



***Finding Yourself
Through Style***

By Cassie Lopez

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For all of the unicorns and mermaids. Share your
sparkle with the world!

1

*The Importance
of Personal Style*

A Reflection on Self-Esteem

So many of us struggle with self-esteem, myself included. For many years, I couldn't be cool enough, pretty enough, skinny enough. I just didn't think I was enough. I spent so much time and energy trying to fit in with other people by being like them. One day, I asked myself, "why the fuck do you care if these people think you're enough?" I then decided that I would become who I wanted to be, not who I thought others wanted me to be. It didn't happen overnight. I still sometimes wonder if people think I'm weird, fat, or ugly. Then I remember that I'm a strong, beautiful woman. Self-esteem isn't something that you just have: it's something that you work on daily.

How Others Perceive You

People will always judge other people. It's shitty, but it's just a fact of life. You know you do it, too. The way others perceive you can affect how they deal with you. You never know, they may have a totally bitchin' opportunity for you. There are 3 interconnected things that people judge you by:

1. the way you look
2. the way you present yourself
3. your confidence

Yes, #1 sucks, but it's true. Everyone judges everyone else on how they look, no matter what they say. However, this doesn't have to be a bad thing. Use the way to dress, do your hair, and/or do (or don't do) your makeup as ways to represent your personality. Are you a super magical unicorn? Share your sparkle with everyone who sees you. Are you dark and twisty? Show it! Make your appearance work for you.

The way you present yourself can seriously affect the way you look. If you walk with slumped shoulders and refuse to make eye contact with anyone, you will look sad or uncomfortable. If you make eye contact with people and smile, you will look warm and friendly. If you strut with your shoulders back and frown or scowl at people, you'll look confident and unapproachable. That last one is my favorite. It really helps me hide my inner introvert without having to be social. The way you present yourself should work for you and for the way you look.

Finally, your confidence is the most important thing that people judge. If you come across as a confident, self-assured badass, people will treat you as such. If you appear to be timid or weak, people will ignore you, baby you, or walk all over you. I don't know about you, but that's not how I want to be treated. If you feel good in your own skin, and clothes, other people can tell. Your confidence completely changes both the way you present yourself and the way you

look. If a classically beautiful girl isn't confident, others will pick up on that and treat her accordingly. On the flip side, if a girl isn't necessarily beautiful by society's (fucked up) standards, but she's confident as fuck, people will treat her like the beautiful woman she is. Remember, you are a strong, confident badass! If you believe you are, other people will, too.

2

*Finding Myself
Through Style*



6th Grade: I really loved a good center part and hair clips.



I couldn't say "no" to glitter and plaid.

My Journey

Before I help you along your style journey, I should tell you about mine. I've always been an awkward person. Like, super awkward. When asked to describe myself, I have trouble deciding what to say. I've always been almost disgustingly girly, with mad love for sparkles, flowers, and bright colors. I've also always been a bit dark and twisty, obsessed with Wednesday Addams, witches, and skulls. I'm also a huge tomboy who loves nerdy graphic tees from the men's section at Hot Topic. This made it very difficult for me to define my personal style, especially when I was trying to fit in.

Junior High

As everyone does, I went through a lot of changes in junior high. When I entered sixth grade, I was the youngest in the class, and my style definitely reflected that. While my classmates were starting to shop in the junior's section or at Abercrombie and Forever 21, I was still shopping at Limited Too. I remember lots of pink, glitter, and rhinestones. Metallic jeans and pleather were also awesome.

By seventh grade I had graduated to the junior's section at JCPenney. I started cheerleading, in addition to dance and gymnastics, so my favorite shorts were the Softe style with "dancer," "gymnast," or "cheer" printed across the butt with



7th Grade: Still rocking that center part. I loved a good statement hoodie! That one says, "BRAT."



8th Grade: Who didn't love a mall photoshoot? And why does my hair look so fried? I hadn't even dyed it yet!

glitter and rhinestones. I still loved slogan tees, and most of my wardrobe was still pink.

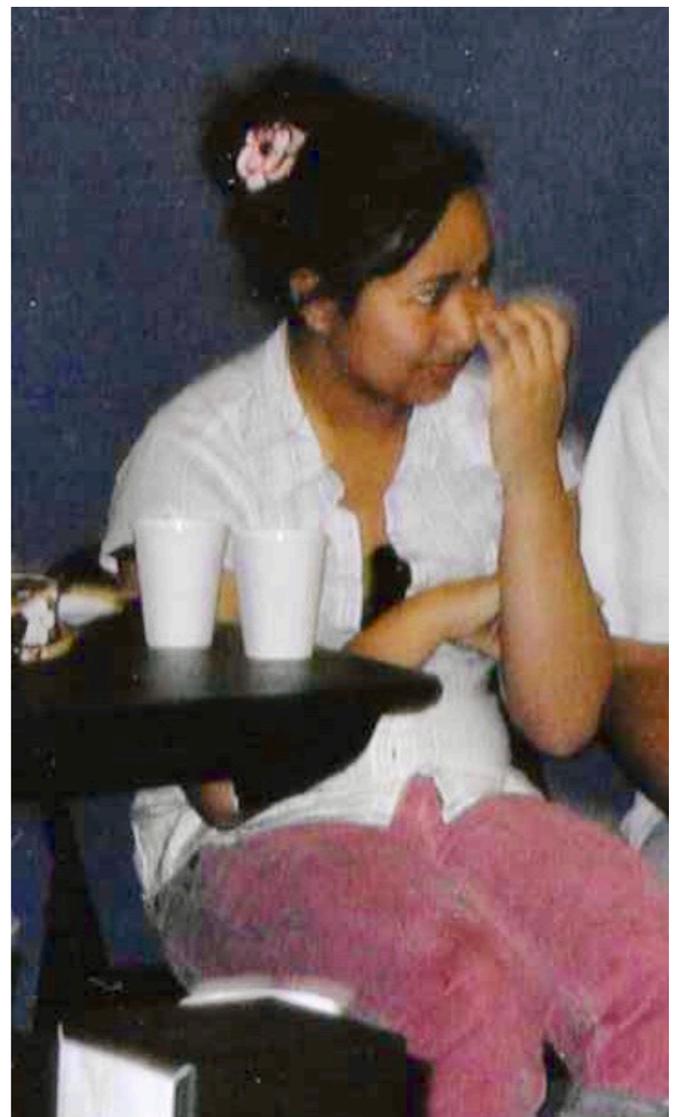
When I was in eighth grade, Avril Lavigne was huge, so I thought I should give “skater punk” a try. I wore a lot of black and pink, often from Hot Topic, and I loved my black and pink skater shoes. I even got my parents to buy me a skateboard for Christmas, which I literally never rode. For a while, I was super obsessed with being Asian. I had a red, cheongsam-style top and skirt. The skirt was pleated, and both the top and skirt had zippers. Looking back at it now, that outfit was definitely cultural appropriation. Uggs became popular, too, so I naturally had to have a pink pair. I loved to wear them with my pink corduroy skirt and a pink tee. I even had a tiny, pink, faux sheepskin purse. Yikes.

