

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



EPISODE 223

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

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10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

Edith Head said, “You can have anything you want in life if you dress for it.”

Elegant women know this, which is why they’re very purposeful in how they show up in the world. And in my own personal quest to create a more elegant life, I have discovered 10 style commandments of elegant women that I cannot wait to share with you in this episode.

Welcome to the School of Self-Image, where personal development meets style. Here’s your hostess, master life coach Tonya Leigh.

My beautiful friends, I am excited about today’s episode because I’m talking about a topic that, not surprisingly, I’m very passionate about. And that is style.

Style is one of the most understated and under-representative tools in the personal development space. Style has the power to transform how you see yourself. And how you see yourself is creating your entire life. That’s why I created the School of Self Image. I wanted to challenge women to see themselves as they truly are, and that is extraordinary. And style is just one of the components that we focus upon within the school, to help a woman change her beliefs about herself.

And when a woman changes her beliefs about herself, her whole world changes as a result. And I know that’s been the case for me. As I have elevated my mindset, my style has also elevated. And as I have elevated my style, it’s helped me to see myself differently.

So, I love working on both simultaneously. In fact, I’ll never forget buying my first designer handbag. And the change that that has on my life, it was about so much more than the handbag. A handbag is just a piece of leather that’s stitched together. And really well-made handbags will last you for a lifetime.

But every time I saw that handbag, it reconfirmed how I wanted to see myself. And for me, I wanted to see myself as an elegant, powerful, and joyful woman. And style has been a critical element in helping me to become that woman.

So, for that reason, today’s episode is dedicated to the 10 style commandments of elegant women that I want you to be thinking about when you’re considering going on your next shopping trip or you’re looking at our closet. If you follow these commandments, you will notice yourself being more intentional and more self-expressed on purpose.

Now, I’m not going to be going into dressing for your body type. I’m not going into the pieces that I think you need in your wardrobe. These are more of the details that we’ll cover within the School of Self-Image. For this episode, I simply want to give you some general commandments that, if you follow, you’re going to start to notice a shift on how you approach your clothing and how you approach the relationship that you have with yourself.

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

So, I can't talk about the 10 style commandments without addressing style and what it is and why it matters. Because most often, we think of style as being what we wear. And yes, that is a big part of style, but it's about so much more.

It's a manner of doing something, it's defined as a distinctive appearance, typically determined by the principles by which something is designed. So, style is about how you walk through a room, how you communicate to another person, how you decorate your home. Basically, style is how you do anything. It is your expression. And I want to challenge you to be remarkable in your style.

Remarkable means to be worthy of attention, striking. And most women downplay their style in order to not be remarked upon. But here's what I want you to think about. When you suppress your expression, it can lead to depression. And I know that to be true.

When I look back to my before pictures, before I discovered who I truly was, when I'd forgotten who I truly was, I see a woman who is expressing suppression. And it was simply because of a lack of my own expression. Style is your way of making your inner self visible. It's a blend of spirit and substance. Style is an outward expression of how you think about yourself.

And I feel like style should be an extension of you, not outshine you. You want to be the one that's noticed, not simply your outfit. So, style has two important functions. First of all, it's a style impression; how it affects you. When you look at yourself in the mirror, what is the impression that you're making on yourself?

Are you impressing upon yourself self-respect? Self-love? Self-discipline? What about the mood you're impressing upon yourself? I think we can all agree that we feel better when we're dressed in a certain way that matches how we want to feel.

However, if you have on something baggy to hide your body, you're choosing an outfit to reinforce a negative belief about yourself and you stay stuck in a bad mood. We can use clothes to elevate our mood, which then has a positive impact on how we show up and the results that we create in our lives.

So yes, there's the style impression. But there's also the style expression, what it says about you to the world. And style has a way of conveying your values, your personality, your dreams, your story. And elegant women know this. And these are the 10 style commandments that they follow.

Number one, elegant women wear what they love. That's right, they just wear what they love. They don't depend on the outside world to tell them what's in style, what they should wear, what the season is telling them is appropriate or what's acceptable.

