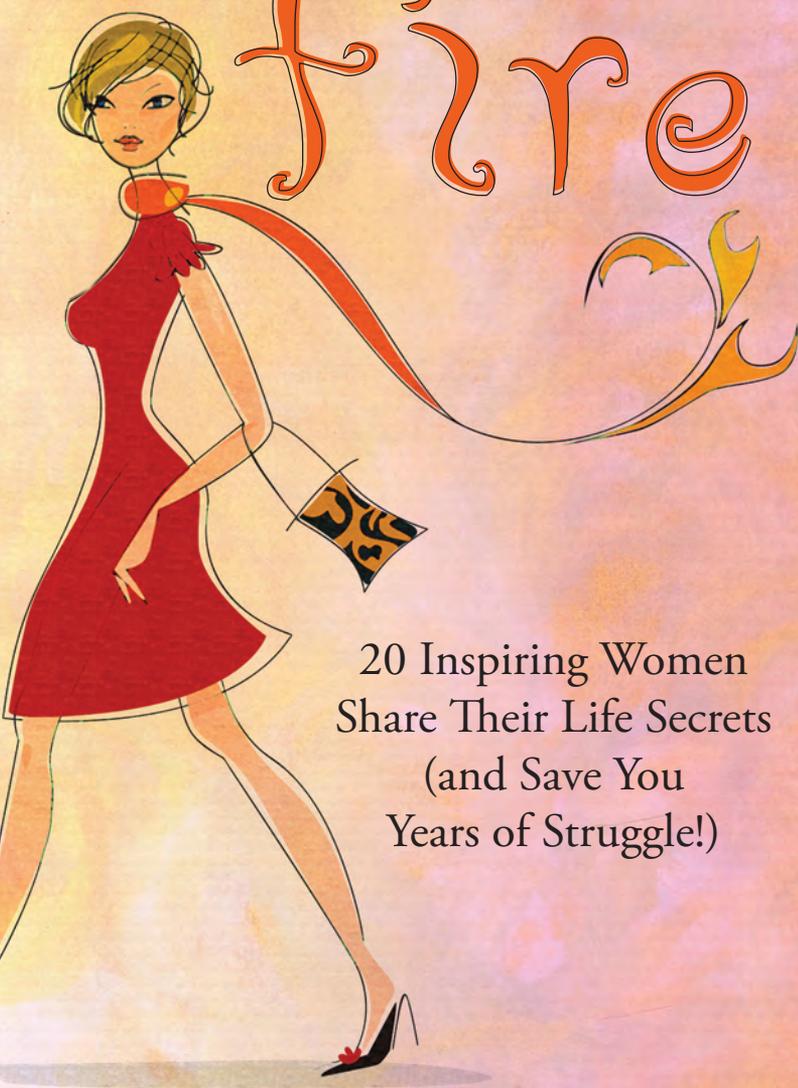


*"Thank you, Debbie, for creating a venue where women can
gather to make great things happen..."*

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm

Women on Fire

A stylized illustration of a woman with short blonde hair, wearing a red dress and black high-heeled shoes with red bows. She is holding a lit match in her right hand, and a long, flowing orange and yellow flame extends from the match, forming the word 'Fire' in a large, decorative, flame-like font. The background is a soft, textured wash of yellow and pink.

20 Inspiring Women
Share Their Life Secrets
(and Save You
Years of Struggle!)

DEBBIE PHILLIPS

PRAISE FOR
Women on Fire
BOOK AND TEA PARTIES

“Margaret Mead once said, ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world . . . it is the only thing that ever has.’ And I would add, “especially a group of women.” Women are a powerful lot. We are the creators of change. And when we get to work, we make great things happen. Thank you, Debbie, for creating a venue where women can gather to make great things happen not only in their own lives, but in the lives of others.”

~ Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor of Michigan

“Where was this book 30 years ago when I was starting out? A welcome reminder that you gain more from adversity and failure than success!”

~ Erin Moriarty, CBS News correspondent

*“This book is an inspiring, motivating treasure of women’s triumphs over their challenges. It is destined to be placed on every woman’s bookshelf right between **Chicken Soup for the Women’s Soul** and **Eat, Pray, Love**.”*

~ Dr. Ranjana Pathak, corporate vice president
and creator of www.ombics.com

*“Debbie Phillips’s inner flame burns so brightly that all who surround her are caught up in the conflagration. In **Women on Fire** she has assembled a luminous group to tell their inspiring stories, ones that move us and challenge us to reach farther than we thought possible. **Women on Fire** is testimony that, if we continue to nurture the inner spark, it cannot help but ignite powerful transformation. Debbie is a nurturer of sparks. She should be forced to wear a sign that says, “DANGER: HIGHLY EXPLOSIVE HERE.”*

~ Edward L. Beck, ABC News correspondent
and author of *Soul Provider: Spiritual Steps to Limitless Love*

*“This book answers the need of women everywhere who seek the empowerment and support Debbie Phillips so graciously creates as she tends the embers of the heart with such love and skill at her **Women on Fire** gatherings. Every woman, whether leader, entrepreneur, social activist, partner or mother will join this ever-expanding circle and be immediately enriched in making her own dreams come true.”*