By the end of the school year, I had calmed my inner wannabe punk, so I could be more like the “popular” girls. I bought my first piece from Forever 21. It was a light blue halter top. I wore it with shorts on my graduation field trip to Marine World, and my mom told me that I looked like a hoochie. To be fair, I kinda did.

Eighth grade was the first year that I was allowed to wear makeup to school. I was super into Bonne Bell Flip Shades. My favorite shade was berry. I also loved glitter bronzer. I was just learning how to use eyeliner, so I would apply it super sloppily and I’d use a wet Q-tip to clean up the edges.



I couldn't stay away from pink, bows, and ugly flowers.
Check out that awful lipgloss on the right!



Who didn't love striped polos and capri pants? Don't
miss the pleather flower and pink corduroys on the
right!

For some reason, I thought bronze eyeshadow was the shit. I didn't know that you could wear multiple eyeshadows at one time, so my eyelids were 1 color from my eyeliner to my crease, and naked from my crease to my brow.

My hair throughout Junior High was fucking awful. For some reason, I thought that super flippy hair was the best thing in the world. I had one of those rotating brushes that made the ends of my hair flip out like That Girl. Not a good look. At one point, I had an unhealthy relationship with my crimper. When I was in 8th grade, "scrunching" your hair became popular. I started drowning my head with TIGI Bedhead on a daily basis. When I wore my hair straight, I continued to flip it out, and I'd occasionally add a shitty fabric flower clip. Seriously, they were the awful ones from Claire's, not the pretty, realistic picks from Hawaii that I still use today. Right after graduation, I bought my first Coach purse. It was tiny and fuchsia, and it had an adorable buckle. I actually still have it.

High School: The First 2 Years

High school is a huge change for everyone, but I felt like the transition was even more difficult for me. I went to the same school with the same people for 9 years. Coming from a class of 32 kids, the transition to high school was terrifying. I started freshman year with terrible bangs and a flippy haircut. It was truly awful. Actually, I dealt with a lot of bad hair



I was feeling my brassy highlights, cartoon graphic tees and capris.



Check out those hoe hoops and layers!

in high school, but this was the worst. I wore makeup every day, but it was a lot of bronze, gold, and lip gloss.

A week or two into the school year, I was welcomed into the group that Cady Heron would have called “The Cool Asians.” I thought it was super awesome to be accepted by cool people, so I wanted to be like them. I started shopping at Papaya, and I wore a lot more black. I upgraded from JCPenney to Macy’s. Outside of my school uniform, I started to rock a lot of super low jeans, particularly the JLo ones, and very basic tops. I’ve always hated my arms, so I wore awful bolero sweaters with just about everything. I also had a strange obsession with short-sleeved zip-up hoodies. Eventually, I started wearing (yes, wearing) giant hoop earrings and those awful stretchy sequined belts. If I wanted to be really fancy, I’d wear the silver one and the black one, twisted together. It was not a good look. My outerwear of choice was a puffy, white jacket with faux fur trim on the hood.

When I was in uniform, I loved to match my shoes to my hair accessories and/or jewelry. I was obsessed with Coach, especially their ballet flats. I loved wearing my yellow Coach flats with this horrendous fake yellow flower with rhinestones. Yes, I still loved rhinestones. One week, I forgot to plan my outfits for school. At the end of the week, my only clean uniform consisted of a blue plaid skirt and a red



Seriously, what the fuck is that hair? I also loved those stupid graphic tees from Aeropostale.



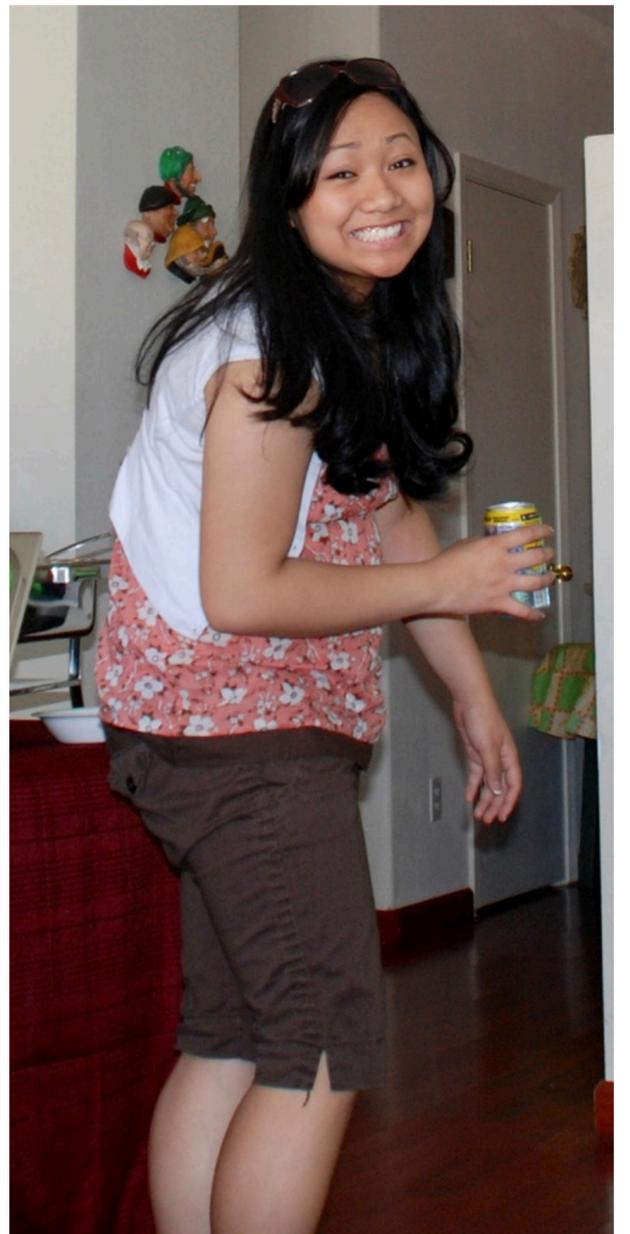
In case you can't tell, I'm wearing 2 tanks and 2 hoodies in the pic on the left. At least my hair was better, even though I didn't give up those shitty flowers.

