proof that sometimes the best way to use your life is to use someone else’s.

### “My Son Brought Me Here” ..... 215

How does Cindy Sheehan feel about joining the great tradition of mothers turning disaster into action? We sent EVE ENSLER to find out.

## Health

### Body Wise ..... 147

Supercoffee, cancer’s early symptoms, a new depression treatment, and more.

### The Way to Eat ..... 154

DAVID L. KATZ, MD, steps up to the plate.

### The Biggest Loser: What’s Sex Got to Do with It? ..... 157

In the network reality show, are the scales tipped unfairly toward the men? SAMANTHA DUNN weighs in.

### Cut It Out! ..... 163

Because you can’t love life and still smoke. Ready to quit? Read on.

## Books

### Reading Room ..... 179

New books to engage and transport you.

### Books That Made a Difference to Jesse L. Martin ..... 188

The actor is blown away by Shakespeare and moved by great black history.

## In Every Issue

### Contributors ..... 22

### Letters ..... 36

### Here We Go BY OPRAH ..... 47

### Calendar ..... 51

### Something to Think About ..... 99

### O to Go ..... 175

### Breathing Space ..... 254

### Love That! Fashion, Beauty, Food ..... 269–278

### Shop Guide ..... 280

### What I Know for Sure BY OPRAH ..... 304

COVER CREDITS: Oprah photographed by Cliff Watts. Fashion editor: Jenny Capitan. Hair: Andre Walker. Makeup: Reggie Wells. Prop stylist: Richie Owings at De Facto. Coat and sweater, Agnona. Pants, Loro Piana. Ring, Ionescu. For details see Shop Guide.

**“Imagine the hungry baby in the photo is your baby. You will not so easily turn the page.”**

—VALERIE MONROE, PAGE 258

You've been told that to get anywhere, you need to know where you're going. But what if that's not how success really works?

BY DAWN RAFFEL

## Are Your Goals Holding You Back?



I GREW UP REVERING GOALS OF ALL kinds: big, small, and bite-size; readily attainable; wildly ambitious; broken up, written down, projected on the stars. My attitude was hardly surprising, given the adages that are central to our culture: *If you can see it, you can be it; if you don't know where you want to go, you're never going to get there; the road to bliss is paved with goals.* Okay, I made that last one up,

but a lot of us seem to believe it.

Which is why Stephen Shapiro, a cheerful subversive in casual business attire, comes as a shock to the system: He's making a cottage industry of what he calls goal-free living. (His book, titled—what else?—*Goal-Free Living*, comes out in December.) If you want to be happy—successful in the broadest sense—

he suggests you take your nifty five-year plan and your lifetime to-do list and throw them out the window. And while you're at it, get some air.

Shapiro had a long track record of running motivational workshops for major corporations when he had his epiphany on the road. He had published a book called *24/7 Innovation* and was planning ▶

Toss your trophies for more long-term satisfaction.

to interview business leaders throughout the country for what he envisioned as a sequel. Not far into his research, though, he spotted a pattern: The most fulfilled people were also the most spontaneous and the least goal oriented. Fascinated, Shapiro chucked his agenda and drove 12,000 miles in his techno-wired car (equipped with cellular Internet access, digital recording equipment, and everything else short of an espresso bar), interviewing risktakers and box breakers, and asking for their suggestions about who else he should meet. He spent time with everyone from Doug Busch, a VP and a chief technology officer at Silicon giant Intel, to John T. Martin, then curator of one of the world's only voodoo museums, as well as 148 others thriving in such fields as education, technology, and philanthropy. After learning about the circuitous paths they'd taken, Shapiro was convinced that the key to happiness lies in checking out the detours and back roads, literal and figurative, without fear of changing course. Road maps for life, he believes, might lead to material gain, but there's a good chance that if you follow them unquestioningly, you'll lose *yourself*.

"I was giving a speech on a cruise ship recently, and the other speaker was a professional athlete," he says. "Her session was on setting goals, and mine was on not setting them. Someone in the audience raised her hand and said, 'I have a question. I've been very good at setting goals and very good at achieving them, and I'm still miserable. Why is that?'"