~ Ellen Wingard, executive coach and co-author of *Enlightened Power: How Women Are Transforming The Practice of Leadership*

*“**Women on Fire** will light your fire! Debbie has done wondrous work in bringing together women of like minds and souls. We are reminded that we never have to do it alone and that we are all part of each other’s inspiration and support. All of our gifts are so needed now. It is no time to hold back. Let’s light our fires!”*

~ Agapi Stassinopoulos, speaker, author of *Gods and Goddesses in Love*

*“A **Women on Fire** tea party is an enchanted journey into a mystical, magical place where very real life conversations happen, very real life chance meetings occur and very real life miracles abound. Debbie Phillips is Merlin in pearls!”*

~ Gina Otto, author of *Cassandra’s Angel*

*“You deserve to be a **Woman on Fire** in your life. You deserve to read this delicious gem of a book, in which real women share how they left behind ordinary lives for lives of courage, fun, magic and true success. You’ll find a dynamic support group in these pages!”*

~ Tama J. Kieves, best-selling author of *This Time I Dance! Creating the Work You Love*

*“**Women on Fire** is full of the richness of voices of women who have lived life, awakened to a deeper part of themselves and are ready to share their wisdom with one reader at a time. I laughed, I cried, I cheered and I felt the stories deep in my heart. The only thing better would be an in-person connection at one of Debbie’s tea parties.”*

~ Andrea Hysten, co-author of *Conscious Choices: An Evolutionary Woman’s Guide to Life*

*“I have written that women are given poor advice when they are told to join an all-women network. And there’s research to show women are more backstabbing to other women than to men. So it’s great to see that Debbie Phillips is tackling the problem head-on by creating **Women on Fire** and environments where women can connect in positive, productive and useful ways. It’s about time.”*

~ Penelope Trunk, entrepreneur, columnist and author of
Brazen Careerist: The New Rules For Success

*“At the heart of authentic female wisdom are the values of collaboration, support, and generosity. When these attributes are present true community and inspired leadership follow naturally. **Women on Fire** and its author Debbie Phillips are both the living embodiment of this ancient wisdom that we so urgently need in these difficult times.*

*“As I read this book I felt like I was sitting in a circle of wise women warmed and emboldened by the fire of their passion, highest aspiration, and courageous action. With its lively style, fearless stories, and mandate to live your dreams no matter what, **Women on Fire** is the perfect antidote in our gloomy and disempowered climate.”*

~ Gail Straub, Co-Founder, The Empowerment Institute and author of
Returning to My Mother’s House: Taking Back the Wisdom of the Feminine

*“Thanks to Debbie Phillips’s personal coaching and her **Women on Fire** tea parties, I am launching a travel website. I figured it was high time to do what I love. What a concept! Even though these are tough times to start any business, I will be well-positioned when the economy turns around. Best of all, I’m energized and excited about what I’m doing rather than drained and anxiety-ridden. I wish for everyone who reads this book to fulfill their dreams—even if the idea seems a bit crazy!”*

~ Doni Belau, founder/creator/CEO, GirlsGuideToParis.com

*“With **Women on Fire**, Debbie has created an environment where you are completely transported to a place of energy, possibility and support; where total strangers become instant friends, and treat each other as if it’s always been so. And the impact of the experience lingers long after the party has passed. I find I can access the powerfully positive intentions of the women*

who gather in this group by simply recreating the event in my mind. What an honor to be included!”

~ Jenifer Madson, financial success coach and author of
A Financial Minute

*“To really appreciate what **Women On Fire** is all about you must first know about the founder, Debbie Phillips. Debbie has been my personal coach and friend for more than five years, and I cringe to imagine where I’d be today with out her advice, support and care. Because of Debbie’s influence I developed the courage and dedication to follow my dreams of coaching, speaking and writing. Every time I doubted myself, felt like giving up, her calm, powerful voice gently put me back on track.*

*“Debbie is a natural connector, and when she first told me of the **Women on Fire** tea parties I knew it would be life changing for any woman who attended. When I went to my first WOF tea party in Los Angeles, I invited seven of my coaching clients to attend as well. Three of my clients met and created new close friendships from that one party; one started a joint-venture partnership, and all of them are looking forward to attending the next one. I personally got re-inspired to finish my book after attending, and made friendships with other women who wanted to help me promote my book to their contacts.*

*“As a coach, I know that much of success is due to whom we consistently rub elbows with, and being a member of **Women on Fire** myself, I have total certainty and confidence in where I am going because of the awesome support I have received and will continue to give and receive on this journey. I’ve witnessed too many women who make the mistake of trying to go for their dreams alone. It doesn’t work that way, and it isn’t any fun either! We need and deserve a team.*

*“Thank you, Debbie, for being in my life and following your vision for **Women on Fire!**”*

~ Mandy Pratt, coach and co-author *Rich Coach, Broke Coach*

Women on Fire



20 Inspiring Women
Share Their Life Secrets
(and Save You
Years of Struggle!)

DEBBIE PHILLIPS



Love Your Life Publishing
Dallastown, PA

Women on Fire: 20 Inspiring Women Share Their Life Secrets
(and Save You Years of Struggle!)