polo. This was a huge freshman no-no. I absolutely couldn't wear a dirty uniform to school, so I had to wear it. It was awful, and some of the girls made fun of me. This is why my number 1 rule is outfit planning, but I'll get to that later.

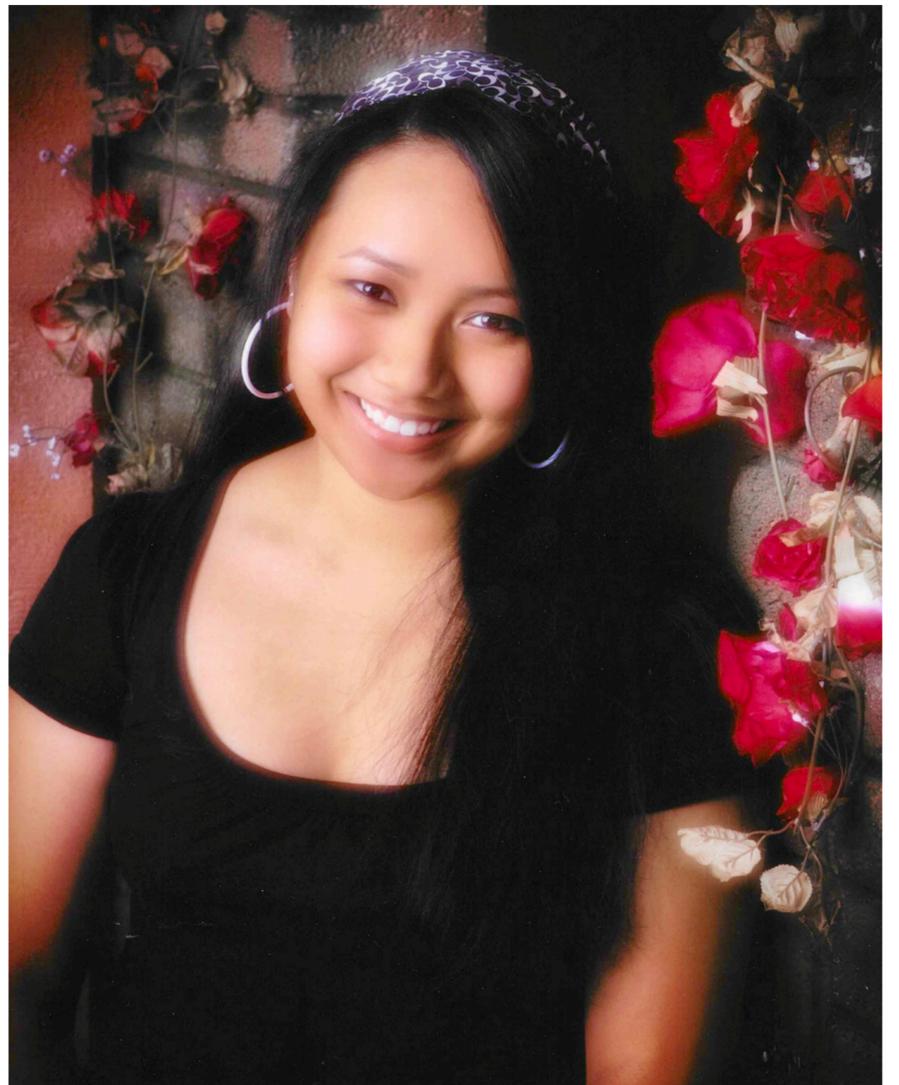
High School: The Last 2 Years

After the style disaster known as the first half of my high school career, I tried even harder to assimilate to high school fashion. I added h&m to my growing list of favorite stores. I started wearing more heels, even at school. I was obsessed with a pair of silver beaded and sequined wedges. I could run from one campus to the other in them. I was a fucking heel pro. I was a little more comfortable with my body, so I started showing a little more skin. I loved skirts, shorts, and tube tops. My skirts got shorter, and my shirts got tighter. I thought I was the shit, probably because I was finally getting a little attention from boys.

My hair was a lot better. I let it grow out a bit, and I straightened the shit out of it. I also perfected my curling technique. My makeup was marginally better. I still wore a lot of lip gloss, but I learned how to do my eyeshadow and eyeliner. My makeup collection still lived in a sparkly pink Caboodle. I actually miss that stupid thing, but there's no way my current collection could fit in it.



I thought that Filipino flag hat made me a G. While these looks weren't great, they were still a HUGE improvement.



