

O

THE OPRAH
MAGAZINE

Age Brilliantly!

O's plan for a
longer, stronger, brighter,
lighter, much more
together life

**Bathing Suits That
Make You Look
10 lbs Thinner**

**How Far
Would You
Go to Feel
Better?**

One woman's
incredible
search for
a cure

**The Instant
Energy Quiz**

Find out what's *really*
zapping your zip—and
how to get it back

**Please
Don't Take My
Sunshine Away**

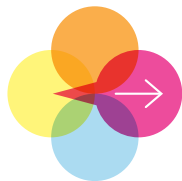
Finally—a few
healthy reasons to
catch some rays

**Boot Camp for
Your Brain**

4 easy ways to
sharpen your mind

See a different
side of Oprah





Contributors

Clear Convictions

Four contributors to this month's issue share the clarity they've gained along their life journeys.



SOPHIA STUART

"How to Stay Sane in a Crazy World," page 88.



"If I'm exhausted, it's time to go back to bed – with tea on a tray, soft pillows and a notebook – and start writing. Then sleep and let the universe sort it out."



KARABO MATHANG-TSHABUSE

"How I Got Here," page 118.



"There's a higher power working in your favour. Mine is Christ, and when I flow with Him, I soar. It's simple."



KAVE BULAMBO

"The Strength of Women," page 54.



"I click and connect easily with people, irrespective of their backgrounds or status. Smiling is contagious, and I do just that to break through any barriers."



DAVE DUARTE

"How to Schmooze – with Class," page 90.



"There's no substitute for love, friendships and trusted working relationships. New technologies are compelling because they allow us to grow these connections."



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BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Yvette Jones ☎ 083 561 7345
yvette@assocmedia.co.za

SENIOR ADVERTISING SALES EXECUTIVE

Michelle Lawrenson ☎ 072 099 9562
michelle@assocmedia.co.za

ADVERTISING SALES EXECUTIVE (COASTAL)

Merise Isaacs ☎ 082 936 2102
merise@assocmedia.co.za

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

CAPE TOWN 21 St. John's Street, Gardens, 8001; P.O. Box 12155, Mill Street, Gardens, 8010; ☎ 021 464 6200; Fax 021 465 8190

JOHANNESBURG First Floor, 3 Sandown Valley Crescent, Sandown, Sandton, 2196; ☎ 011 783 5500; Fax 011 783 5489 **E-MAIL LETTERS** to letters@assocmedia.co.za;

inquiries to info@assocmedia.co.za

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS to submissions@assocmedia.co.za

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1. *How Do I*

STAY SANE IN A CRAZY WORLD?

It was the ultimate life-changing moment. Lying scared and alone in a hospital bed, *Sophia Stuart* realised she had to rethink her crazily busy existence and rediscover life's simple pleasures.

IT ALL STARTED when I was lying on a hospital stretcher wearing one of those not-so-attractive surgery gowns that ties up the back. As I stared up at the ceiling, surrounded by the medics who were about to cut into me to remove three tumours that had grown in my throat, one thought kept running through my head: "I have to do something good with this." Actually, that was the second thought; the first was a silent scream as I fought back the sobs: "How the hell did this happen?"

I will never have an answer to that question. I don't know why I got tumours; thankfully they turned out not to be cancerous, but it was a wake-up call nonetheless. I do know that I had not been living in the most, let's say, optimal state of mental and physical health.

I had a fancy job in New York – the kind that a girl from Brighton dreams of. It was an extraordinary opportunity. I travelled the world, met wonderful people (and some insane types, too) and lived a rather glamorous existence. But I also dealt with stress by mainlining carbs and paying people to put me back together again (massages, therapists, concierge services to do my grocery shopping). I'd lost touch with what made me truly happy (writing and photography). I was like a ticking time bomb. And that's how I ended up on a stretcher in 2011, waiting to have five and a half hours of surgery.

When I tell you that I left Manhattan and walked away from the nice salary to live by the sea and freelance as a writer and digital consultant, you'll know I changed my life radically. But that's just the outside stuff. None of this would have happened if I hadn't made tiny, almost imperceptible, changes in my daily life. If there's anything useful I can share from all I've been through, it's this – it's the really small things that make the difference.

SHARE WHAT YOU ARE FEELING

The first change I made was deciding to tell the truth about how scared I felt. I'd never had my own blog, despite having worked as an online editor for many years. I started an anonymous blog, *teamgloria.com*, to document

all the glorious people, places and things that got me through the trauma of surgery and the long, slow, painful road back to health. Telling the truth about how terrified I was of being sick was transformative.

Stop and think – when did you last tell someone the truth about what it's like being you? I found that people in my life got very nervous when I started to fall apart. So I established a bunch of new virtual friends who didn't mind at all – it was a lifesaver. I highly recommend blogging, anonymously or not, to release that stress valve. Due to the magic of global time zones, there's always some kind insomniac who is awake and willing to chuckle at your agonising blog post and add some pithy comment that makes you smile again.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO UNWIND

The other small change that yielded instant results was my decision to chill out. What are the top 10 things you love to do that make you feel glorious? Mine include bubble baths, listening to Radio 4 (usually while in a bubble bath), taking a walk in the park and finding a quiet bench where I can sit and read a saucy novel, going to the cinema on a Sunday morning (and sneaking in healthy snacks), writing in a small notebook, and going back to bed on a Saturday afternoon with an armful of magazines and a pot of tea. It's a good list, but when I came round from the surgery, I realised I hadn't done anything on it for a very long time. So I changed all that.

MAKE A KINDNESS KIT


I also made myself a Kindness Kit – though I didn't call it that at first. It was only when I'd gathered a box of nice things to help me during my recovery that I realised I'd put kindness in a box. It was then that I really fell apart. I'd been driving myself so hard for so long that this simple box drove me to tears.

So what's in a Kindness Kit? Anything you like. Here are a few of the things I put in my first one, nestled between tissue paper and scented with drops of lavender oil:

soft linen handkerchiefs, tea lights, scented soaps, hand cream, vanilla bean pods (for hot milk), wish-paper (for magic spells), bubble bath, pencils from five-star hotels and glamorous notepads, a slim volume of poetry and a vintage Jilly Cooper novel.

There are other simple pleasures that have helped me, which I put into my book, *How to Stay Sane in a Crazy World*. Like downloading an audio book read by someone with a gorgeous voice (in my case, the actor Tim Curry), popping in earphones and doing some exercise. Or, to boost creativity, sticking inspirational pictures on to a tiny vision board and putting it somewhere you will look at it. I have one above the bathroom sink so I can see it every day – it never fails to make me dream about the future while I'm brushing my teeth.

These tiny changes have completely transformed my life. There's not a day that goes by when I don't do something from my list of things that makes me feel pampered and relaxed. I still have a Kindness Kit, and I regularly restock it with delicious things to make me feel soothed.

Getting ill was the worst thing that ever happened to me. But I was determined to do something positive with the experience. And so, in a way, it has become the best thing that ever happened to me. I hope you take a moment to write a list of glorious things today, and you do at least one of them. Perhaps you'll make a Kindness Kit for yourself and know that you matter. It was when I started to take exquisite care of myself and build some sanity into my everyday life through sweet rituals, that the world didn't seem so crazy after all. 

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

Three O Club members will each win a copy of Sophia Stuart's *How to Stay Sane in a Crazy World*. Visit oprahmag.co.za to enter, and read an excerpt from the book.

