

TALKING *with* *the* EXPERTS



with

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Be mindful of your own excuses - the more honest you are with yourself, the more you can begin to understand the emotions driving your shopping habits

GET INTO YOUR ITEMS

You can't efficiently have a clear-out if you haven't put something on for three years. Get into your clothes and really look and feel. Try your best to remove the emotion of looking at yourself and get practical about your reflection. Does it actually fit you? What I mean by that is, do the shoulder seams actually sit on your shoulders? Does it ride up every time you lift your arms? Do those jeans fit great when you're stood up and really don't fit when you're sat down? Read your body language, it tells you what you need to know.

RELEASE THE OLD YOU

We often keep items to incentivise ourselves to fit into clothes that we wore when we were a smaller size, perhaps, or at a time we felt more confident. We all do it. I encourage you to release clothes that don't fit you and dress for the perfect person you are today. Show yourself some kindness and dress for your gorgeous body, exactly as it is now.

EXCUSES, EXCUSES, EXCUSES

you like it but you can't wear it because it blows up with the slightest gust of wind? Does it need a bra with complicated straps that you can't be bothered with? Be mindful of your own excuses - the more honest you are with yourself, the more you can begin to understand the emotions driving your shopping habits. Beware of "I'd wear it if the weather was better", or "I'd wear it if I had more events to go to". Most of the time when an event does come up, we go shopping for something new anyway.

MY 'FIVE OUTFITS' CHALLENGE

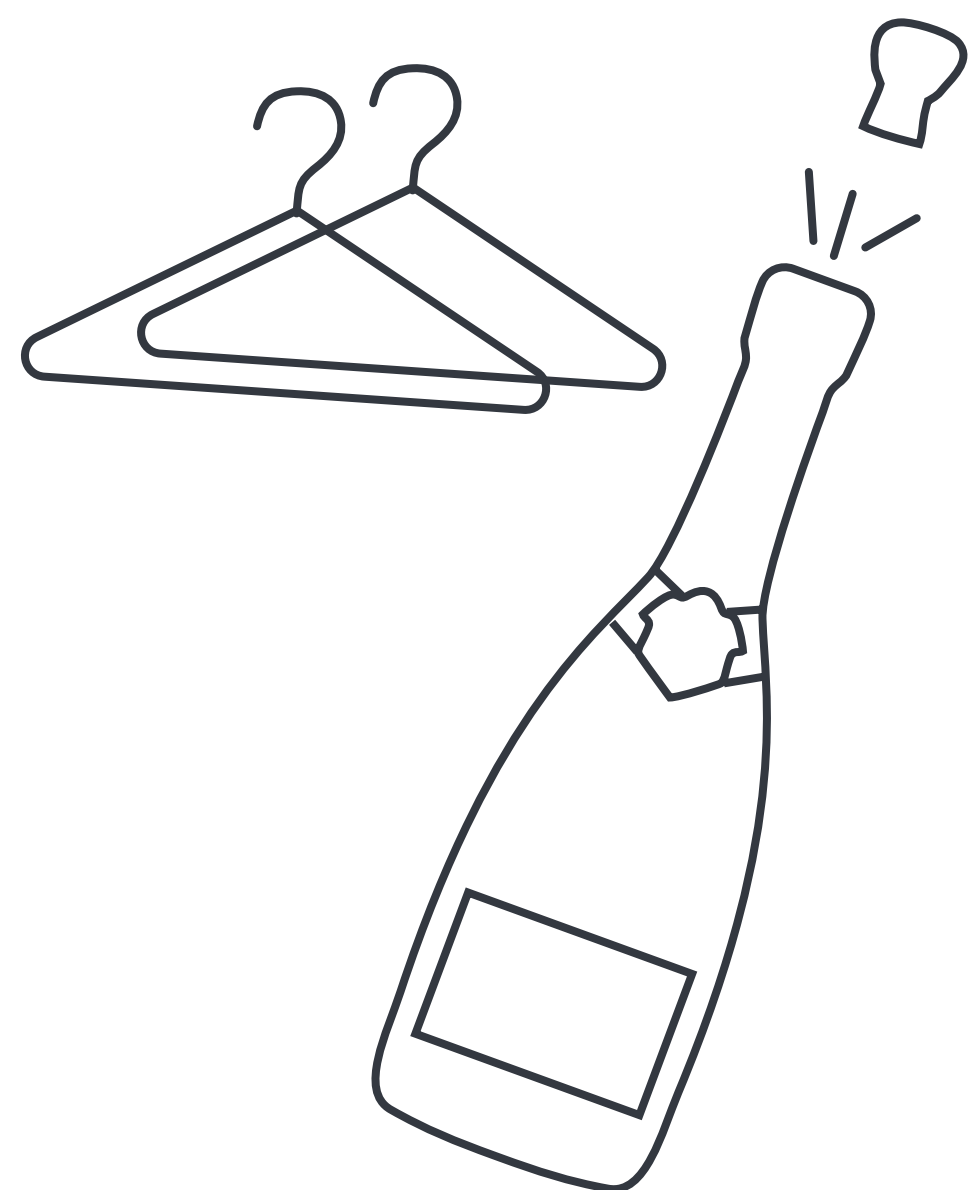
If you're standing there with the item on, and you love it, and you feel good in it, the next challenge is to create five outfits with that item. Here's where having everything out on your floor really comes in handy! Create new outfits, take pictures of them and pop them into an album on your phone. Then, on those "I HAVE NOTHING TO WEAAAR" days, you actually do, because it's sat there on your phone, holding you accountable. This allows you to use zero brain cells on those days when the clothing creative juices have run low.