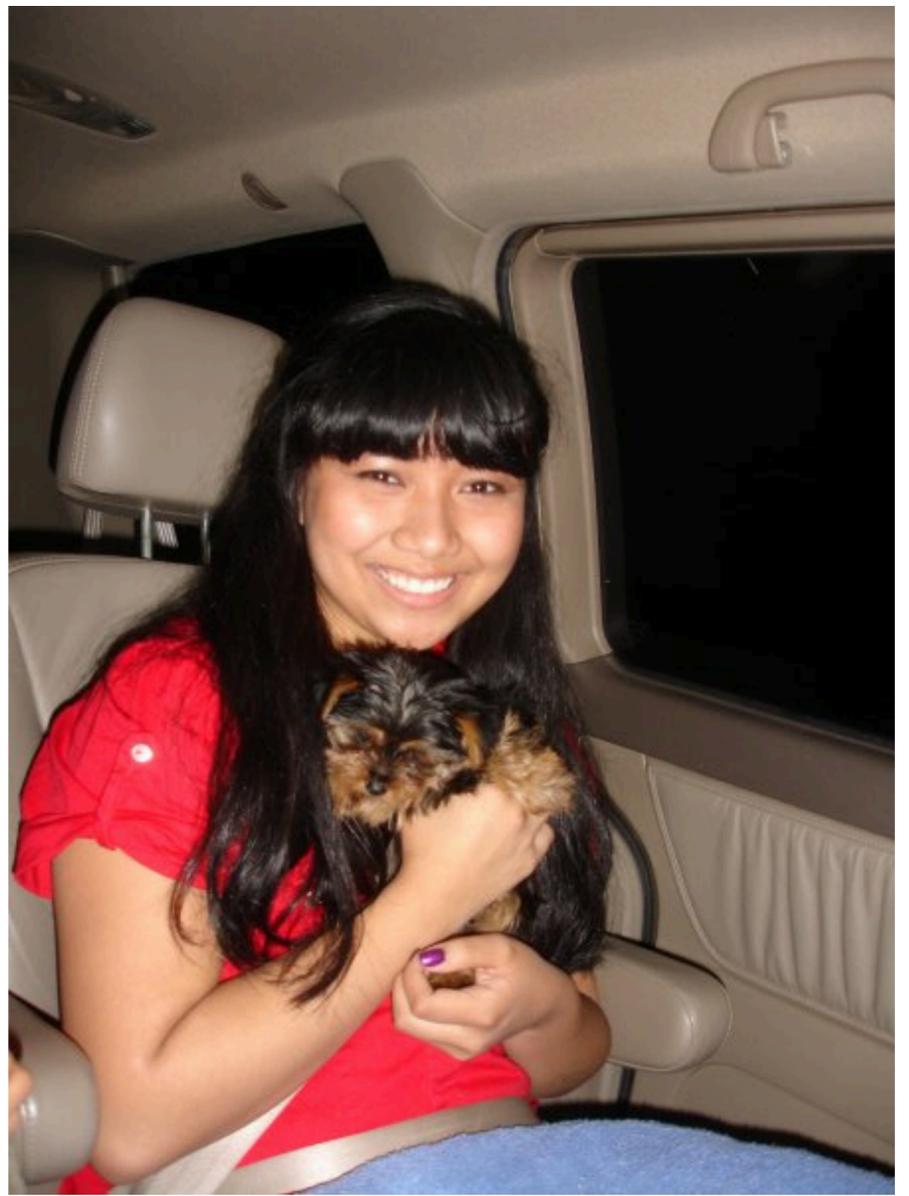
I thought I was super hot in my corset for Halloween. I actually still have that Coach hair scarf on the right. I didn't lose the hoe hoops until college.

College: A Transformation

When I started college, I really wanted to impress people. I tried super hard to be trendy and cool. Freshman year, I had like 6 outfits that I wore on rotation. The only ones I can clearly remember are the college tee that my high school best friend sent me from his school and this dark brown baby doll top with flowers. I liked to wear that one with either jeans or black leggings. Most of my stuff at that time came from Forever 21.

During the first quarter of freshman year, I pledged a sorority that shall remain unnamed. Initially, the girls seemed super nice. Long story short, shit got crazy. During the pledging ceremony, they literally said, "We now take away your individuality." I was the only person from my high school at that university. I desperately wanted to make friends, so I went with it.

Honestly, I don't remember everything that went on during that month and a half or so, but I do vividly remember standing at attention in a garage for hours on end, wearing my uniform that perfectly matched all of my pledge sisters. This uniform was made up of black track pants with white and burgundy stripes on the ankle, burgundy tee shirts, gray sweatshirts, and black coats. We even had to have the exact same shoes. The sisters had us all go shopping together, so we could buy identical items.



I wore that floral babydoll top every week. Sometimes, I miss those bangs. Then I remember what a pain in the ass they were to straighten.



I was having a lot of fun with colors and prints. P.S. That's my best friend. We met 8 years ago, and we're closer than ever!

The uniforms were just the tip of the iceberg. During our meetings in the garage, we had to look at the top of the wall across from us, because we weren't allowed to look at the sisters in the eye. I remember facing my big sister and shouting the Greek alphabet back and forth in each other's faces. Eventually, the stress, lack of sleep, and forced conformity got to me, and I made the decision to de-pledge. That was probably one of the best decisions I've ever made. I later learned that this sorority forced pledges to strip down to their underwear. They then called in the brothers from a fraternity and asked them to go up to each girl and circle her imperfections with a Sharpie. It was just like what Chanel did to the Kappa Kappa Tau pledges on *Scream Queens*, minus drinking the poo water soup and murder. A few years after my experience with them, they lost their charter. Apparently, the daughter of the university's president pledged and ended up hospitalized. I wasn't sad to see them go. Seeing their letters on Greek Hill being painted over was absolutely magical.

The stress of being at a new school without my high school besties really got to me. I had my awesome boys, whom I still seriously miss, but it wasn't the same. Sometimes you just need some sisters. I started baking every week, and it didn't just gain the Freshman 15. I gained the Freshman 25. It definitely showed both in my clothing choices and in my confidence. I was really down, and it affected the

way I carried myself. If I hadn't met my best friend that year, I don't know how I would've survived college.

Even though my clothing and confidence suffered, my hair definitely didn't. I started the school year with long, straight hair and blunt bangs. I eventually added a bunch of blue highlights, too. I don't mean to sound like a total hipster, but this was back in 2008, so unicorn and mermaid hair wasn't a huge thing yet. I totally started that trend. My makeup skills improved exponentially. I started playing and experimenting with bold eyeshadow and eyeliner colors. My favorite at the time was blue, because it matched my hair.