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Dedication

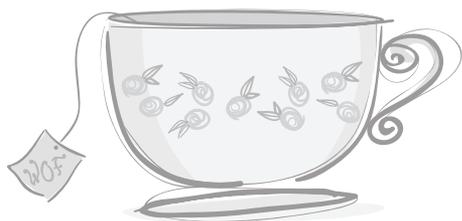


For

Irene O'Garden, Kathleen Laughlin and Judith Ivey

Playwright, filmmaker, actress

Your brilliance led us to ours.



20 Aspirations of Women on Fire™

Are you a Woman on Fire? Ask yourself the following.

Do I:

- Desire deep fulfillment in my work and life?
- Cheer on the successes of other women?
- Embrace my talents and achievements?
- Eagerly share my information, ideas, experience and connections to benefit others?
- Always work to improve myself?
- Love to learn new things?
- Know how to ask for help?
- Invest in myself and my potential?
- Connect with other women in a trusting, soul-satisfying way?
- Have a positive attitude (at least 90 percent of the time!)?
- Have an awareness of my powerful impact on others?
- Dedicate myself to using my strengths, gifts and talents to make a difference in the world?
- Act in a clear, direct way with compassion and kindness?
- Appreciate, honor, credit and celebrate those who helped me along the path to my goals?
- Know (mostly!) when to say “YES!” and how to say “NO”?
- Cultivate a “tough mind” yet lead my life with a “tender heart”?
- Work toward my next desires and know that I am on my way, even if I may not yet fully know “how to get there”?
- Recognize my creativity as a gift to be protected, valued and nurtured?
- Give—and accept—love and support?
- Believe there is plenty in this world for me?

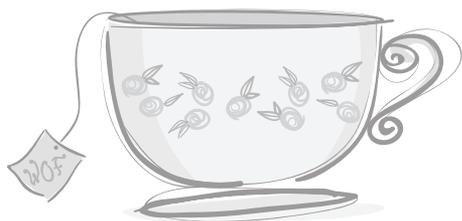


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Foreword

JANETTE BARBER

I once read that if you were to take a drop of pond water and view it under a microscope you would see, in microcosm, the entire pond. I believe that also holds true with people.

We see in each person's story all of our stories. That is what makes the individual accounts in this book so important. There is a part of all of us in these reflections. We have all dreamed and we have all achieved and we have all been on fire about something.

What Debbie Phillips gives us is the chance to be on fire together. Connecting gives us a way to recharge our own dreams and our own belief that we can achieve by bonding with other women in celebration of our goals, whatever they are. One thing I've learned is that when we "burn" together, the fire gets so much brighter.

I found Women on Fire by accident. I was at the first of the now-famous Women on Fire Tea Parties. (If you say to yourself, "Famous? I haven't heard of it." Well...I can't be responsible for that, can I?) The Tea Party is famous among the women on fire.

It's where small groups of us come together to meet other women and celebrate success by drinking tea and eating cakes. At the tea party, it becomes clear that success is really already yours and that everything imaginable is within the realm of possibility (including chocolate-covered strawberries, scones and clotted cream...).

It was September 2004 and my friend Agapi Stassinopoulos was in town promoting her book, *Gods and Goddesses in Love*. She had invited me to her press luncheon, which was lovely, and then she said to me, in

her wonderful Greek accent, “Dahling, come to a tea party with me.” I thought, “Good! There’ll probably be tea.” Little did I know. We walked into Lady Mendl’s Tea Parlor on Irving Place in New York City, and as soon as I crossed the threshold I felt like Alice going through the looking glass.

Inside, it’s elegant and Victorian. It was immediately clear that I had mystically left New York City and had time-warped into someplace that still had manners. For example, there isn’t a coat room where you have to stand like herd animals waiting for your turn. Instead a well-dressed, soft-spoken, handsome young man in a suit will take your coat for you. Nice.

In this distinctive atmosphere, I met Debbie Phillips for the first time. Debbie feels like the most wonderful harbor you could ever imagine sailing into. She sets the tone. If you have never been to a Woman on Fire tea party, it’s very hard to describe. On the one hand, nothing happens. On the other hand, everything happens.

Through these tea parties, Debbie Phillips has created a movement about women connecting with women. A Women on Fire tea is a place where women share their strength and their dreams and open the door to becoming who they had always intended to be but maybe forgot somewhere along the way. It’s a place where growth is inevitable and transformation happens.

All my life I’ve been hearing about the “Old Boy Network”—that mysterious patchwork of men who are supposed to be able to shift lives and careers with a slap on the back and a handshake. Well, women definitely have to fight to find a place in the old boy network, so for myself, I’d rather skip that battle.