**G**IVE SHAPIRO A MINUTE, AND he'll rattle off the reasons, as he did that day at sea, and as he does almost every day, everywhere he can. "Number one I'm calling 'Whose goal is it, anyway?'" he says. "Most people's goals aren't their own. They tend to be driven by society and family pressure."

Second, he says, when you focus on a goal, "you put blinders on. You lose your peripheral vision and miss out on all the great opportunities around you. Third," he says, hardly pausing for breath, "you're always living for the future. You end up saying, 'I'll be happy when....' You sacrifice today in the hopes that something wonderful is going to happen tomorrow.

But it almost never does." Yes, you might win the promotion or bag the trophy, but you rarely feel the lasting satisfaction you'd imagined. "Mountain climbers have a concept called the false summit, where they get to what they think is the peak and then they realize they're only at the bottom of an even bigger mountain," Shapiro says. "That's what happens with goals. You're constantly chasing them. The fourth issue is that you're courting

## The key to happiness lies in checking out the detours and back roads.

failure." Meaning, he says, you become attached to one outcome, and even if you get it, reality seldom matches the dream in all its Technicolor splendor.

But just a minute here. Aren't goals, however idealistic or elusive, crucial to achievement? How much greatness would be lost to the world if artists, athletes, scientists, and thinkers fled potential disappointment and boredom to wander off in search of delight?

"Goal-free living isn't about being aimless or saying, 'Oh, this is getting tough. I've got to stop,'" Shapiro contends. "It's about being passion-driven in the moment, while knowing you can change course." It's also about "getting out, playing, and trying lots of new things." You can't find out what you love to do by sitting and thinking about it, he says; you must experience it.

Intel's Doug Busch, for instance, started off picking fruit during college, then maintained machinery in a poultry processing plant. "Most people think that's pretty low-end, but he actually loved it, and realized the reason was that he wanted to work with his hands," Shapiro says. "So he went back to school and became a mechanical engineer." Next, he got a job at Intel and grew more interested in other aspects of technology, eventually growing into his current position. "This is meandering with purpose," Shapiro says. "When you're living a life of passion, you're almost

always making a contribution.

"Let's say you'd like to be a healer," he says. "You can move down the road to medical school but look around and see that maybe you don't want to be a doctor after all. Maybe you want to be a nurse, or work with the elderly, or start a charity. You don't lock yourself in."

If, like me, you are a goalaholic, you can't be expected to quit cold turkey, nor do you need to. "The question is, do you have the right goals, and are you relating to them the right way?" Shapiro says. Some people abuse goals "as a way of escaping from being present. They distract themselves by looking ahead. I'm much more into enjoying every single moment for what it is and allowing things to unfold." He suggests thinking in terms of aspirations (work in the visual arts) rather than goals (get a painting into a specific gallery by date X) because they give you pleasure today and are more broadly defined.

**E**VEN CORPORATIONS—IN FACT, especially corporations, Shapiro tells his clients—suffer from rigid planning. No one can foretell how the world will look in just a few years—witness the quick burst of the dot-com bubble. His biggest beef is with the popular institutional concept of goals that are SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, results oriented, and time based. The idea that you'll know right away whether you've succeeded or failed is misguided and crippling: "Not only have you set yourself up for failure but you've put a time limit on everything," Shapiro says.

His antidote to the pain of a failed goal is to step back and ask yourself whether you defined the desired outcome too narrowly and whether you tried to control the uncontrollable. "Life is unpredictable," he says. "So give up control. Create many paths. And play hard."

Above all, trash the "If I don't succeed by Tuesday, I'm a loser" mentality. "You know what?" he says merrily. "I'm not going to be done with what I'm doing till I'm dead. Sometimes I think of things so audacious they couldn't come true, so I just keep playing with them. It's really about applying creativity to every aspect of your life."

And that, if you'll excuse me, sounds like a worthy goal. ●