I saw the beginning of Sophomore year as a new start. I lost 20 lbs, and I started pledging for a co-ed community service fraternity. With my new friends and new body, I felt better than ever. Again, I conformed to what I thought they would like. I bought almost all of my clothes from Forever 21. I wore a lot of bodycon dresses and skirts, and a lot of heels, because I knew they expected me to be sexy.

However, I did start wearing a lot of bright colors. My favorite coat at the time, which I still have, was a bright orange peacoat. I wanted to stand out, and it definitely worked. I started getting the attention that I thought I wanted, especially from guys.

College: The Sloppy Years

After dating a few guys from the fraternity, I started seriously dating one of the alumni. My parents decided to move to Boise, ID, and I wanted to stay in California, so he and I moved in together after only a few months of dating. I got way too comfortable and gained a bunch of weight again. I started wearing a lot of yoga pants, tees, and hoodies. I only did my hair and makeup for work and the very rare date. My sexy clothes didn't fit me anymore, so when I wasn't covered up in yoga pants and hoodies, I wore shapeless dresses. I missed my family like crazy, and my sadness definitely bled into the way I presented myself.

My then-boyfriend and I moved to Boise after almost a year in our shitty little apartment. I was super happy to be back with my family. I didn't lose the weight, but I started occasionally buying the nerdy graphic tees that I loved so much from Hot Topic. I actually still have a couple of Beavis and Butthead tees and a Sailor Moon costume tee in my closet.

After living with my parents for 5 and a half months, I realized that my relationship wasn't going anywhere. I broke up with my boyfriend, and he moved back in with his dad in California. The breakdown of this relationship really hurt me, and the fact that my closest friends were states away



I apologize for the blurriness, but I have so few pictures from this dark time. That shapeless maxi dress really did nothing for my body.

This one isn't too bad, but that white sweater definitely doesn't go with the vibe of the rest of the outfit.



didn't help. My ex didn't like crayola-colored highlights, so I gave myself bright orange streaks. I also started playing with bold lipsticks.

I was (finally) 21, and on the rare occasion that I went out, I tried, and failed, to dress like my old sexy self. The confidence wasn't there, so I couldn't pull it off. I wasn't wearing things that flattered my new (fatter) body, which definitely didn't help the situation. It was a vicious cycle. Feeling shitty made me look shitty, which made me feel shittier.

Style Nirvana

Moving to North Carolina changed a lot for me. I switched my major from Biology Secondary Education to Anthropology, and I started truly enjoying school again. For my first year here, I only took 1 class per semester, because out-of-state tuition was ridiculous, and I didn't qualify for in-state tuition yet. After coming out of my funk from the last few years, I did a lot of soul-searching. I realized that it wasn't just the things and people around me that made me unhappy. I made myself unhappy. Trying to conform to what other people wanted from me made me absolutely miserable. Giving up on my appearance made me even more miserable. I decided that it was time to make a change. I started by buying pieces that I loved. Bright colors and loud novelty prints started making

Here are some of my recent looks:



Sushi Dress



How to Rock a Cape



Cat Lady Bookworm Realness

their way into my wardrobe. I started collecting more structured dresses and skirts. I stopped buying so many pairs of leggings and shitty Forever 21 jeans. Don't get me wrong: Forever 21 has some adorable dresses, and most of their basics are pretty good, but their jeans are absolute shit.

By my second year in North Carolina, I was going to class with full hair and makeup, and real clothes, every day. Gone were the days of messy hair, no makeup, and leggings or sweats, unless I really didn't feel well. I felt more confident, and I actually started speaking to my classmates. While I still didn't hang out with anyone, I was confident enough to talk to them, and my professors, before and after class.

Dressing the body I had, instead of wishing for the body I used to have, did wonders for my confidence. I realized that I could still feel fierce as fuck, even with some extra pounds. Learning to love myself again inspired me to start taking care of myself. I started eating a little better and working out a couple times a week. I didn't lose that much weight, but I felt better both physically and mentally.

3

Your Journey

The Roadmap

As you saw, my own journey was kind of all over the place. I didn't have anyone guiding me, so it took me a while to figure everything out. Hopefully this roadmap will serve as your fastpass to style nirvana.

Discover What Inspires You

This can be harder than it sounds. I recommend starting with a list of things you love. Write it in your favorite notebook or make it into a spreadsheet. If you prefer visuals, cut out pictures from magazines and pin them to a bulletin board. Do whatever works best for you. Include things like your favorite animal, flower, and colors. Do you love glitter? Dump some of that shit on there.

Find Brands That Are Inspired by the Same Things

This can be a little more difficult. There are probably a bajillion brands to pick through online, and more than half of them are probably international scams. A good way to find some good, legit brands is by following bloggers whose style speaks to you. All fashion and style bloggers post links to their favorite brands. (PS If you click through those links and make purchases, your favorite bloggers usually make commission, which helps keep their blogs running.) Some of us actually have a page on our blogs listing

our favorite brands. You can find mine at cassiewearswhat.com/faves.

The easiest way to find inspiring bloggers is through social media. Dig through some style-centric hashtags on Twitter and Instagram. You'll definitely find some inspiration. I've included a short list of totally awesome fashion and style bloggers to help kickstart your inspiration search. Also, brands often give bloggers coupon codes to share with their followers. Keep an eye out for those! I recommend subscribing to their blogs and/or following them on social media, so you don't miss out on some awesome discounts.

When you find some brands you love, subscribe to their mailing lists. Most of the give you a discount code for subscribing. I recommend doing this right before you make your first purchase with them, because these codes usually expire. Also make sure you follow them on social media. Doing so will keep you updated on their newest collections and any coupon codes they may have. As you can tell, I'm all about coupon codes. I hate paying full price.