I’d rather be part of a new network of Women on Fire. Imagine! A world where every major city you go into has a Women on Fire network to plug into! That could so easily happen because Debbie Phillips definitely has a mission—to connect with other women and not to be satisfied until every woman can raise her own voice with authenticity and satisfaction and know that she is living her best life.

That is what it is to be a Woman on Fire. It means that you are ready to open, to connect and to grow. Join us. Together we will be a conflagration!

Introduction

First, a little quiz.

“Women on Fire” describes a:

- Documentary film
- One-woman play
- Book
- Tea party
- Retreat
- Coaching group
- Movement of fabulous women coming together to inspire, strategize and support each other’s dreams
- All of the above.

Of course, because you are very smart and quite possibly a woman on fire yourself, you probably answered “all of the above.” And you are correct!

The documentary film and the one-woman play I can take absolutely no credit for. In fact, I owe much to filmmaker Kathleen Laughlin for her delightfully quirky documentary of women discussing their experiences of menopause. I adored the movie and was enchanted upon meeting Kathleen. What dazzled me though was hearing the words “women on fire.” Those three words strung together buzzed. They *felt* exciting, as

though anything were possible if you were a woman on fire!

Several years later, I again met up with those stunning words. In a chance encounter at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, N.Y., I came upon playwright Irene O'Garden and her captivating one-woman play *Women on Fire*. In it actress Judith Ivey plays a dozen passionate women on the brink of self-discovery, all burning with her own personal fire. When I spoke with Irene, she not only opened her beautiful creative heart, but she also encouraged and helped me to follow my dreams of providing forums for women to flourish in.

Neither Kathleen nor Irene had known of the other and her “woman on fire” work. Generously, they both gave me their blessing to use the name “women on fire” in anything I'd create to uplift, benefit and transform the lives of women.

They are who I was thinking of when I wrote the *Women on Fire* aspiration of abundance: “I believe there is plenty in this world for me!”



Have you ever wondered just how great and deeply fulfilled you could be if only you had the inspiration, strategies and support to live up to your life's highest calling?

One of my favorite quotes from the Talmud is “Every blade of grass has its angel that bends over it and whispers ‘grow, grow.’” Have you ever wished for your own angel to whisper over you like that?

Chances are you have. I certainly did.

From the beginning of my career, I held fascinating and creative jobs. I've been a radio and newspaper reporter, a presidential candidate's deputy press secretary and a governor's press secretary, and I've run a television production company.

I have loved my work, but I often felt I could somehow be better, truer to myself, less prone to falling into traps or stumbling through mistakes and stressing myself to a breaking point.

In all my jobs, I was surrounded by talented people—both men and women—and I learned a lot from them. Many even saw promise in me and cheered on my success. What I longed for, though, was someone to help me to become my very best in every way, personally and professionally.

In particular, I wanted women as role models so I could learn to lead with my own brand of feminine gifts, strengths and talents. Back in the 1980s, there were so few I related to, and the ones I did were out of my reach: Gloria Steinem and Hillary Rodham Clinton (much softer and quite witty when I initially met her as First Lady of Arkansas) were two.

So after more than 20 years in the workforce, I allowed my heart to lead the direction of my career. I simply created for other people what I had wanted for myself—someone to help me clarify and express my greatest gifts, strengths and talents in the world. It was several months before I found out my new endeavor had a name: I was an executive and life coach.

The profession was so new and unknown in 1995 when I started my practice that many people on hearing about it thought I had become involved in sports! Few understood how I could possibly make a living by supporting other people to stretch and be their best. But I did, and I was financially successful from the beginning.

Many people could not understand why someone would need—or even want—such a coach. True then, but not now.

Coaching took hold in the United States and around the world as more and more people experienced the value of this type of partnership. Today, there are tens of thousands of coaches. A *Harvard Business Review* study in 2009 revealed the meteoric rise in coaching. A decade prior, coaches were mostly hired to fix toxic behavior in employees. Now, coaches are more likely to be hired to help people develop their natural abilities and best qualities.

After several years of working one-on-one with professional women from all over the country, I was led to a dream of my own: I wanted to connect my wonderfully engaging, fabulous, talented clients with each other!

Even though each had me as her coach, I believed they would greatly benefit from knowing each other. “A rising tide lifts all boats” is one of my favorite sayings, and I felt if my clients knew one another’s struggles, hopes and dreams, even greater joys would come.

So I finally revisited my three favorite words and started my own version of Women on Fire™. At first we held a large event, then a smaller day-long coaching group, and then tea parties, which turned out to be a big hit!

Over time, my clients began to invite their fabulous women friends to the tea parties, and those women invited their friends, and on and on it went. Today, Women on Fire has expanded and includes tea parties, retreats, coaching groups, Vision Days® (strategic life-planning days), videos and now this book.

“Grief shared is halved; and joy shared is doubled” is one of the reasons I wanted to create this book. I personally invited the authors within to share the deeply personal and powerful stories of their lives. When you see how another woman led the way or coped with or survived issues many of us have faced or may face over a lifetime, we grow stronger and smarter together.