KEEP, TOSS AND TAKE

Throw your stuff into four piles - donate, sell, tweak and keep. Maybe also try a fifth pile which is the “I’m really on the fence about this item” pile. I always advise people to err on the side of keeping items. If it’s a ‘fence’ item, my advice is to wear it once more. Wear it again to solidify your opinion on it. I did it recently with a ‘fence’ dress that I put on and thought “god I love this, why don’t I ever wear it?” Turns out when I sat down on the tube the whole thing opened at the crotch. Brilliant. I knew there was a reason I didn’t wear it after I had to spend the rest of my day standing up or gently perching.

If the closet clear-out still feels overwhelming, make an event of it. Get your best gals round, open some Prosecco, put some banging tunes on and have yourself a Sex and the City 2 session of ‘keep, toss and take’.



PRELOVED PRIMA DONNA: HOW TO BE THRIFTY AND FABULOUS

Get to know a tailor to tweak and prolong the life of your clothes. There are amazing brands out there doing the most to make our chaotic modern lives easy as well - like online tailors Sojo, or The Seam.

You can consider selling via online platforms like Vinted, Vestiaire, eBay and Depop as well as supporting your local preloved boutiques and sell to them. Consider renting out items that you keep especially for events that don’t get worn very often with apps like Hurr, or By Rotation, Swished or My Wardrobe HQ.

If you don’t want to sit on a pile of clothes waiting to sell on Vinted, try in-person preloved events as well, like the ones run by The Fashion Flea (@the_fashion_flea), where you can rent a rail and bring all your clothes to sell to other sustainable enthusiasts, or Roomy (@roomy.mkt) who run preloved markets purely for sizes 16+.

We also need to normalise sharing and giving clothes to our close circles. When my friends have a clear out, I make myself very available in case there’s something fabulous I can have.

For donations, consider Give Your Best (@giveyourbest.uk) - a charity who run a platform for refugees to shop for clothes or Round Retail (@roundretail), who run preloved events and pop-ups on behalf of charities that don’t have their own stores.

Next time you're stood in line at Zara, picture five things that you can put the item you have in your hands with. Not possible? Leave the shop



POST-DECLUTTERING: HOW TO KEEP YOUR WARDROBE FROM BECOMING A BLACK HOLE AGAIN

The most sustainable way to shop is within your own wardrobe. So get messy once a month, play dress up and keep creating. Keep on top of things you don't wear. One thing you can do is turn the hangers round once you've worn an item and you hang it back up. That way, you can see what you've worn and what you haven't. Keep asking yourself questions to avoid build-up over time. Get to know your own shopping habits as well - do you shop when you're tired and need a pick me up?

Do you buy something as a reward after being brave at the dentist? (Yes, yes I do.) If so, next time you're stood in line at Zara, picture five things that you can put the item you have in your hands with. Not possible? Leave the shop / website, and if you're still thinking about it a week later with a few outfit combos in mind, order it. Just remember - have you been needing or wanting something like that for a while, or is it driven by a dopamine hit / a well timed Instagram ad?

MIMIC THE RETAIL THERAPY RUSH

If you want to recreate that dopamine hit and you also don't have loads of room in your London property (I know this all too well), get into storing and vacuum packing your clothes. Pop your chunkiest knits and heaviest winter garms away for the season (despite the fact that we now seem to live in eternal Autumn), and enjoy the twice yearly event of the seasonal 'swapover'. That way, you trick your mind into forgetting everything you own and then you can joyously rediscover all of your favourite clothes. It works.