Purge

This can happen all at once or over time. One popular method is to start with all of your hangers facing one way. As you wear/wash/put away an item, flip the hanger around. If you wear something multiple times, only turn its hanger once, so you don't confuse yourself. After a month, a season, or

a year (depending on how long you want to do this for and how your closet is organized) get rid of all of the things you haven't worn.

If you just want to get the purge over with, this is my favorite method. Take everything out of your closet and drawers, and throw them into a pile on your bed. Go through the pile piece by piece. If you don't love it, it doesn't fit, or you don't need it, donate it, give it away, or throw it away. If it's in bad shape, definitely throw it away. If you're planning on getting rid of a lot, keep some of it until after your initial spree. You probably don't want to go shopping in your underwear, unless you're just shopping online. Make sure you keep that stuff separate from the wardrobe that you're keeping. You don't want it to find its way back into your closet.

Initial Spree

When you purge, you're definitely going to need to go on an initial spree. Make a list of basics that you need, and make sure you get them. Also, fit a fun piece or two into your budget. You can't survive on basics alone, unless that's the aesthetic you're going for. There are some totally awesome people who thrive on a minimalist wardrobe, but if that's not you, don't force it.

If you don't have the funds for a huge spree, I recommend doing your purge and initial spree slowly and simultaneously. Get rid of 1 or 2 pieces

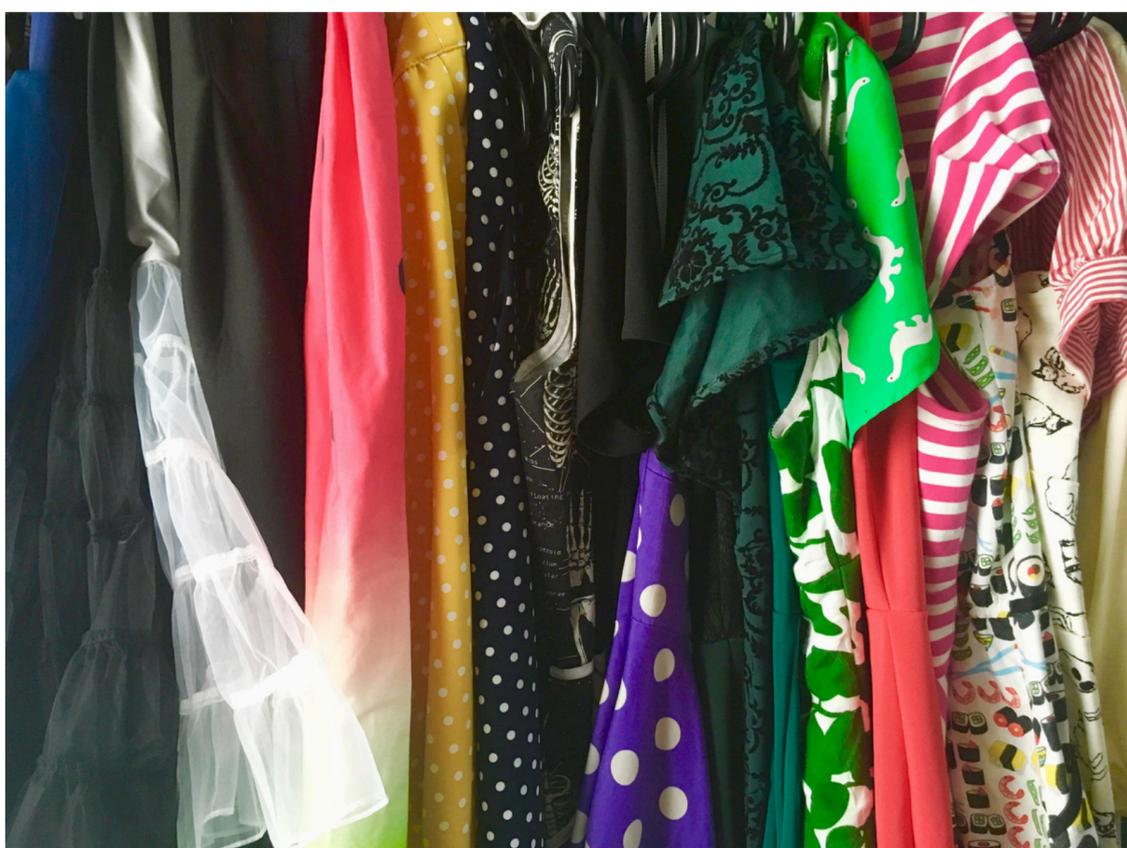
for every 1 piece that you buy. This method is also great for people who are nervous about starting their journey or parting with their old stuff.

Keep Growing

Your wardrobe will never be complete. Designers and clothing companies constantly come out with new pieces. Seasons change, and so do trends. New pieces will catch your eye constantly. Your wardrobe will grow. Just make sure it doesn't get too out of control, and stay within your budget.

Reassess

Because your wardrobe will never stop growing, it's important to periodically reassess and purge, if needed. Some people do this every season. Others aim for once a year. Do whatever works for you. Just make sure that your closet doesn't take over your house. Shit gets weird when you have to start storing formal gowns in the entryway closet.



4

The Rules

1. Plan Your Outfits!

How often do you find yourself saying, “I have nothing to wear”? I used to say this all the damn time. The best way to prevent this problem is to plan your outfits. Before you buy a piece, ask yourself, “what the fuck can I wear this with?” If you can’t answer that question, you probably shouldn’t get it. Unless you’re obsessed with it. If you’re obsessed with it, you should definitely get it.

Anyway, back to planning outfits. When you buy a piece, you should already know what to wear with it, or what else you need to buy to make an outfit with it. You should also plan your everyday outfits ahead of time. If you’re really into it, you can plan your weekly outfits every Sunday. If you aren’t, you can just plan the night before. I’m super crazy, so sometimes I plan my outfits a month early. Either way, you shouldn’t have to dig through your wardrobe every morning. That will make you late, and people who are late for everything suck.

If you have a big event coming up, like a wedding or holiday party, planning your outfit a month in advance is actually a good idea, especially if you have to shop for it. You don’t want to scramble for a formal outfit at the last minute.

