

THE OPRAH

MAGAZINE



# HOW TO BE A HAPPIER CAMPER

A free & easy  
road map  
for moving  
forward  
in your life

GAME-CHANGING  
ADVICE FROM  
**THE LOVE  
WARRIOR!**

You'll never drink 32 oz.  
of merlot while weeping in  
your underwear again



OPRAH.COM

FEBRUARY 2017 \$4.50





# Contents



## » FEATURES

**114 O'S GO-FOR-IT GUIDE TO GETTING UNSTUCK** Whether you want to make a big leap or simply get out of a rut, we're here with just the push you need.

**126 WHERE ARE YOU GOING?** For an intrepid female ski team, it's all about the climb.

**128 BEAT THE CLOCK** Essentials for youthful, radiant skin at any age.

**134 THE INHERITANCE** What does a modern mom's overblown anxiety have to do with her grandmother's war-torn past? As *Monique Barry* discovers, so much.

**138 SPECIAL PRESENTATION** Delicious new hors d'oeuvres lineups to debut at your next viewing party.

**ON THE COVER:** Oprah photographed by Ruven Afanador. **FASHION EDITOR:** Jenny Caplain. **HAIR:** Nicole Mangrum. **MAKEUP:** Derrick Rutledge. **LOCATION:** Thanks to Kaibab National Forest and Airstream. **On Oprah:** Blanket, Woolrich, Cardigan, Eileen Fisher, Plaid shirt, Talbots. Pants, Calvin Klein. Earrings, Jamie Joseph. Bangle, John Hardy. Boots, L.L.Bean. Signature Mug, Canvas Home. Scarf (on chair), A Peace Treaty. Chair, L.L.Bean. For details see Shop Guide.

## Live Your Best Life

**21** The ghostwriters behind Romeo's leading lady...Neil Patrick Harris on his high-flying family and biggest pet peeve...a photographer's sun-and-sea-drenched snapshots...two army veterans who are spicing things up...writer *Chris Colin* on the preteen phone call he's still hung up on...and more.

**32 THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GAYLE** Editor at large *Gayle King* goes gaga for this year's Super Bowl halftime headliner—and praises a nifty gift for kids.

## May We Help You?

**37 MARTHA BECK** The way out of a toxic relationship is easier than you think—just trust your instincts.

**44 DEAR LISA** Driver's dread and a suffocating lover: Writer at large *Lisa Kogan* untangles it all.

**46 FARNOOSH TORABI** Financial strategies for every life stage.

**48 GLENNON DOYLE MELTON** When pain arrives on your doorstep, invite it right on in.

## Love That!

**59 FAB FIND** Chic sneakers you can sport with nearly any outfit.

**60 GREAT BUYS UNDER \$100** Ten trends to rock this spring, from snazzy slip-ons to eye-popping graphic tees.

**64 ADAM'S STYLE SHEET** Ultracomfy heels and wedges to put a bit of pep in your step.

**66 ADAM'S HOME STYLE SHEET** Dazzling gray decor for every room in your house.





ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
Gracia Lam



# THE Inheritance

For decades, **Monique Barry** was tortured by incessant **anxiety** (her daughter's rough day at school? proof the child's life was ruined) and **baseless guilt** (choosing a bad restaurant? a hanging offense!). Then she learned that her garden-variety **neuroses** might be something else: the trauma of her **ancestors**, passed down through the generations.

# THE Inheritance


# THE Inheritance

# THE Inheritance

# THE Inheritance

# THE Inheritance





I assumed  
I'd never  
**marry**—  
who could  
accept  
someone  
who had to  
take drastic  
measures to  
**get through**  
a life that  
wasn't even  
difficult?

**N**OBODY LIKES ME," said my daughter, Elyse, inhaling dry cereal as she bopped to Taylor Swift on the car radio. It was the end of her first week at a new school.

"I'm sure that's not true," I said, gripping the steering wheel. My heart rattled. My breath went shallow. Tears fell on the pile of snacks on my lap. *Who are these kindergarten bastards? If she doesn't make friends with them now, they'll shun her all the way through high school. She'll be so depressed, she'll turn to drugs or cutting. And whose fault will it be? Mine, all mine.*

"Can I have some more Cheerios?" Elyse asked.

"You can have the Oreos!" I blurted out, handing her the tear-soaked plastic bag.

"Ew, it's all wet," Elyse said. She looked over to see my streaked cheeks, and her sweet face was gripped with surprise, then fear.

"Mama," she said, "what's wrong with you?"

