



You wear it well

How to reassess and revise your wardrobe as you establish a new chapter of your life

Whether it's an extravagant tulle dress, a cosy cashmere knit or a pair of tracksuit bottoms, the choice of clothes you wear is intrinsically linked to the image you present to the wider world. You only have to think of a nurse's uniform or a white wedding dress to understand the value of sartorial signifiers.

Clothes play an integral role in shaping identity – and as your life changes, the choices you make regarding what to wear may change too. While it's always important to reassess the items you own, this becomes even more crucial when navigating a new life chapter. Whether you're changing jobs, relocating or retiring, revising your wardrobe is key.

Declutter your mind

Firstly, the mental health benefits that can be brought about by a life-changing clear-out shouldn't be underrated. 'Feeling organised and in control when you are embarking on anything new will help you to feel "ready",' says professional organiser and decluttering expert Vicky Silverthorn, who visits people in their homes and offices to offer practical and easy systems to make their spaces more streamlined and efficient. 'When you get your wardrobe in shape it helps start each day off on a positive note. A streamlined and decluttered wardrobe will instil an organised morning routine free from too much choice and unclear decisions.'

Beyond the obvious and commonly enjoyed benefit of the old adage 'tidy wardrobe, tidy mind', the process of reassessing your clothes is key in dealing with change. 'The connection between mind and body cannot be underestimated. The mind can take a while to adjust to big lifestyle changes but by adjusting your psychical wardrobe you can quickly and easily feel like the "new you",' says Padma Coram, a lifestyle and wellbeing coach. Failing to do so can result in a disconnect between the way you feel and the way you appear.

'With new thoughts and old clothing there can be a mismatch. Communicating our new selves is easier when we



are dressed in a way that feels most appropriate,' adds Padma, who has face-to-face consultations with clients in central London but also offers advice worldwide via phone and Skype.

Similarly, if you want to move forward, this wardrobe reassessment provides one of the building bricks for doing so. 'In life we must respect and learn from the past but always move forward. The same applies to clothes. You can, of course, keep things from the past that hold dear memories but it's important to have a clear-out of the rest.'

Marie Kondo, the famed Japanese organising consultant and author of the bestselling *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, says: 'The space in which we live should be for the person we are becoming now, not the person we were in the past.' Her advice rings true, but how should you practically go about changing your wardrobe? When implementing a clear-out, Marie's philosophy of only keeping items that serve a purpose or spark a sense of joy is a good starting point.

Go with your gut

'I believe in going with your gut feeling,' shares Vicky. After you have made time in your diary (ideally nominate a day to carry out the exercise), go through every piece of clothing in your wardrobe and consider whether you really still need it. 'We know deep down if we're going to wear an item again, and we also know if we bought an item in error or made a mistake or rushed purchase,' she says.

If tapping into your gut instinct is proving tricky or you're in some doubt, Vicky recommends asking yourself two questions: 'If I saw this in a shop today would I buy it?' and 'can I live without this particular item in my life?'

When it comes to answering these questions, it's important to think about the difference between your old and new life. If you are retiring, changing jobs, or moving area, what you wear day to day may change dramatically. For example, you may no longer need professional clothing and may require



ONE PERSON'S TRASH IS ANOTHER PERSON'S TREASURE

There's no need to throw away old clothes. Instead, consider the following

Pass on

Think of family, friends and members of your local community who might have use for the items you no longer need. Do make sure in advance that they are happy to receive them and you're not just passing on your 'clutter'.

Donate

Give away good-quality, secondhand clothes to charity shops (charityretail.org.uk) or refuge centres. Professional clothes can be donated to an organisation like Smart Works (smartworks.org.uk), which provides interview and work items for people re-entering employment.

Sell

More expensive items can be sold via sites like eBay, Depop and Vinted. If you have a lot to clear-out, you might want to consider attending a car boot sale.

Recycle

For clothes that can't be donated or sold, make sure to take them to your local council recycling point. High-street stores such as H&M, M&S and Zara also offer clothes recycling schemes, sometimes in exchange for vouchers. Visit recyclenow.com

more outdoor activewear. Having grandchildren to look after or more time to travel may demand a different set of clothes.

Sorting through

Take time to sit down and make a note of what activities you will be doing on a daily basis and establish what clothes are required for each. From this list you can sort the items in your wardrobe into their respective piles – 'keeping' and 'going'. Once your wardrobe only contains items you use regularly, it's much easier to identify clearly if there are any new things you need to purchase.

Often when going through a big life change, it's easy to think – or even hope – a big shopping trip is required, but that isn't always necessary. Having a dedicated session to organise your wardrobe properly will highlight this, as you can see if there's anything missing much more clearly post-clear-out. For the extra items you really do need, think about buying second-hand or having clothes swaps with friends – this will save you money and help the planet.

A wardrobe clear-out can often be an emotional experience, especially if you are in the middle of a period of change or adjustment, but acknowledging these feelings is all part of the process. 'Recognise your habits and embrace any negative feelings like guilt or regret,' says Vicky. The results more than outweigh the struggle. 'The next day you will have greater headspace and clarity. Prepare to feel refreshed, energised, and excited for your next chapter.'

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

When giving your wardrobe a refresh, here are some key points to think about:

When did you last wear this item?

Apply the two-year rule: if you haven't worn it in the past two years, will you really wear it again?

Does it fit me?

Take time to try on all your clothes properly and see if they still fit and flatter your physique.

Do I feel happy in this?

When trying on a particular item of clothing, see if it makes you feel your best and the most like 'you'.

Does it have sentimental value?

If an item is particularly treasured, don't feel you have to give it away. Instead move it into a separate storage area so it doesn't clutter your everyday wardrobe.

How do you spend your time?

Think about how many hours you're at home, how frequently you socialise and how long you spend in the garden or out walking. Look at your upcoming diary engagements and see what events you have planned.

What activities do you do?

Consider whether you need specific clothing items for gardening, sports or hobbies. Think about how maybe some of your older clothes can be recycled for this.

Will you be travelling?

Think about the destinations you are planning to visit. Keep your holiday wardrobe (for example, swimwear, kaftans and beach shorts) in storage separately.

What one-off events do you need to be prepared for?

Remember not to get rid of smarter items that could be suitable for weddings, funerals or evening dos.

Are you looking after anyone?

Are you caring for children or elderly relatives? Think about how this might impact your lifestyle and wardrobe choices.

Words: Elizabeth Bennett



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