

REAL LIFE REAL WOMEN

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SPECIAL ISSUE

LOVE YOUR BODY!

good-bye scale,
hello happiness

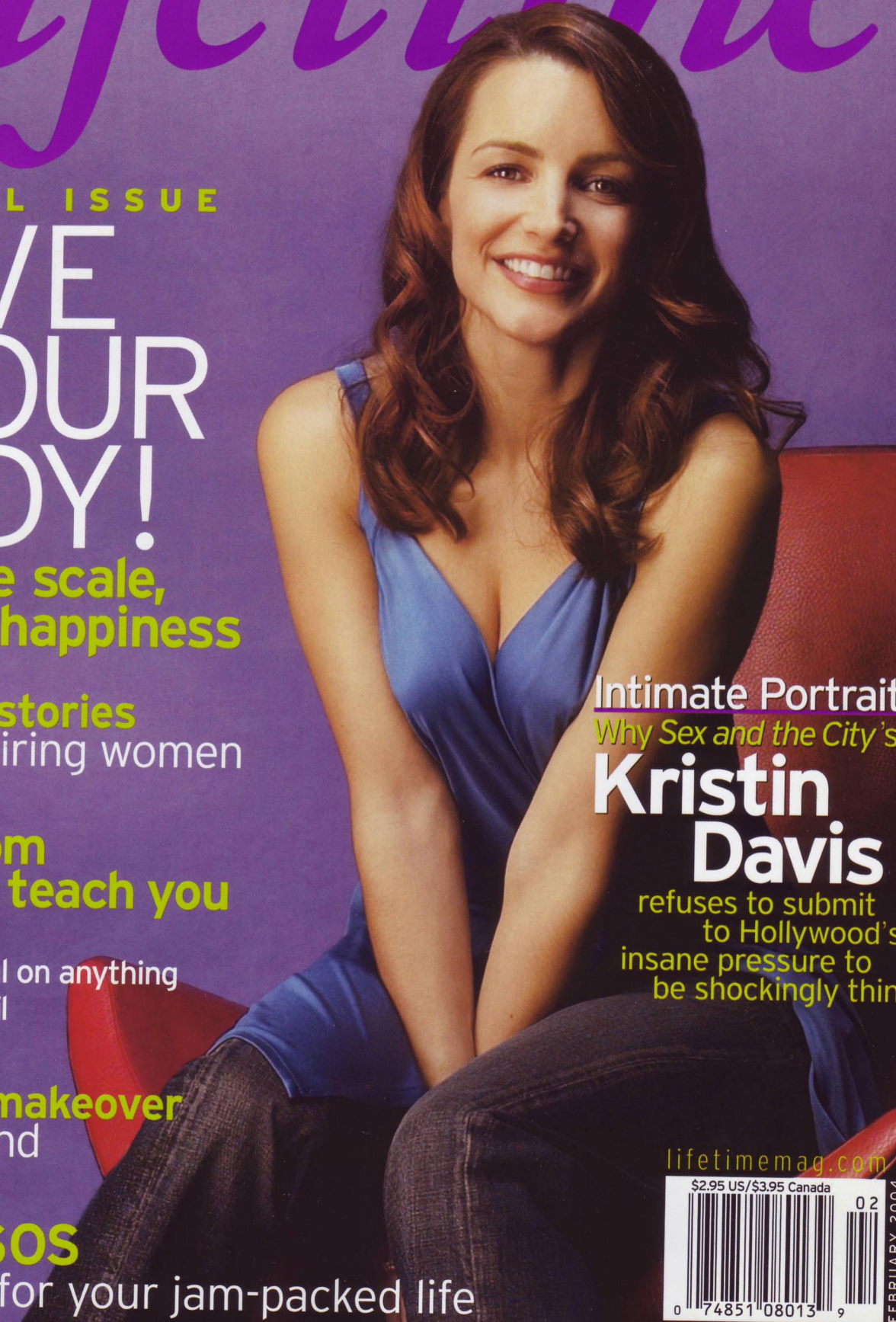
Heartfelt stories
about inspiring women

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FEBRUARY 2004

kids out of the frame. Back up and see the whole picture, says W. Gerrod Parrott, Ph.D., a psychology professor at Georgetown University. I'm reminded of the quote by dramatist George Bernard Shaw: "The man with toothache thinks everyone happy whose teeth are sound." Your friend with the proverbial sound teeth? She may have a nonexistent sex life. Or an incontinent cat. Or she may envy *you* for something you take for granted, like your tennis serve. You never really know what goes on behind closed doors. In my single days, I used to be jealous of a certain married couple. They had it all—adorable kids, interesting jobs, vacations to places most of us can't pronounce. They were even profiled on a TV show about what makes solid marriages. "If only I could find a relationship

like that," I'd sigh. P.S. They divorced when he ran off with a much younger woman.

Let Her Achievement Be Your Inspiration

If a friend's success makes you bal- listic, adjust your attitude. "Turn envy into emulation," says Parrott. Recall my svelte friend Jen? I've finally stopped whining about how life is so unfair—she gets to be fit while I feel like a cow, blah, blah, blah. I realized she doesn't have the corner on thinness. If she did it, so can I. I've joined a weight loss program and I'm already down 10.

Learn to Appreciate What You Still Share

She bought your dream house and you could just spit. Before you start gossiping about her pretentious

McMansion, focus on what you still have in common, instead of what separates you. You both share a pen- chant for jewelry making? Hit bead shops or debate the merits of cer- tain semiprecious stones and steer clear of the mortgage-rate and dec- orating talk.

Untangle Her Priorities From Your Own

The more important the area of your friend's accomplishment is to you, the more likely you are to begrudge her, according to studies. When a friend of mine got a big promotion at her insurance job, I congratulated her without the tiniest flicker of envy because if I had to spend one single second of my life selling insurance, I'd stick a fork in my eye. When you feel a wave of jealousy sweeping over you, ask yourself if what she has is something you genuinely care about. And even if it is, is there a way to differentiate yourself? For example, it may irk you that she can afford a sitter on the weekend while you're at home refereeing your *Rugrats*, but perhaps your hubby is a more involved dad than hers is, so you're not chomping at the bit to flee come Friday.