I've had anxiety for as long as I can remember. As a child, I never wanted to go to school. Would I have anyone to sit with at lunch? Would Bridgett Markham steal my pencils? (No and yes.) I was so nervous around other kids, I hardly spoke. In addition to being overweight, I was the only Asian kid, the only mixed kid (my mother is Chinese; my father is white). I had a few close friends but nursed a constant terror that they would realize something was wrong with me—I wasn't normal, wasn't cool, wasn't something else that I could never quite identify—and leave me in the dust.

Unlike most kids at my Los Angeles junior high, I came from a family that struggled financially. My dad was a teacher, and my immigrant mother worked long hours trying to start a cosmetics business. My parents didn't worry about my happiness or lack thereof; they were busy trying to keep our house from the creditors. Their worry became my guilt. Maybe if I hadn't asked Mom for that

Barbie, they wouldn't have fought. Maybe if I weren't fat, I could be in commercials, making money to save our house.

I found ways to medicate my fears; my chief strategy was to eat. A latchkey kid, I'd come home and dig into a jar of peanut butter studded with chocolate chips. By my teens, I was obese. Then I found a less fattening way to cope: I replaced the drug of food with actual drugs. A friend who came from money could afford cocaine. For a while, I loved it—what anxious kid wouldn't? It was confidence in powder form. But then that friend became an addict, and I became terrified of the stuff.

In my 20s, I built my life around my anxiety. I started a business designing handbags, which I could do at home, safe from the hell of other people. I didn't live; I functioned. I had a few friends, a prescription for Xanax, and my familiar habit of binge-eating when stressed. I assumed I'd never marry or have kids—who could accept someone who had to take drastic measures to get through a life that wasn't even difficult?

But time proved me wrong. I met Rick, who is now my husband, and he loved me in spite of my demons. Then I got pregnant and spent nine months in an excruciating state of terror. How could I care for a child? How could I steer a little life through this scary world? Hell, how could I even give birth? ("I just don't think she'll fit through," I'd cry to my obstetrician.) After I had Elyse in an emergency C-section (see? I was right!) and fell in love with her, my anxiety multiplied. I felt as though my heart was beating in this child's body. The thought of her suffering haunted me.

And of course, my fear of her suffering made her suffer.

"We have a normal kid," Rick said one particularly rough afternoon a year ago, "and sometimes she's going to have a bad day. Your stress makes her stressed. It makes *me* stressed." He looked at me. "You've got to do something."

He was right. I was sick of my neck aches, my knotted stomach, seeing my dread reflected in my child's eyes. So I finally did the one thing I hadn't: I asked for help.

My internist, whom I'd told in vague terms about my anxiety, enthusiastically referred me to a woman named Angelica Singh. She would change my life, he said. On her website, Angelica calls her profession "embodiment process and counseling." Her woo-woo job title didn't concern me much; this is L.A., where psychics and



healers are as ubiquitous as In-N-Out Burger. I was even less concerned when I read Angelica's description of what she could do for me: "My healing work is designed to facilitate your moving from a constricted place of judgment and self-criticism to an open ocean of self-love and compassion." That sounded downright blissful.

When I arrived at our first session on a hot Tuesday afternoon, Angelica greeted me at the door of her cottage. She was beautiful—sexy, really—with piercing dark eyes and long black hair. I'd been expecting a soothing, beatific type; she had more of a Kali, goddess of destruction, vibe. She led me to a small room, where an array of crystals and oils sat beside a massage table, and motioned toward a love seat covered in Indian-print pillows. I sat.

"So, I have a bit of anxiety," I began.

"I can see that," she said, her face unsmiling. She perched on a stool, her legs crossed. She wore hip camouflage pants, Converse sneakers, and a stunning white crystal around her neck. For some reason, she held a pendulum. "You're not breathing," she said. "You're not even in your body."

"I'm not?"

"Start by feeling the ground beneath your feet," Angelica said. "Take deep breaths."

I closed my eyes and inhaled. This interaction was causing me stress, not reducing it. I didn't like being looked at. I didn't like being judged. I did not want to fail spiritual therapy. But I kept breathing and eventually found a rhythm, my breath smoothing, deepening. *I am safe*, I thought. *I am fine*. *I am here to get help*.

Angelica smiled faintly, then leaned in, looking not into my eyes but at the area around my head.

"There's so much drama in your energy field," she said. "I see war all around you, fires and bombs and screaming. Were you or your mother in a war?"

I thought I must have misunderstood. What did my mother have to do with anything? "Mom and I did fight a lot when I was in my 20s—"

"No, I mean a literal war. You have all these souls clinging to you. You feel guilty about them."