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

Elegant women have such a strong relationship with themselves. So, they know what they love and what they don't love. and this is a lot of the work that we do within the School of Self-Image, is helping a woman get in touch with what she loves. Instead of being given a bunch of style rules, it's way more effective to have a woman answer the hard questions of getting to know herself on a deeper level, so that she can be the expert of herself.

So, it's up to you to go on a discovery of figuring out what styles you love. What cuts do you love? What materials do feel great on your body? What colors are you drawn to? Which designers speak to you? And as you begin to discover yourself on such an intimate level, what is going to emerge is your own unique expression through your style.

The second commandment of elegant women is that they dress for their dreams. And this is where self-image comes into the picture. Because we can get so used to seeing ourselves in a certain way that we continue to choose clothing to reconfirm a certain image that we have of ourselves.

And oftentimes, if we're not being intentional, that image is actually holding us back from our dreams and our desires and our goals. And so, using style as a way to elevate yourself into your dream is a powerful, powerful process.

When I first started my business, my coaching business, I invested in some really good pieces to wear to my home office. Now, granted, no one else was seeing me. That was before the days of video conferencing. All of my calls were on a teleseminar via the phone. But I saw me. And I wanted to tell the story of a successful business owner who treated her business and herself with respect.

And so, by dressing in such a way, I was reconfirming the message that I wanted to have about myself. And so, I want you to make style choices based on who you want to be and what it is you want to create. For example, if you want to be a wealthy woman, dress like a woman of wealth. Imagine what that version of you would be dressing like and what are some little changes that you can begin to make in your current wardrobe that will align you with being her.

If you want to one day own a horse farm, perhaps you want to invest in some cowboy boots and jeans as part of your unique style statement. Whether it's a ballgown or a dazzling blazer, you have the ability to elevate yourself into the world in which you want to inhabit.

And studies have shown that clothing can elevate your mood and help you create certain emotions. And the way to create what you want in this world is to create the emotions of already having it. what would it look like if you used clothing as one of the tools to help you elevate your emotions into your dream that you wish to live? Elegant women know this, which is why they are very purposeful in their style.

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

The third style commandment of elegant women is to choose quality over quantity. Now, I know that those sales are tempting. And you're thinking, "Why don't I just get a bunch of these things right now because they're 50% off?"

But this is not how elegant women think. Elegant women are not about quantity. They are about quality. They don't want to invest in things that fall apart after the first few wears. And I believe it is better to have one quality piece than 10 crappy ones.

So, what that looks like for me is investing in classic and timeless pieces. So, for example, my Max Mara coat. I tried this coat on in Paris probably four years ago and I knew it was something that I wanted to add to my wardrobe. But I wasn't quite ready.

For me, I like to really think about my purchases. I love the excitement of saving and really being thoughtful with what I bring into my wardrobe. So, the last time I was in Europe, I bought a Max Mara coat. And it's one of the best purchases that I've made because it's quality.

Again, I will have this quality for the rest of my life if I choose to and if I take good care of it. And that's the other thing. When you invest in quality, you're more likely to tend to it, take care of it. But the reasons why I believe we should choose quality over quantity, especially when it comes to our clothes, is for a few reasons.

The first is the ethical perspective. Fast fashion relies on speedy design, manufacturing, and delivering clothing as soon as it comes off the runway. So, when you do the research and investigation about how this clothing is manufactured, you often find that it leads to child labor and generally very poor working conditions.

And so, that's one reason why I want to choose quality over quantity, because of ethical reasons. Also, when you think about the resale value, if you ever choose to resell a quality item, you're going to get a higher resale price, whether it's a beautiful coat, a great handbag, because quality sells.

And finally, generally speaking, quality things last longer. So, you may pay a lot upfront, but the upside of that is that you will have it for a much longer time. Elegant women know this, which is why they'd rather have less but better when it comes to their clothing.

Style commandment number four of elegant women is a big one, and it's one that I have to remind women of often in my programs. And that is, elegant women dress the body they have now.

How many of you are waiting until you lose the weight to invest in clothes that make you feel beautiful? It's like putting yourself in purgatory. And it doesn't work. And the reason why it doesn't work is that you are reconfirming a self-image that is out of alignment with the version of you who has lost the weight.