I welcome you to join our circle of dynamic and authentic women. Any time you need a little inspiration or perhaps a strategy or some support and comfort, may you find it waiting for you in these pages.

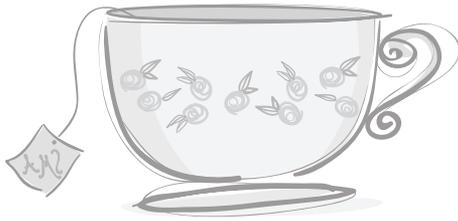
We hope this book saves you some wear-and-tear so you can use the extra energy to create a life you really want and dream of.

It will be a great pleasure if one day I get to meet you and hear what you are “on fire” about in your life!

Debbie Phillips
February 15, 2009

PART ONE

အံ့ဩစိတ်



Taking Shopping Seriously

How I almost overlooked a career that fits me hand-in-glove

❧ HOLLY GETTY ❧

I work for a very large insurance company. Monday through Friday, I review accident claims, assess the damage to automobiles and file reports. I complete about 30 forms a day, talk to clients on the phone, and start my lunch countdown at about 11:15.

Oh, and I doodle a lot.

Wait, I'm sorry. What am I doing? I'm writing about a life the way my father planned it. Hang on! This is supposed to be about *my* life, the way *I* planned it. Sorry, I got confused for a second.

You see, Dad wanted me to be safe and insured...and then happy. Or not, but safe and insured for certain. It was a dad thing and a thing from his generation. He worked for one very large insurance company for 37 years. One life, one job. That was how you did it.

Day one of 1968, enter one daughter with little or no interest in anything insured, or even numeric, really. Dad loved me dearly and was charmed by my interests, but he couldn't identify with a single one of them.

You see, I grew up in the brown bathroom. Owned it. Claimed it at a very young age.

CREATIVITY CENTER

At 7, I reluctantly shared the space with my younger brother. I took over the faux marble countertop and claimed the far end as my makeshift

vanity. The poor kid had about eight inches of storage space, and I would pitch a fit if he stayed in the bathroom for more than 15 minutes.

This was my workspace. My creative home. Here, I used every potion and lotion I could find to make magic—braid my hair, cover my friend in makeup or make gifts for my mom.

A friend and I often rooted around in the gigantic linen closet of the previously mentioned, said brown bathroom to find ingredients to create things from. The closet was big enough to stand in, and we would hunt until something struck our fancy. One day, it was a box of tampons.

Not having a clue as to what they were, we experimented. I unwrapped the tubes, pulled the cords and submerged them in the sink. They expanded to five times their original size! Hours of fun.

Tying them onto a hanger, we sprayed the distended objects thoroughly with Love's Baby Soft—my fragrance of choice at the moment. Days later, they dried (in retrospect, probably many days later). As I held about eight in my hand, we tied the strings together, finished with a bow, wrapped them up in a box and, *voilà!* We were ready to give our mothers their own custom-made drawer sachets. Really? Yes, really.

I remember only that Mom's hand quickly muffled her involuntary scream as she opened the box. Scented, dried tampons with a bow. Shocking, maybe. But please, at age 7, this was genius...or, at least, pretty damn creative.

I'm sure you're thinking, "My God! Get this girl into an advanced beauty school immediately. We have a savant on our hands! If she can turn dried tampons into an attractive and useful gift, what other kinds of highly developed beauty skills must she possess?"

I hear ya.

Well, it wasn't that easy.

All I wanted to do was go to beauty school. Truly, it's all I ever really remember wanting to do. Dad would joke, "Yeah, you can go to beauty school after you graduate." After college graduation, I would ask, "*Now* can I go to beauty school??" "No," Dad would say, "I meant after you get your master's degree."

It was a big joke in the Getty household and, after so much time mocking my "talent," I saw it as a joke, too. Here is Holly. All she wants

to do is play with makeup and lotions and shop. She doesn't want to do anything serious. She just wants to make people look better.

TAKING A SHINE TO SHOPPING

What 12-year-old do you know who buys clothes for herself, much less for her mother, father and brother? I could do it with my eyes closed. But instead of seeing it as a gift for fashion, it was seen in another way: I could make money disappear.

So the journey began. It's almost comical when I look at it now. There I would be, agonizing over what I was going to do with my life, when my mom would announce that she needed an outfit for a formal event. In about 10 minutes, I'd have her in the perfect cocktail attire, complete with clutch, shoes and earrings. Mom was thrilled and amazed at my ability. Then, I was back to my teenage angst (dramatic neck arch with hand on forehead): "Oh, whatever will I do with my life?"

I lived for the days when Mom and I would drive to Philadelphia to get haircuts and then spend the rest of the day at the King of Prussia mall. I would bound out of bed, ready to go early. Mom, God bless her, would just try to make it through the day. She loathed shopping, but so graciously indulged me with the time and space to shop all day—an enormous sacrifice. And she always complimented me and acknowledged my interest and taste. I flitted through the store, knowing she would be parked in the nearest chair. It was touching to me then and even more touching now.