"I do often feel guilty, but it's about irrational things."

"What was your grandmother like?" Angelica asked.

"She abandoned her husband and kids for a general in the Chinese army. She never saw them again. She had

three more kids, including Mom, with her new lover." I rattled this off easily; the mythos of my grandmother's life, though grotesque, had over the years lost its sting.

As Angelica kept asking questions, she knelt on the floor, arranging crystals and rocks around her—a jagged amethyst here, a hunk of hematite there. I didn't ask why. When there were no more crystals and rocks, she pulled a few pencils and erasers from her desk. Then I noticed her arrangement was wider at the top than at the bottom. I finally got it: She was building my family tree on the rug.

She picked up a rock. "This is where your anxiety comes from."

"My grandmother? I only met her twice."

"You have epigenetic trauma."

I nodded as though I understood.

"Your grandmother had to live in survival mode,"

Angelica said. "She passed that stress onto your mother. Your mother passed it onto you. Look at your lineage." She pointed at the floor's sad tableau. "Can't you feel the grief, the abandonment?"

I gazed at the glassy obsidian and pink eraser that represented my forsaken cousins, and I began to cry. I told Angelica, as politely as possible, that I had no idea what she was talking about.

"Would you like to get on the table?" she asked in response. When I did, she laid crystals on my body and swayed her pendulum. She put her hands under my head, and I fell into one of the most relaxing states I've ever experienced—similar to the moments just before sleep, when dreamy images arrive but never quite coalesce. I had to book another session. I had no idea whether I was carrying the burdens of some long-ago war, but I was certain I needed another brilliant nap.

*continued on page 150*



This interaction was causing me stress, not reducing it. I didn't like being looked at, being **judged**. I did not want to fail **spiritual therapy**.







continued from page 137

That night, I Googled, hard. Epigenetics, it turns out, is the study of the mechanisms that switch genes on and off, affecting our brains and bodies. This gene flips on, and we may develop diabetes. This one switches off, and we are likely to get cancer. What we eat, the environment we live in, the chemicals we are exposed to—all can influence how our genes express themselves. One site I read compared DNA to a film script; in this scenario, epigenetics is the director, cutting lines or scenes, influencing the whole picture.

Recent findings suggest that epigenetic changes can be inherited. In other words, as parents' genes are altered—thanks to their experiences, environment, and habits—so are their children's. Angelica's philosophy hinged on this notion. She had told me I had what she refers to as epigenetic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which she says I inherited from my mother and my mother's mother, just like my almond eyes and black hair. In essence, the traumas of my forebears, however little I knew about them, had wired me for anxiety.

I told Rick what Angelica had said. "It turns out I have PTSD. That's why I overreact to everything."

"What, from trauma that was self-inflicted? You're saying you have SIPTSD?"

Silly Rick. "I inherited the trauma from my ancestors."

My husband, an MIT-educated atheist engineer, looked skeptical.

The more I read, though, the more this seemingly loony idea

appeared to have some basis in reality. Recently, Rachel Yehuda, PhD, director of the Traumatic Stress Studies Division at New York's Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, led a study comparing the genes of Holocaust survivors and their children with those of other Jews of similar ages; survivors' children are known to be at increased risk for anxiety, depression, and stress disorders. The researchers found alterations in the same gene associated with depression and PTSD in survivors and their children. The gene changes in the children "could be attributed to Holocaust exposure" in their parents, Yehuda wrote.

Still, I struggled to believe that my grandmother could have such a profound influence on my life. When I'd met her, she seemed jovial, plainspoken—and other, a woman from a different time who spoke another language. My most vivid memory of her is when we were all sitting at dinner one night when, without preamble, she began belting out Chinese folk songs. I was 9 then; she was 80.

When I arrived at my next session, I sat on the love seat opposite Angelica. Again, the weight of her gaze unnerved me.

"Did you metabolize what we last talked about?" she asked.

"It's hard for me to wrap my head around the idea that my anxiety is all from Mom's family."

She shook her head. "It's not just your lineage. What was your conception like?"

I had to laugh. "I don't know."

She sidled up to me. "You had a hard time in utero. There's dark energy there."

"My mom was happy to be pregnant with me," I said.

"And who were the other kids I'm seeing?"

"Oh, my half sisters. Mom had them during her first marriage in Taiwan, when she was really

young. She left them there when she moved to the States."

"How old were they when she left?" Angelica asked.

"Twelve and 14," I said.

Angelica visibly recoiled. "Can you imagine doing that to Elyse?"

