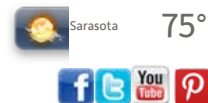


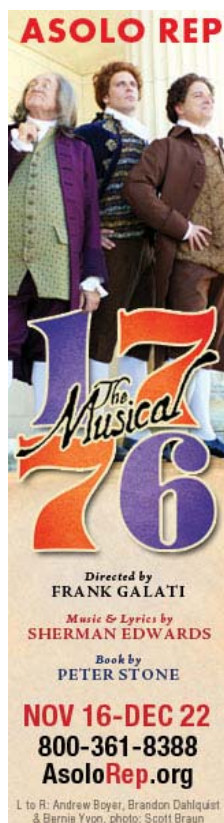


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My Closet, My Self

November 15th, 2012

"Closetologist" Jackie Walker on the psychology of our closets.



Jackie Walker '09

Jackie Walker, closetologist and author of *"I Don't Have a Thing to Wear": The Psychology of Your Closet*, believes in "dressing from the inside out"—that women can find confidence and boost their self-esteem by figuring out who they really are and applying that knowledge to their closets. "I use clothing as a vehicle for self-esteem," she explains.

The Chicago-based Walker (who lived in Tampa for years before relocating) will be in town for the Women's Resource Center's annual fundraiser on Nov. 2, where she'll be



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selling and signing copies of her book and CD, but her tips about style and embracing our bodies are ones you'll want to come back to again and again. Below, she shares her thoughts on how we can embrace our wardrobes, how to transition our clothes from summer to fall, and when it's really best to splurge or save.

How did you get started in this career?

I was working as an executive at Burdine's, and my "aha!" moment came when the company needed a human resources director. That was strange for me, because I had always been a fashion person—but I was also the person in the store who had always been the cheerleader, and I'm a people person, so they asked me to take the position. Within the first week, a beautifully dressed woman came in and suddenly started telling me all of her problems—and I remember thinking, "She has on the most beautiful shoes I've ever seen in my life; how can she be unhappy?" It dawned on me that I'd be doing things backward—I believed it was the outside that made you happy, but I realized that if you're not happy on the inside, no amount of "outside" can change you.

Where did the term "closetologist" come from?

I wanted a word people would pay attention to. I define it as "finding self-esteem in your closet through the psychology of clothing." When I stand up on stage, they call me the doctor of closetology!

How many clients do you work with?

I've spoken to 100,000 or more women in major presentations as a keynote speaker; my personal clients number in the hundreds, and in fact I still have the first client I started with more than 20 years ago.

How does someone even start on the process of rethinking her closet and how she feels about clothing?

It starts with a cup of coffee and some questions. I ask things like, "What do you love about your body, your clothing, your life? What don't you like? Do you shop on sale? What colors do you love?" I want to get to know the person. The most important thing is that every woman is born with an internal fashion persona, and when you know what that persona is, you can shop effectively, you won't waste money and you'll buy things that bring your closet into harmony with your life.

Next I'll classify your closet for you, and make 30-60 outfits out of your existing clothes that are brand-new to you. I'll also measure [what I call] your architecture—I don't use the words "petite," "short," "plus." I'll show you the space on your body and how to layer clothing correctly against that personal space. And then I'll leave you with a list of must-have [clothing items], although very rarely do you need to buy new clothes. Sometimes all a woman will need is a trip to the dry cleaner or seamstress.

To discover your fashion persona, you can take Jackie's closetology quiz by [clicking here](#).

And during that process your clients experience that lightbulb-going-off moment?

I cannot even begin to tell you how this changes lives. Women tend to wear only 20 percent of their closets—the things in which feel safe and secure. [By contrast,] men wear 90 percent—and the reason is because the woman dresses for emotion and the man dresses for need. There are many reasons for this—some women are trying to cover up their bodies; some have a tremendous amount of clothes but because they can never make a decision they go out and buy more. Everybody has a different situation, but what they act out is based on self-esteem. After I measure a woman's architecture, that's when the "aha" moment comes—there's suddenly an awareness. Clothing is courage; when we get up every morning, we go into the closet for a dose of self-esteem.

You say that to a woman, a skirt is a story. What do you mean by that?

Every piece in a woman's closet has a story. For example, I hear things like, "I wore that to my son's wedding 23 years ago; it doesn't fit but I can't get rid of it because it reminds me of the wedding," or "My mother-in-law gave me that purple sweater—I've never worn it, but someday when she comes to visit I'll have to have it on" or the No. 1 reason: "I'll wear it again when I lose five pounds." Yes, but then you're going to want new clothes! Lots of our pieces are someday clothes—we fill our closets with things for what we'll never do, but we have nothing to wear for what we do every day. And so the question becomes how do you wear 20 percent of your closet for 100 percent of your life?

Let's talk about shopping. When do you splurge on something vs. save on it?

Splurge on basics. Why would you skimp on a fabulous pair of black pants or a black pencil skirt that you're going to wear over and over again, but spend a fortune on a trendy red polka-dot sweater? It's all about the price per wear. I say invest in the basics: a crisp white shirt, a beautiful handbag, a great navy suit. And make sure you buy great fabrics and have a good dry cleaner and seamstress available to you.

Any other shopping tips?

Your closet should be 75 percent tops and 25 percent bottoms. If you have a strong, top-driven wardrobe, you'll always have a lot to wear. Tops change the look of an outfit and usually cost the least.

Also, you can find great pieces in great fabrics at stores like Zara and T.J. Maxx. I like Dillard's, Macy's, Nordstrom, Forever21 and Anthropologie, as well.

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We're finally having some cooler fall weather here in Sarasota, but it's still warm. What advice do you have for transitioning our wardrobes into fall?

Wear the same fabrics, but darken the color. If you're wearing cottons in the summer and they're white and pink and turquoise, then wear cottons in the fall and winter that are rust, olive or other darker colors. Same goes for accessories. Also, wear lighter, cooler fabrics on your top half—you can go a little heavier on your bottom half with opaque tights or wool trousers, for example.

What do you want women to take away after working with you or listening to you speak?

Every woman I've ever met is beautiful, and my whole goal in life is to teach them that they can find inner confidence and self-esteem and success by dressing from the inside out. Know who you are on the inside and dress for it on the outside.

To buy tickets to the Women's Resource Center's annual fundraiser on Nov. 2, where Jackie will be speaking, [click here](#).



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