I would spend hours at makeup counters asking about the latest exfoliator and in specialty stores wanting to know about the newest cut in jeans. Mom would shrink in embarrassment. "You're taking too much of their time. We have to buy something." I wanted to know more about everything. I was in my element. I didn't want to bother anyone; I just wanted to learn about it all.

I would end up buying so much stuff—way more than I needed or wanted (well, I thought I wanted it). The routine was always the same: I would sneak the bags into the house while my mother distracted my dad. Over a period of the next few days, I would gradually show him what I

bought, explaining how new and different every item was and why it was a good purchase. Seeking his approval, for some unknown reason.

The whole process was infused with shame. I embarrassed my mother in the store, and Dad would get upset because I spent too much money, which I most certainly did. And then the American Express card would arrive. Oh, the horror.

So I never saw my passion for shopping as a gift. It was more like a disreputable compulsion. I did not embrace it, and I most certainly did not imagine it could be a career.

My mother saw it. She understood I had something special. Every time we shopped, she would say, “If you could just bottle it and sell it....”

My father would then say, “Yeah, you want to hurry up with that. I have an AmEx bill here.”

My dad had plans for me. First and foremost, they were to get an MRS degree as quickly as possible. Go to college and leave with a degree in whatever—and a husband. That was Roger Getty’s Plan A.

Plan B, an even more frightening possibility to me at the time, involved an entry-level job with his employer, the very large car insurance company. Imagine me, the girl born to bring out your bone structure, instead inspecting your car’s front-end damage. I’m more interested in fingernail polish color and the lighting options of a makeup mirror. Working in insurance would have been a nightmare for me. The dear company and I both dodged a bullet.

I guess I could have applied for a beauty school scholarship (the tampon story alone would get me in, I’m sure) and worked my way through. But I saw my talent as a joke, as a needless, frivolous thing that I abused.

What I did instead was to drift around...and around and around. I ended up with BA in psychology and another one in fine arts. At the end of my college career, I was panicked and had no idea what I wanted to do. So the obvious choice was...you’ve got it, more school. I went to graduate school initially to study photography and pursue an MFA. After a semester of photography, I ended up drifting into the education department. I connected deeply with the head of the department, who later became my adviser, and began a master’s in art education. I liked art. I liked school. It seemed like a fit.

It was a great experience, but I lacked the passion of the other students. I wasn't sure teaching was for me. I tried it, along with a series of other odd jobs, but I felt like something was missing. I toyed with the idea of getting married to someone who was offering. I considered it only because I had no idea what I was doing with my life. I was lost.

NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Then my best friend moved to New York City, and I visited her for a weekend. Sitting amongst the plush red walls of the Ziegfeld Movie Theater, I turned to her and asked, "Why am I not living here?" Never before had I seriously considered moving to New York, not even for one moment. I didn't even have it on my radar. But, for some reason, in that moment, it all became clear. It was like someone gently tapped me on the shoulder and whispered in my ear, "Move to New York City."

Two weeks later, I crashed at Laura's studio. I found a job the following Monday and an apartment on Tuesday. It was truly the easiest thing I have ever done. I blew up my air mattress, threw on a Jones suit and started my job as a receptionist at Jones apparel.

Little did I know that I was starting an affair with the new love in my life—New York City. It is the place where I found myself and came alive. It felt more like home than anywhere I had ever been.

My dear dad was less than thrilled. Here was his highly educated daughter working as a receptionist in the city he most disliked. (Remember when people didn't like New York? Well, my dad led the charge.) Regardless, he funded the project (bless him) and convinced himself I would be home in six months and then get married.

"Screw the lease, come home and marry Shane" was my dad's answer to all my New York stories. Be it boy issues or job issues, the answer was always the same. But it was not to be. I finally felt connected, and moving home was never a consideration.

I was "receptioning" my heart out for a couple weeks when a spot as a design assistant opened up at Jones. *Perfect*, I thought. I had it all figured out: I was in New York City, I loved to shop, and there I was working in design for a clothing company. Fabulous! I had found my passion. Clothing!

But not so fast. Although the world of clothing was interesting to me, “seeing how the sausage is made” showed me that retail wasn’t the right fit either. I wanted to help people feel better. That is really what I always loved to do. But that was not the top priority in a frenetic business like retail. I was getting closer, but I still felt empty.

Even though it wasn’t a perfect match, there was a flow. I was given job offers rather easily and, with each one, I felt it was to be my last, as surely my purpose would present itself soon and I would be freed from the indecencies I saw. Surely soon.

One low moment was while I was working at a start-up, which shall remain nameless, and by direction of my boss, I took a private car and her credit card to a well-known, pricey fashion house. My co-worker and I acted like we were a couple and bought thousands of dollars worth of clothes, whether they fit or not. We brought them back to the office, cut them into swatches, and the next day we presented them to the company that had created them as *our* product. I was shocked and disgusted to be a part of the process.