"God, no, I can barely leave her to use the bathroom."

I cracked the joke, but inside, I bristled. What seems horrid in modern California is worlds away from desperate measures taken in misogynistic Taiwan 60 years ago. My mother had been young and alone, with few options.

"I know it sounds bad," I said, "but it wasn't like she was a negligent mother—she was thrilled to have me. She thought getting pregnant again would be impossible after all her abortions."

Angelica's face twisted. "That's what I'm seeing, then," she said.

I felt defensive, and strange for feeling defensive, and oddly close to tears. I reached for humor to deflate the shame that seemed now to be filling the room.

"Abortions were like a form of birth control then. Sometimes she and a friend would get lunch and have an abortion, like a spa day."

Angelica didn't laugh. "Your mother loves you. But she also lived her life in survival mode. And it changed her."

I said nothing.

"No wonder you have anxiety," Angelica said gently. "Your first days were in a womb filled with the energy of unwanted souls."

I began to cry—deep, body-quaking sobs. I felt gut-punched by the idea that my mother was as heartless as Angelica seemed to think. I felt grief for those unwanted children. But mostly I felt guilt. Why had I been the lucky one, the wanted daughter? It seemed so arbitrary, so unfair.

"You didn't do anything wrong," said Angelica.

"I feel like I did," I said.

"These hurt souls are holding on to you because you accept that

guilt," she said. "You need to set them free."

"How?"

"Tell them what they've been waiting to hear."

I looked to my right side, where I thought the tiny souls might be, and said, "I'm sorry Mom didn't want you." And then I sat and cried for a while. I was overcome by a calm sadness. I lay down on the table without being asked to. Angelica placed crystals on my body. The moment her hands cradled my head, I fell asleep. I woke up unable to recall the specifics of my dream—just that it was full of people and a profound feeling of reckoning, of truth. I felt peaceful, as though I'd been lying on an exquisite beach.

That night, as we sat on the couch, my husband flipped to *The Walking Dead*. I hate *The Walking Dead*. "No," I said. "I want to watch *Parts Unknown*." (I have a thing for Anthony Bourdain.) So we did.

Even a day earlier, saying no would have consumed me with guilt. This time it felt like something I could do. It felt right.

**AT OUR NEXT SESSION**, Angelica asked me to write out as much of my family history as I could. This only served to show me how little I knew. When my mother came over for Sunday dinner, I decided to ask her about when she was a young woman.

My mother, in her customarily breezy tone and broken English, walked me through her early life—one of fear and grief, of horrific decisions wrought by limited choices. She told me about the herbs she took, the pot she sat on as she waited for a fetus to be expelled. She told me about the time, in Taiwan's rural south, when a snake shed its skin beside my half sister's crib. She told me about how years later, she left that child and her sister behind. I asked about her own girlhood, about the war in the late '30s and



early '40s—surely she didn't remember it?

"I live in a small village," she said matter-of-factly. "When Japanese bomb Chengdu, whole city rush out. Come by my village. My friends and I run outside. We all watch bomb go off together."

She told me about how, in those years, she fought with her brothers for shreds of meat. Most times, all they had to eat were the pumpkins and lima beans they grew. I was stunned. My mother and my grandmother had indeed been exposed to war, just as Angelica had intuited.

**WHEN I SAW HER NEXT**, Angelica told me, "The person who reacts to everything with fear is the child you. It's my job to awaken adult Monique, who can care for herself."

We set out to do just that.

I learned to step outside my body whenever anxiety threatened to overtake me, to watch my behavior as though it were someone else's. I recognized my anxiety in real time, noting how it affected me physically. Again and again, I saw reactions that made no sense. Putting the wrong kind of crackers in Elyse's lunch didn't warrant a spike in my heart rate. Choosing a lousy restaurant on date night didn't merit a roiling stomach.

Without as many "emergencies" to react to, I became more patient. When Elyse was stressed about running late for school, instead of mirroring her anxiety, I gave her a long hug. When Rick forgot to buy milk, I shrugged and poured Elyse a glass of water. When Rick's brother came over with his pug and it rubbed its chronically itchy butt across our rugs, I put a sheet down and laughed at my daughter's delight in the dog's antics. Before, when I seemed stressed, Elyse had often asked me "Are you angry, Mommy? Are you frustrated with me?" She had seen my anxiety, absorbed it, and taken responsibility for it, just as I once

had with my mother. Now she wasn't asking me that. She had no reason to.