2. Wear What You Love

Unless you’re a bridesmaid, or have a uniform for work, there’s no reason to wear something that you don’t absolutely love, or at least really really like.

Yes, sometimes you will have events that require clothing that may not fit in with your daily aesthetic, but you can still wear pieces that you love.

3. You Can Never Be Overdressed

When in doubt, wear something dressier than you think may be necessary. No, you probably don't want to wear an evening gown to a picnic, but there's nothing wrong with wearing a pretty sundress to a football game. Even if you're interviewing for an intern position, you should dress like the CEO. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, and pretty much all rules. You probably don't want to wear your wedding gown to clean the bathroom, and your pencil skirt should never see the inside of the gym, unless you're changing in the locker room.

4. You Can Be Underdressed

Please don't ever wear jeans to a wedding, unless the bride asks you to. Leggings, jeans, and club dresses should never be worn to an interview. Wouldn't you prefer to look a little too good, rather than showing up somewhere and feeling like a slob?

5. Don't Be Afraid to Break Rules

There are so many fashion rules out there. Don't wear white after Labor Day. Wear heels with a skirt that hits at the knee or lower, and wear flats with a skirt that hits above the knee. Avoid horizontal stripes. Before you leave the house, remove 1 accessory. I like to think of these as guidelines,

rather than rules. You probably don't want to wear a miniskirt, hooker heels, 2 chains, giant hoops, and 4 rings. You may look like a prostitute. If that's the look you're going for, I won't stop you, but you may want to sit and think about why you're going for that look. If that empowers you, fucking go for it! Get it, girl! If you're doing it for attention from others, you may want to reassess your style journey.

6. Don't Be Afraid to Ask For Help

Purging, shopping, and planning outfits isn't for everyone! Some people just really hate fashion. Some are completely overwhelmed by all of the choices. Some are just too busy. If you need help, ask for it. There are plenty of stylists who do this for a living, myself included. There are some who will come to your house or go shopping with you. Some have online business where they consult via Skype, FaceTime, and email, like I do. Stylists can do anything from styling for an event or photoshoot to a full on What Not to Wear-esque makeover. Do a little research, or visit my website, and find someone who can help you. We're out there. I promise!

7. Don't Forget About Beauty

Your style isn't just about what you wear. Style is an all-encompassing entity that covers clothes, accessories, hair, beauty, and the way you carry yourself. You don't have to revamp all of these things at the same time, but it is important to take some time for all of them.

5

Beauty

Skin Care

The foundation of beauty is definitely skin care. The skin is the largest organ, and you totally need to take care of it. You don't actually have to spend a bunch of money on it, but you definitely need some kind of routine. Don't forget that this includes your whole body! Here's my routine:

Morning

- Wash my face
- Moisturize
- Makeup

Evening

Remove makeup

Wash my face in the

- shower

Exfoliate my body with a

- loofa and/or a salt scrub

Lotion everywhere

Use toner or a gentle

- exfoliant on my face

Moisturizer or face oil

Sunday bonus: face mask



Hair Care

This is way more fun than skin care, and almost as important. If you don't dye or chemically straighten/perm your hair, you don't need to do much to it. You really just have to wash and

condition it. An occasional mask would be a good idea, too. If your hair is chemically treated, definitely use a mask. I do a mask every time I wash my hair. If you blow dry or use hot tools on it, you should definitely do masks. Before you dry, curl, or straighten your hair, make sure you use a heat protectant.

Makeup

This is totally optional. Some people, like me, are completely obsessed with makeup. If you love it as much as I do, cake the shit out of your face! Just make sure you clean your brushes and sponges regularly. You definitely don't want a staph infection. If you don't love makeup, don't bother with it! You don't have to do anything that doesn't make you feel happy and confident. You are a beautiful badass, with or without makeup!



6

*Super Awesome
Stylish Bloggers*

Talia



Talia says, "When I created Gingham & Ginger in November, I was coming off of a 3 and a half year stint with my prior blog that was solely about fashion. With Gingham & Ginger, the goal was to center it more to suit the busy college student and young professionals. As a college student myself, I wanted to create a blog that was honest, entertaining and downright real about how tough it can be to "adult" sometimes. I was getting a little fed-up with blogs that were always so perfect and it just didn't feel genuine to me. Gingham & Ginger covers it all: style, self-care, local travel on the budget and of course, I share a bit of my daily, crazy and imperfect life with my readers."