Despite my feelings, I didn’t leave. Partly because I didn’t know what else to do, and partly because there was some tiny part of me that felt like I needed to be there. I stayed in the industry, and soon my resume read like a mall directory: Lauren/Ralph Lauren, Jones, J Crew, Dana Buchman and Calvin Klein, to name a few. There were fantastic opportunities in the industry—some really great people and great experiences. Throughout my career, I traveled to Paris, Milan, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Osaka, Istanbul and Korea. It was a rare opportunity, and I loved the visual and cultural aspects of the job.

So much of it was a dream, but as I was moving from job to job in the fashion industry, my insecurities were growing. Focus was always on appearance, and I judged myself harshly. I was never thin enough, never cool enough. My inner critic was having a field day.

I couldn’t accept myself, so I tried to pattern myself after a co-worker. Despite the fact that she was a foot taller than me, had an opposite body type and was completely different from me in just about every way, I copied her style. I was disconnected from myself, and the days were long, since I spent so much time beating up on myself.

BATTLING THE INNER CRITIC

I tried different approaches to reconnecting to my inner self: therapy, coaching and any class that would help. But finding my passion was not some sparkle-filled moment with harp music playing in the distance. I doubted myself deeply. I had so little faith in myself because of my shame that I really didn't think I had much to offer. Did I want to write? Work with dogs? Try advertising? I didn't have a clue.

I finally decided to focus all my energies into finding the right career. Whatever it took, I was going to find my passion.

I decided to follow my coach's advice and take a gestalt management class. As compelling as the class was, I could not take my eyes off of one of my classmates. In this rather exclusive and expensive class, there sat a man dressed like he was ready to rob a minimart.

Unshaven and unkempt, his off-putting appearance, I learned, had nothing in common with the person he was. He loved opera, had an extensive knowledge of wine and was sharp as a tack. From an affluent family, he had played the role of the black sheep. This class was a way for him to appease the family and, he hoped, help himself.

Out of someplace in myself I had not previously accessed, I told him I did not buy his look. I did not think this outer shell represented his depth.

Did I just think that or say it out loud? I asked myself.

I offered to give him a makeover, head to toe. If he paid for the services and the clothes, I would redo his look in a day.

Shockingly, he agreed. A facial, haircut, manicure, new glasses and shopping spree later, he appeared to the class as a new man. Perceptibly taller and suddenly handsome, he blew everyone away. He wore a jacket, sat tall and participated in class, something he had not ever done before. Everyone loved his new look, and I could see his confidence grow immediately. I was over the moon and marveled at how fun and easy it all was.

In the weeks to follow, he got a job and a girlfriend; again, things he had not done before.

Another classmate asked me to makeover one of his clients. Then another, and from there more. I found my passion and my voice all at once.

STAMP OF APPROVAL

Voice. In my family, my mother's voice wasn't heard enough. Dad was smart, temperamental, loveable and extremely witty. Mom, soft-spoken, sweet and extremely wise. Dad's temper overshadowed Mom's gentleness way too often, especially when she expressed appreciation for my interests. I really needed validation from my dad.

"Why do you need his approval?" Mom would ask. "You know he never will give it."

Here I was, a 33-year-old woman so desperate for her dad's approval of her business, a business that would have seemed something so foreign to him, so risky, so scary. There was no way in the world my father, with his background and his view of the world, would ever say, "Go, girl! We believe in you. You go get people to pay you to take them to a store. You do that. I believe in you!"

Never. Never ever. Never ever ever.

Instead, our phone calls ended with Dad saying, "Well, this shopping thing isn't going to pay the bills. Don't you dare let this affect your job."

"Give up the dream," Norman, my genius therapist, would tell me. Dad had his view, I had mine. It should have been enough.

Then something happened. My first business cards arrived and I was overjoyed. *Holly Getty, Personal Style Consultant*. I was sitting on a bench in Philadelphia with my parents, and I brought out the cards. Stiffening up, I was ready to hear my dad say they were a waste of money. To my surprise, he asked for a big pile of them. Mom said, "Don't take too many." And he replied in his usual temperamental way, "Goddammit, I'm proud of her, for chrissake."

Sure, it came with a few expletives, but that moment on the bench meant a great deal to me. Besides my dad's encouragement, it also reminded me how my mom's quiet belief in me was always there. She has more faith in me than I ever knew. She listens to my challenges, gives incredible advice and deeply believes in my gift.

Her voice gets stronger every day.

We lost Dad three years after the day on the bench. I miss him and I know, in his way, he was proud of me. I wish he could see what I have accomplished since then.

You see, I have become very serious. I am serious about what I do for my clients. I help them gain confidence to do what they are put here on this earth to do. When they discover their authentic style and allow what is inside to be reflected outside, their opinions of themselves change, too. It's a beautiful process, and it flows through me.

My opinion of myself has evolved, too. Today, I am more concerned with being warm than being cool, and I know that comes from the inside out.



HOLLY GETTY is known for helping people achieve their authentic, sustainable style while working within their budget. During her career in the fashion industry, she has worked for such notables as Liz Claiborne, J Crew and Calvin Klein. She has bachelor's degrees in fine art and psychology from Gettysburg College, a master's from Penn State and has done postgraduate work in Gestalt Psychology. For her free style tips, go to: www.hollygetty.com

An Invitation from Debbie

I'm thrilled you found your way to us!