As I grew more convinced that I had inherited my anxiety, my relationship to it changed. I became more accepting of it. I was able to stop judging myself for finding life so unmanageable. The thing about not judging yourself is that it lets you actually start to like yourself. More and more, I felt that happening.

In my next session with Angelica, I told her this. And I told her about the strides I'd been making—walking around in the world as though I belonged there.

"That's a victory," she said.

"I still worry about Elyse's feelings getting hurt," I said.

"That's normal," Angelica said. "She's your kid."

Later, I asked Rick, "Do you think I'm better?"

He paused. "Well, I did notice you didn't tell me which lane I had to drive in to get to the movies last night," he said.

I am better. I know it—I feel it every day. I feel it when I wake up and don't assume that everything that can go wrong will, and when I make plans with people without worrying about whether I'll be entertaining enough for them. I feel it when my daughter runs to me, instead of away, when she's had a hard day.

Delying into my ancestry let me face my own turmoil and finally see myself clearly. I am my grandmother's sadness and my mother's fear—but I am also my grandmother's strength and my mother's resilience. And I can see my anxiety for what it is, too: a series of reactions I can choose to breathe through. (Believe me, I pat myself on the back every time I do.) Whether my pain was inherited or not, my life was defined by it. I was forever looking backward, stuck in familiar fears. I was living history—and now I'm creating a new one.

## Shop Guide

(All prices are approximate.)

**COVER** On Oprah: Blanket, \$190; woolrich.com. Cardigan, \$598; eileenfisher.com. Plaid shirt, \$80; talbots.com. Pants, \$189; calvinklein.com. Earrings, \$1,145; jamiejoseph.com. Bangle, \$2,300; johnhardy.com. Boots, L.L.Bean Signature, \$229; ilbean.com. Mug, Canvas Home, \$12; canvashomestore.com. Scarf (on chair), \$425; apeacetreaty.com. Chair, \$229; ilbean.com.

**BEHIND THE SCENES PAGE 12** and **HERE WE GO**

**PAGE 19** On Oprah: Plaid shirt, \$49; woolrich.com. Tank, Pure Lime, \$36; bandier.com. Pants, Brunello Cucinelli; bergdorfgoodman.com. Hat, \$36; outdoorresearch.com. Scarf (over blanket), \$425; apeacetreaty.com. Blanket, Pendleton, \$229; pendleton-usa.com. Mug, Canvas Home, \$12; canvashomestore.com. Chair, \$229; ilbean.com.

**WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE PAGE 152** On Oprah: Shirt, \$70; coldwatercreek.com. Mug, Canvas Home, \$12; canvashomestore.com.

### BUCKET LIST

Found: a stylish spring bag that won't break the bank! For more budget-friendly trends, check out Great Buys Under \$100 (page 60). \$90 each; deulux.com.



NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. Oprah Magazine Auto Camp Airstream Adventure Sweepstakes (the "Sweepstakes"); Beginning January 10, 2017, at 12:01 A.M. (ET) through February 13, 2017, at 11:59 P.M. (ET) (the "Entry Period"), go to [oprah.com/acaasweeps](http://oprah.com/acaasweeps) on a computer or a wireless device and complete and submit the entry form pursuant to the onscreen instructions. One (1) Winner and a guest will receive a two-night, three-day trip to the Auto Camp in Russian River, CA, and two (2) coach class airfare tickets (voucher subject to additional terms and conditions) (ARV: \$4,768) as well as \$1,430 in the form of a check (which Winner may use, if he/she so elects, to help defray any tax liability Winner may incur in connection with his/her acceptance of the Prize Package). Total ARV: \$6,198. Important Notice: You may be charged for visiting the mobile website in accordance with the terms of your service agreement with your carrier. Odds of winning will depend upon the total number of eligible entries received. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia who are 21 years or older at time of entry. Void in Puerto Rico and where prohibited by law. Employees of Sponsor, its parents, affiliates and subsidiaries, participating advertising and promotion agencies, independent judging organizations, and prize suppliers (and members of their immediate family and/or those living in the same household of each such employee) are not eligible. Sweepstakes subject to complete official rules available at [oprah.com/acaasweeps](http://oprah.com/acaasweeps).

O, The Oprah Magazine (ISSN 1531-3247) is published monthly, 12 times a year, by Hearst Communications, Inc., 300 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019, U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional entry post offices. Canada Post International Publications mail product (Canadian distribution) sales agreement no. 40012499.

Postmaster: Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 707.4.12.5.) Nonpostal and military facilities: Please send address changes to O, The Oprah Magazine, P.O. Box 6000, Harlan, IA 51593. Printed in the U.S.A.