Go Ahead and Ride Her Coattails to Glory

"Her good fortune may benefit you as well," says Tesser. Think of yourself as on the same side. When my friend Nina landed a fantastic job that had my name written all over it, my first inclina- tion was to rage and hit the Ben & Jerry's pretty hard. Then I thought, Now I've got a terrific contact with a great corporation—maybe she'll throw some work my way! Which she has, God bless her successful little hide. **L**

The 3 biggest envies—deleted!

1 Beauty She's got legs like Cameron Diaz and a wardrobe worth more than your 401(k). Face it: 99 percent of us will never reach the physical ideal we have jammed in our faces at the movies. Women come in all sizes. Though society doesn't recognize that, we can (for more on this, see *Our Lifetime Commitment*, "10 Ways to Love Your Body," page 84). At some point, you also have to develop your sense of humor. She's in designer duds and you've got your kid's throw-up on your shirt? Laugh. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

2 Other People's Kids Theirs seem perfect; yours seem . . . average. Why is it that everyone else's offspring appear to be gifted athletes with flawless manners? You're happy if your kids use spoons when they eat. If we buy into the notion that we have to be perfect, and we believe that our kids are reflections of us, of course we panic when they aren't perfect as well. "Ask yourself: 'Am I pushing them because I need to compete or because I think they'll benefit?'" says Susan Shapiro Barash, a professor of gender studies at Marymount Manhattan College and author of the forthcoming book *Tripping the Prom Queen: The Myth of Female Solidarity*.

3 Money "If you surround yourself with people who make you feel bad for not being richer or complain because they aren't richer, they'll suck the energy out of you," says Chellie Campbell, a Los Angeles-based money management expert and author of *The Wealthy Spirit*. You may not be able to completely eliminate whiners from your life, but befriend people who embrace your values, and your self-satisfaction will surge.