You can find her at ginghamginger.com or on Instagram @ginghamgingerblog

Nakhala

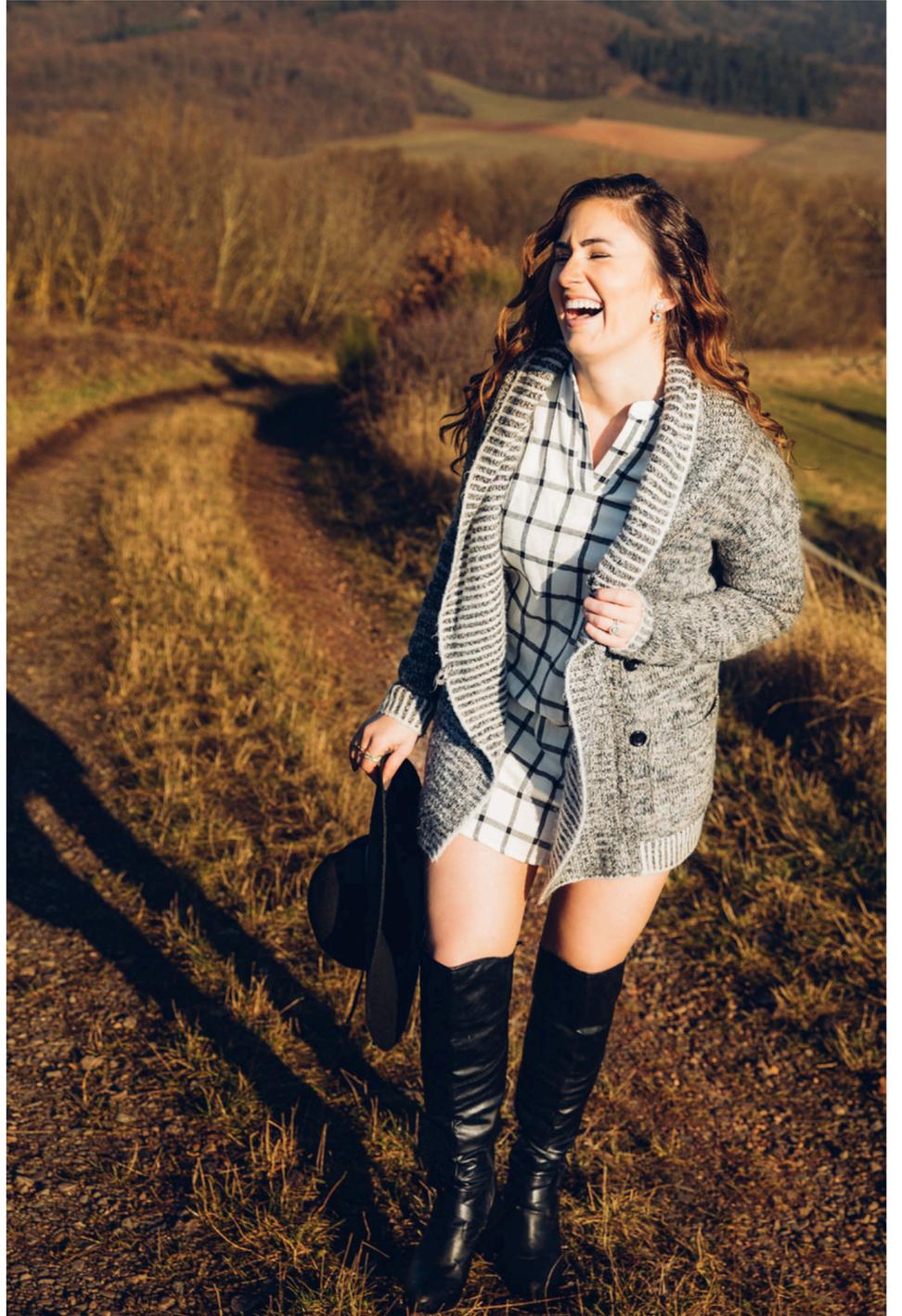


Nakhala says, "My style consists of experimenting and trying out new things. I'm like a chameleon...sometimes I want dress like a boy and sometimes like a princess. It is really important to know that style offers you a platform to express yourself freely without boundaries. You should always dress for yourself and never to impress others. I have been working in the fashion industry for a while as a designer and stylist and wanted to share my love for clothes through my blog that I recently created. I am also a vintage curator and it is really important to understand that there is room for upcycling and being green in fashion. Rule #1 in fashion...be yourself and always do you!"

You can find her at ledressingdemoon.com or on
Instagram
[@ledressingdemoon](https://www.instagram.com/ledressingdemoon)

Kali

Kali says, "For as long as I can remember, I have always had a passion for clothes and shopping. Unlike fashionistas with timeless "capsule wardrobes" I have always loved trying new trends and pushing the boundaries just a bit. Once you know the colors and cuts that really work best for your body, there is so much room to explore and change. I like to combine high-end favorites with



great sale finds to build outfits that can speak to a range of budgets. A lot of women are scared to take style risks so I use my blog www.lovelaughexplore.com to try and share my love for fashion and show them real trends on real people like myself. Clothes are such an extension of ourselves - they can amplify our mood or even change it entirely. There is nothing like putting on your favorite dress or pair of jeans and feeling like the bombshell that every woman should know she is!"

You can find her at lovelaughexplore.com or on Instagram

@love_laugh_explore

Ria



Ria says, "I turned 26 and thought I had it all figured out.. Until my life shook so badly I fell into the sort of depression that leaves you trapped in a cycle of mental defeat.. Unable even to face myself in the mirror. It affected everything, my beautiful daughter most of all. I began to fight like mad, determined dig myself out of what felt like a black hole. My new Instagram became a catalyst for healing. A means to come alive again.. To breathe life back into my spirit. Fast forward a year and my blog has blossomed into something more than just expressions of my story, it has become a means to share thoughts of hope, love, healing and inspiration.. Surrounded as I am by this amazing community.. I invite all to join me as we go about the business of creating a life we can live with."

You can find her at lamourtoujoursria.com or on Instagram @lamour.toujours.ria

Sydney

Sydney says, "For me, fashion is summed up in one word: fun. It's art you wear, it's an extension of your personality, your creativity, and in such a personal and shareable way. I've started conversations with women and men on the street just because I love how they've expressed themselves through their style, and it's always such a lovely experience to share with someone. I don't feel that my style is necessarily exceptional, maybe more dressy on average than most, but nothing too out there. The main source of enjoyment on my blog is my vivacious, biting wit, obviously. The one thing I might say about my style is that it definitely leans towards the feminine, with dresses galore. I try to embrace femininity as a strength rather than the weakness it's often regarded as. I don't worry about somehow seeming less competent because I'm wearing a pretty floral dress and cute heels. I still slay, and look fabulous while doing it. Femininity is only a weakness if being a woman means being "less than," which is completely untrue. Women are powerful, and therefore femininity is powerful, and that's a part of me that I express through my style. I also talk about my struggle with depression, and my embarrassing moments and mistakes in a very honest, real way. It's all in hopes that anyone reading it will see a part of themselves there, and feel less alone. On my blog, I want to use fashion as a means to bring people together."



You can find her at sincerelysydnie.com or on Instagram
[@sincerelysydnieblog](https://www.instagram.com/sincerelysydnieblog)

About the Author

Cassie Lopez is a California girl, currently stuck in North Carolina. She has a BA in Anthropology from UNCC, where she minored in Women's Studies. She blogs about style, beauty, feminism, and life at cassiewearswhat.com. Cassie is also launching her stylist services. Email her at cassie@cassiewearswhat to be a client, or visit CassieWearsWhat.com/index.php/stylist for more information. You can find her on Instagram [@cassiewearswhat](https://www.instagram.com/cassiewearswhat)

