

The Style

CLARITY

Workbook



CREATE
A WARDROBE
USING YOUR OWN
FASHION RULES

By Bianca Chesimard

The Style
CLARITY
Workbook

Introduction

A while back, a fellow blogger (let's call her "Annie") sent me the following email:

I can barely manage to match my socks half the time—how can I even hope to own a unified wardrobe that expresses exactly who I am as a person? Is that even possible? I'm starting to think that the idea of any woman finding and maintaining one specific "style" is a myth perpetuated by fashion blogs and magazines to keep us all desperately eating up their crappy advice.

Judging from similar conversations I've had with friends and female acquaintances my entire adult life, Annie's not alone in her frustration. We all grew up poring over silly magazine quizzes that tried to answer all our major life questions: Is my significant other a jerk? Is my sex life normal? Am I a good friend? Am I a Carrie or a Samantha?

Obviously, those of us no longer in junior high have realized that generic multiple choice questions are a ridiculous way to figure out anything about ourselves. But that doesn't mean that we don't still struggle with who we are and how to achieve the image we wish to convey to the outside world.

While I definitely feel for Annie, I don't agree with her assessment that finding one's personal style is an impossible task. My philosophy

is that we have to find a better way to go about it. Just like finding the right career or maintaining a happy home life takes practice, patience, and a whole lot of hard work, so does finding your true style self. But once you achieve it, it pays out much more than you initially invested. In time, it may even become effortless—or at least appear to be, which we all know is almost as important!

Who is this book for?

- Women who are ready for some seriously proactive, non-judgmental tips for finding and embracing their true individual style.
- Women who feel like they have a basic sense of who they are fashion-wise, but need some help clarifying a few trouble areas.
- Women who like many items in their closet, but need help kicking it up a notch by creating a more cohesive wardrobe.
- Women who know they like a certain look, but continue to buy the same uniform over and over without letting themselves explore new twists or tweak the details.
- Women whose wardrobes have multiple personalities—and it's not on purpose.

The goal of this book is to help start you along the path of style self-discovery. I am not going to tell you what you should like or try to push products on you. Every woman is unique, and you deserve your own journey—whatever that may be. I'm just here as your guide—a Virgil to your Dante, if you will—but hopefully with much less drama. Together, we will uncover the stylish person inside you waiting to come out.

Inside you'll find a number of activities designed to help you do the following:

- Explore and build a basic understanding of what you like and what works for your lifestyle.

- Construct a style template that you can then play around with and modify at will.
- Make thoughtful, informed purchases and ease the anxiety of shopping with a clear plan of action.
- Cultivate a well-edited closet full of timeless, interchangeable, and functional pieces.
- Develop the insight and confidence to stand in front of your closet and see endless possibilities rather than settling for the same old uniform.
- Achieve style clarity and truly *own* your clothing.

Create your own visual style... let it be unique for yourself
and yet identifiable for others.

~ Orson Welles

One man's style must not be the rule of another's.

~ Jane Austen

What is style?

The dictionary defines style as a certain way of doing something. In this book, we'll be using the term to describe the way we express ourselves through outward appearance—particularly through clothing. As you work through the exercises within, I encourage you to be inspired by things that aren't necessarily clothing related. Just the other day, I saw a car that was an interesting shade of green, and I ran right home and looked online for a sweater in a similar hue. There are no limits or restrictions here; no right or wrong answers.

As you develop and define your closet, bear in mind that every season features particular "trend items." Style books usually tell you to avoid these like the plague, as they tend to go out of fashion very quickly. However, this style book is slightly different. There may be

some trends that work into your wardrobe in a way that makes them more timeless. That's great! If these items reflect your style as a whole rather than just being something you are buying to fit in, they will not stand out as trendy. The freedom to break the rules is one of the benefits of *owning* your own style.

What is style versus image?

When we discuss style and image, and how the two relate to each other, it's often easier to think about in terms of corporate branding and customer perception of that brand. Companies spend ridiculous amounts of time and money developing a style (or brand identity) in the form of logos, mascots, websites, taglines and catchphrases... you name it. This is all done with the hope that customers will come to recognize this brand and everything associated with it and associate it all positively with the company itself.

So, what is image? This is the way a customer perceives that company thanks to its branding. Think of the television ads for Geico insurance—the cave men, the geckos, the weird little talking hamsters. From their advertising, a customer may assume that this is a company that doesn't take itself so seriously. Maybe their agents are laid back and approachable, and they'll help get you out of a jam with a smile and a little joke to lighten the mood. That's the image the company wants you to have of them. Whether or not it's really true—who knows?

Now consider the Allstate ads featuring spokesperson Dennis Haysbert. He's the actor with the friendly face and a deep, soothing voice. Personally, I'm drawn to these ads because they unconsciously make me feel safe and secure, which I expect from an insurance company. But other people may be more persuaded by Geico's happy-go-lucky style. Which company has the best insurance? Based on these ads, it's impossible to tell. But we've found ourselves discussing them based on their image because humans are drawn to that sort of thing. Like it or not—we just can't help it.

As individuals, our style is the outward expression of the clothes and accessories we choose to wear, and hopefully this personal style supports our image—the feelings and opinions we want people to have about us based on our appearance.

What does having Style Clarity mean?

Having style clarity means that you have a defined, carefully crafted vision for what you want to look like—and what image you convey to others. And on a practical level, you will know which clothing items fit your image and look, and which ones don't, saving you time, money, and sanity.

Sound good? Then let's get started!