Right now you may be wondering what your own next steps are to being on fire with your life. As a favorite teacher of mine, Marianne Williamson, says, "Don't stop now, before the miracle happens!"

If what you've read so far and the 20 Women on Fire™ Aspirations in the front of this book speak to you, you may want to consider joining us. There are many opportunities for you to connect and thrive in the Women on Fire™ community.

I would be honored to have you join our ever-expanding circle!

Here are a few ways to be involved:

- Become a member of Women on Fire™. With membership, you will receive monthly newsletters full of inspiration, strategies and support to help you keep your fire burning bright. You'll also receive an audio CD each month featuring an inspiring woman who will share her wisdom and more. You will find us at: www.BeAWomanOnFire.com
- Attend a Women on Fire™ tea party in your area. To be notified of events and tea parties, please join our mailing list at: www.BeAWomanOnFire.com

If you are an experienced coach or facilitator and would like to learn more about hosting Women on Fire™ tea parties or coaching groups in your area, please contact us at Info@BeAWomanOnFire.com

- While I no longer coach individual women on an ongoing basis, I do lead a small number of group and private Vision Days each year.
- I also have a limited membership, private coaching group. If you would like to be considered for Vision Day or for future membership in the Founder's Coaching Group, please contact us for an application at Info@BeAWomanOnFire.com

Thank you for your interest.

Here's to living a life you are on fire about!

Love,
Debbie

~ Contact ~

DEBBIE PHILLIPS

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www.VisionDay.com

www.GriefRelief.com

ONLINE

Blog: www.DebbiePhillips.com

Twitter: [WomanonFire](https://twitter.com/WomanonFire)

Facebook: Go to: Debbie Phillips and request to join the private group Women on Fire™

YouTube: Subscribe and receive video tips and information at www.youtube.com/beawomanonfire

For quantity book sales or to sponsor a Women on Fire event in your area, please call (508) 696-4949.

About Debbie Phillips



Debbie Phillips is the inspiring founder of Women on Fire™ and a pioneer in the field of executive and life coaching. She is known for her work transforming women's lives.

In 1995, Debbie created a service for leaders and women in transition that previously didn't exist but that she had wished for earlier in her career. Executive and life coaching were all but unheard of in professional circles at the time, and she was among the first trained coaches in the world.

After several years of coaching individuals and teams, she founded Women on Fire™, an organization that features tea parties, retreats and coaching groups to extend the outreach of support for women's success.

Debbie also created and co-developed Vision Day®, a strategic planning day that has helped thousands of people live the lives they've dreamed of.

Prior to becoming a coach, she was a reporter for the *Columbus (Ohio) Citizen-Journal*; a deputy press secretary to former U.S. Senator John Glenn during his quest for the Democratic presidential nomination; press secretary to former Ohio Governor Richard F. Celeste; and an executive with U.S. Health Productions Co., which featured the internationally syndicated television health and lifestyle show *Life Choices with Erie Chapman*.

Debbie has a bachelor's degree in journalism from The Ohio State University and a master's degree in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

She and her husband and collaborator, Rob Berkley, live with their big white cat, Wilber, on Martha's Vineyard, Mass., and in Naples, Fla.

What if you could carry the wisdom and inspiration of 20 strong and insightful women with you each and every day?

You'd never have to face your struggles alone!

Women on Fire: 20 Inspiring Women Share Their Life Secrets (and Save You Years of Struggle!) is a heart-stirring and heartwarming anthology of stories written by 20 courageous and powerful women who faced real-life challenges and successfully moved through them to become authentic Women on Fire.

Each woman shares the details of a seemingly insurmountable obstacle and describes how she summoned the strength to overcome it and emerge stronger, healthier, happier, and more deeply fulfilled. The most important part of their message is that you can do the same!

Reading these inspiring stories, you will discover how you, too, can:

- **Tap into your passion and make a living from it**
- **Transform being laid off or fired into exciting new dreams**
- **Survive and even flourish after the death of a spouse or loved one**
- **Joyfully step off the corporate track**
- **Gracefully move through divorce and thrive after it**
- **Find love, even when you think it has passed you by**
- **Earn your college degree later in life**
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- **Successfully overcome an eating disorder**
- **End job burnout... forever**

And so much more!

"Where was this book 30 years ago when I was starting out? It's a welcome reminder that you gain more from adversity and failure than you do from success!"

-Erin Moriarty, CBS News correspondent

"You'll find a dynamic support group in these pages!"

-Tama J. Kieves, best-selling author of *This Time I Dance!*



Photo by Jinsey Dauk

Debbie Phillips, founder of the Women on Fire™ organization, is a pioneer in the field of life and executive coaching. She personally coached many of the book's contributing authors through their struggles and rejoiced with them when they discovered their inner greatness. For more information, visit www.BeAWomanOnFire.com



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