

Closet Psychology

A Search For Self-Esteem In Your Closet

by Jackie Walker



Meet Jackie Walker, the self-proclaimed Doctor of Closetology. Jackie firmly believes that every morning when you go into your closet to dress yourself, you're not looking for a new outfit, but rather, for a dose of self-esteem. Once the youngest couturier buyer in the country, Jackie spent nearly two decades teaching women the art of stress-free dressing. Recently, the vivacious closetologist moved to Chicago, and she's making it her mission to show Windy City women how to find confidence in their closets!

FACT: On national average, women only wear 20 percent of the clothes in their closets.

OK, be honest! How many items are hanging in your closet with price tags still

attached to them? I find myself constantly asking women why they fill their closets with pieces they'd like to wear or hope to wear, but why they having nothing to wear for the person they are today? It's not about someday clothes; it's about knowing your internal fashion persona right now.

Everyone has one—it's the internal persona that you're most comfortable being. For proof, enter any children's store and watch the little, four-year-old girls playing in the clothes, sporting a little handbag and trying on mommy's high heels. Then there are the other little girls squirming out of the dress mom is putting on them. These are the ones with absolutely no interest in getting dressed—they're just itching to get outside and ride their bike or climb a tree. as you grow up, these traits will continue to invade your shopping habits.

FACT: When a man looks into the mirror he sees his face. When a woman looks into the mirror she sees every insecurity she's ever had in life.

As you start 2007 it's time to bring your closet into harmony with your life. I begin by asking my clients and audiences to go back to childhood and recollect their first memory of shopping. Did you go with your mother and was it fun? Was it an unpleasant experience due to your weight or other issues? As you get older, imprints of these past positive and negative comments enter your life and reflect what you see in the mirror every morning. Before the physical closet work can begin, you must organize your internal feelings and get past your past. Classifying items, buying the right hangers or making new outfits won't do any good until you have internal mind organization and can pinpoint your fashion persona—the rest is easy!

The following is a basic overview of the five main personality types—remember, every woman has a little of each inside. The percentages of your internal personas relate to how you feel about each piece you purchase.

The Classic

The Classic woman loves a hard-edged jacket with a lapel. She wears pants and short skirts to the knee. She loves plaids, stripes and dots as well as solids—never a print! Her earrings are always a stud, ball or simple hoop. Her shoe selection is just as cut and dry; loafers, pumps or simple elegant boots. She wears the same jewelry all of the time, taking it off at night and putting it right back on in the morning. The Classic will purchase other jewelry but never wears it.

The Romantic

The Romantic loves lace and bows. Her fabrics are soft and flowing and floral patterns are her favorite. She adores pearls, wearing one strand as a necklace and opts for small pearl studs or dainty, drop earrings. Handbags are crocheted fabrics or supple leather with a bow or tassel. She loves hearts and proudly displays them on everything—from shoes, to clothing to handbags.

The Natural

“Make it Comfortable!” is this sporty, outdoor-loving woman’s wardrobe cry. Leaving the house without makeup is OK, as this Natural constructs a wardrobe that’s easy and can be repeated over and over again. She doesn’t wear jewelry, save for her wedding ring (though she usually forgets to put it on as she does earrings). She’ll wear the same handbag for years and thinks that scarves are foreign. She’s always more interested in what she’s doing that what she’s wearing.

The Dramatic

On the opposite hand, the Dramatic cares a great deal about what she’s wearing. More is more! Put it all on me at one time! The Dramatic wears rings on unexpected fingers like the pinkie, middle finger or thumb. She layers lots of bracelets—the flashier the better. She’s a definite “Trend Tracker” and reads every fashion magazine on the stands. She loves logos and changes her accessories daily. She has personally appointed her self the position of making over every friend and family member—whether they want it or not.

The Mood Dresser

She wakes up every morning and has lots of options in her closet, but, because she doesn’t know how to put it together, she changes her clothes dozens of times before she leaves her home. The Mood Dresser consistently copies everyone else’s look, but has no idea of her own internal or external image.

So Who Are You?

Take the quiz (visit The Closetology Quiz above on the menu) to analyze your own closet—the answers will explain why there are some items you just love to wear and others you’ve yet to take the price tag off of. If you still have trouble figuring out what clothes work, and what don’t, ask yourself these questions:

Do I still love you and feel great in you?
How many ways can I wear you?
What will you do for me in my current lifestyle?

Anything that doesn't fit your persona needs to go in one of four piles: Consignment Shop, Charity, Alterations or Dry Cleaner. Take everything that very day to their destinations and remember: This New Year, learn how to wear 100 percent of your closet and dress yourself from the Inside-Out!

Discover Your Fashion M.O.

Want to find out what fashion persona you are? First, go online to tcwmag.com take Jackie Walker's Fashion Persona Quiz, excerpted from *I Don't Have a Thing To Wear*. Once you've analyzed the results, see if you match up to your Persona ("Remember, most women are a combination of different persona types because of career choices, personality quirks or due to different things they do at different times," Jackie says.)

The Classic

Timeless & conservative

Tend to shop at: Talbots, Cole Haan, Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's and the more understated part of Ellen Tracy, Dana Buchman, Bill Blass and Valentino.

Classic Celebrity: Diane Sawyer, Reese Witherspoon, Audrey Hepburn

The Romantic

Traditional, Nostalgic & Ladylike

Tend to shop at: Kate Spade, Betsey Johnson, April Cornell, Ralph Lauren, Lord & Taylor, Oscar de la Renta and Eileen Fisher

Romantic Celebrity: Christine Brinkley, Faith Hill, Kathy Ireland

The Natural

Direct, Unpretentious & Low-Maintenance

Tend to shop at: Patagonia, L.L. Bean, Title Nine sports, Active Endeavors, J Crew, the Gap and Ann Taylor.

Natural Celebrity: Jennifer Aniston, Gabrielle Reese, Kate Bosworth.

The Dramatic

Ready For Their Close-up

Tend to shop at: High-end, be-seen stores such as Neimen Marcus, Saks, Escada, Burberry as well as Lillie Rubin, Cache, and Bebe.

Dramatic Celebrity: Dolly Parton, Madonna, Gwen Stefani.

The Mood Dresser

Bohemian, Creative & Artistic

Tend to Shop at: From the trendy Wicker Park/Bucktown boutiques (think: Jade, Language and clothes Minded) to vintage stores in Belmont, to H & M and Macy's, the Mood Dresser is an insatiable shopper.

Mood-Dressing Celebrity: Nicole Ritchie, Angelina Jolie, Britney Spears

Most importantly, "Whoever you are, you're fabulous!" Jackie says.

-All excerpted from *I Don't Have A Thing To Wear: The Psychology of Your Closet* by Judie Taggart and Jackie Walker (Simon & Schuster, \$13). Sold at major bookstores or through www.jackiewalker.com