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

Now, I get not wanting to go and buy really expensive things if you know that you're going to lose the weight, in a year from now, chances are you won't be wearing those things. But that doesn't mean that you neglect the body that you have now.

I want you to pretend that this is a body you're always going to have. How would you dress it? How would you treat it? How would you talk to it? A lot of you have conditions on your body and the love and respect that you give it. When you think it looks a certain way, you think you're going to love it and respect it more.

But you have to love and respect the body you have now in order to create the results that you want. Never ever punish yourself by dressing yourself in a way that doesn't make you feel beautiful and remarkable and like the extraordinary woman that you are.

And remember, there are these things called tailors. You can have your clothes altered and tailored if you are planning on losing weight. But never ever deny yourself of beauty for some future date.

My entire body of work revolves around self-image and the philosophy that in order to create what you want, you have to feel the way you think you're going to feel once you have the thing. So, however you think you're going to feel when your body looks a certain way, it is up to you to generate that feeling for yourself now. It's very difficult to generate that feeling for yourself when you're punishing yourself and you're not allowing yourself to feel beautiful and the best version of yourself today.

So, dress the body you have now. Accepting your body is the first step to changing your body, if that's something you want to do. But a lot of you are doing it backwards. You're trying to beat yourself into acceptance.

You only want to accept yourself when you look a certain way. So, by not accepting yourself, just notice how you keep perpetuating the same patterns, feeling disappointed in yourself, neglecting yourself, dismissing yourself. All of those types of behaviors are recreating the very thing that you don't want. So, remember, elegant women dress the body they have now.

Style commandment number five of elegant women is that they accentuate what they love. They don't spend time hating on and trying to hide what they don't love. They focus on their positives. It might be your shoulders. It might be your derriere. It might be your breast. It might be your legs. It might be your face. But what part of your body do you like the most and how can you dress in such a way that reveals more of that?

It's like you tell the world what to look at. With the illusion of style, you can guide people's eyes to what you want them to see. But more importantly, you guide your eyes to what you want to notice when you're standing in front of the mirror.

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

So, if your eyes are your favorite feature, how can you style them to make them pop, to make them even more noticeable? Maybe it's a different kind of shadow. Maybe it's a certain makeup look. Maybe it's a certain type of mascara. Maybe you love your legs. Maybe you feel like you have the most beautiful calves in the world. Well, wear shorts. Wear shorter skirts. Show those darlings off.

For me personally, one of my favorite features are my shoulders. So, I often, when the weather permits, you'll find me in halter tops or sleeveless sundresses, things that accentuate my shoulders because it's one of my favorite body parts. And I do that on purpose because I like the way I look when I'm accentuating what I love. It doesn't feel good for me to try to hide a part of my body. What feels so much better is to highlight the part of my body that I love.

Style commandment number six of elegant women is that they create a friendly wardrobe. What do I mean? Well, friends get along, they go well together. And one of the best things that I ever did was to decide on my pieces, looking through a friend lens.

Will this skirt get along with my top? Will these shoes get along with my jeans? Almost everything in my wardrobe fits together. They work together. Which means I can have many different looks with less clothing. And in order to do that, elegant women usually have a palette; a color palette that they typically stick with that the colors work together.

For me, I love very monochromatic. I love toques and navies and blacks. And occasionally, I'll throw in pops of color to pizzazz my wardrobe up a little bit. But for me, elegance is all about simplicity and effectiveness. And when you are working with clothes that work together, it takes so much less time to choose an outfit. And what I've also noticed is that it's so much easier to pack.

I don't know about you all, but I used to agonize over the packing process because many of my clothes didn't work together. So, I would end up overpacking and not being able to get the maximum amount of outfits out of the clothing that I had. Because I would have, for example, pinks and reds and grey pants and brown tops. And it just didn't work. It was not a friendly wardrobe.