Also, challenge yourself. Find the fun in wearing that summery white maxi skirt or that tiny tank top in the bleak midwinter. Get creative with layering and playing. Put those wacky colours together. You never know what might happen, and it gets us out of the safety zone of "I wear that top with that one thing, and that pair of shoes, when the weather is like this".

STYLING TIPS FOR A FRESH START

Create some Pinterest boards, look at styles of celebrities that you are drawn to and go forward from there. Find three words that describe your aesthetic (for example: edgy, eighties, casual), so that the next time you go to purchase the latest trend on a whim (I'm looking at you, mesh ballet flats), you can stop and question whether it fits into your three style words. That way, you're only allowing new purchases that align with your style and will work seamlessly with what you already own, and preventing yourself from adding random items that you won't know how to put with anything once they get incorporated into your closet. Historically, fashion has always been associated with status and relevance - so fast fashion brands lean into that to make us purchase the latest thing. The more aware of it we are, the easier it is to break. Hone into yourself and what you need from your closet and the chances are, it's probably not a ballet flat that lets water in. And if it is, then I'm behind you all the way.

LET'S GET TECHNICAL

When it comes to getting technical about shape and colours, I'd recommend a session with a stylist. We're not all here to sell you loads of stuff and tell you that your wardrobe is entirely wrong.

I delve into clients wardrobes and love it - because it's them. They can wear a bin bag for all I care, as long as they feel confident in it! Style isn't a destination, I don't believe it's something you either do or don't have - it's you. So whatever you like and feel good in is what we work towards. But, the technical elements of dressing for your shape, your style personality and your colour palette is all something that a personal stylist can absolutely help you with if you're in a rut and in need of help.



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FAST FASHION NO MORE

I read an amazing Anna Lappe quote recently that said “every time you spend money, you’re casting a vote for the kind of world you want”. As much as we want to berate the fast fashion brands for their inhumane work, the responsibility also lies with us.

I recommend really trying to find new and sustainable brands. Learn to shop preloved, second hand and vintage too and try to quit the high street for a month, six months, or even a year, and then shop slowly for things that you actually love. It’s really hard to go back to fast fashion once you learn about everything that goes on. Apps like Good On You will help you navigate the greenwashing.

VALUE IS WHERE YOU PLACE IT

The misconception that sustainable clothing is more expensive is exactly that, a misconception. I tell my clients that value in clothing is where you place it. Even if we go on a personal shopping session, it is far more beneficial to come away with one gorgeous pair of well fitting trousers that you feel amazing in, that goes with everything in your wardrobe, than lots of very average things.

Times are hard but we can also reframe the mentality of buying items at a higher cost. It’s much more sustainable and a much slower way to shop because you are far more likely to stop and think twice before parting with the money, and consider if you’ll wear it before you buy it. You’re far more likely to wear it, and you’re far more likely to look after it too. Plus, if the brand is doing the work, then the higher cost goes towards a living wage down the entire supply chain and better customer care - like Nudie Jeans, who give you free repairs for life.

MAKING CONSCIOUS DECISIONS

Sustainability isn't brand snobbery, because we can even slow down fast fashion if we actively choose to make it last. We make the choice to wear and rewear, and that can be done with an item from H+M as an item from a sustainable brand. But still, sustainability is a choice and there are so many things that we can do if we are willing to try. We don't need a few people doing it perfectly, we need lots of people doing it imperfectly (to paraphrase Anne Marie Bonneau).

Investing in a session with a stylist is also a sure fire way to settle confidently into your style, increase your brand awareness, shop more slowly and create a wardrobe that you really love and that will love you back for a long time.

FASHION ICONS AND COOL FINDS: MY PERSONAL FAVES

I'm a big fan of One Scoop Store in Stoke Newington who are an independent boutique full of cool, preloved pieces. I also love Bridgerton's Claudia Jessie for her commitment to re-wearing outfits on the red carpet and shamelessly telling the press to get used to the suit she's wearing, because they'll be 'seeing it again'. Meanwhile, Leigh at The Re:Directory on Instagram is great for uncovering fast fashion secrets so you don't have to! (@the_redirectory)



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AN ITEM I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT?

My pink vintage leather jacket from Vinted, and my knitted waistcoat from Le Bon Shoppe.

MY DREAM DRESSING SPACE

Who wouldn't want a Carrie Bradshaw-style walk-in closet, complete with blue Manolos?



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