But now, when I go to pack, it's so easy. I got my black skirt. I've got a few tops that work with a black skirt. And then I have some black pants and then my jeans. It's like it all fits together. In fact, I'm at my mom's right now, I came here to be with her after her surgery and it took me so little time to pack. And I didn't pack that much, but I've been able to create so many outfits out of very few pieces. Why? Because of the color palette and the pieces. Again, it's a very friendly wardrobe.

Style commandment number seven of elegant women is that they dress to impress themselves. This very much aligns with the first style commandment of wear what you love. But dressing to impress yourself is about waking up every morning and being intentional about how you want

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

to feel for the day. And dressing in such a way that when you look at your reflection in the mirror, you see a woman who cares for herself, who thinks highly of herself, who respects herself enough to put in the effort.

Just like the effort you put into your children, into your community, into your work, it's taking that same effort and putting it towards yourself so that when you look in the mirror, you're not thinking, "God, I look like a hot mess. I look like a woman who's given up on herself," which I used to look like, my friends, on most days. Again, just reconfirming a self-image that did not serve me.

But when you dress to impress yourself, you can tune out all of the noise about what other people think you should and shouldn't wear and you simply get to ask, what do I want to wear? What would delight me today? How would I love to see myself today? And then you dress accordingly.

Style is a choice. and it's a choice that I want you to make for yourself and not for someone else. Because if you're making these choices for other people, everyone's going to have an opinion about what you should wear. Some people will think you shouldn't dress up. They may think, "Well who does she think she is?"

Other people may think that you're underdressed, thinking, "She doesn't think much of herself." But when you bring it back to you and what you think of yourself and what you want to think of yourself and you use that as your guiding principle, you will never disappoint yourself because it's being driven by a motivating factor that serves you. So, dress to impress yourself.

Style commandment number eight of elegant women is to focus on one remarkable thing. This one commandment has really helped me not only simplify my style, but also elevate it because I used to believe that, to be stylish, everything had to be remarkable; the outfit, the hair, the makeup, the shoes. And quite frankly, it was exhausting and overwhelming. And it was not an approach to style that I felt like I could keep up with.

But then, when I started to spend a lot of time in France and Italy, I noticed that the best style, the most elegant style, the most remarkable style was not head-to-toe designer. It was when there was simplicity with a touch of remarkability. Is that a word or did I just make that up? A touch of remarkable.

And the way this looks is maybe you have a very simple classic black dress and you have a fun pair of earrings. Or maybe you're just going casual with a t-shirt, a great pair of jeans, maybe a kitten heel. But you take the time to do something really fun with your hair. Or maybe it's your makeup. Maybe that's where you want to spend your time.

But when you focus on one remarkable thing, it takes the pressure off to be perfect and it makes it fun. You can walk into your closet and say, "You know what? I'm in the mood today to

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

wear this simple sundress. But I want to pizzazz it up a little bit. What's one remarkable thing that I can add that will make it a statement outfit? That will make it more like me? And that will simplify this whole crazy process of style?"

Style commandment number nine of elegant women is to invest wisely. Not reactively. Not to escape your life through some online shopping. But to really think about your style and to approach it as you would a stock portfolio.

What's missing? Where do you need to diversify? What pieces are going to bring you the greatest ROI. And when it comes to investing wisely, I always like to think about cost-per-wear. To calculate the cost-per-wear, what you do is you take the item's price and you divide it by the total number of times you think you're going to wear it.

So, take my favorite pair of Stuart Weitzman 5050 boots. I wear these boots religiously in the fall and the winter. And because I've worn them for so many years, I know I usually get like three years out of these boots because they're so well-made.

So, if you think about me wearing them three times a week for let's say 24 weeks. I probably wear them more than that. But that comes out to 72 times. And then you multiply that by three and you get 216. Well, the boots are \$700 divided by 216, equals my cost-per-wear is \$3.24. Meaning every time I put on these boots, it's costing me \$3.24.

And you get to ask yourself, is that worth it? And there's no right or wrong answer. It's just about being deliberate and conscious of what you're spending and if you like how that feels to you.

Because I have spent a lot of money on a dress that I've only worn a couple of times. Some of those purchases feel good and some of them don't. When I'm being deliberate and I'm investing wisely, it feels good. But when it's just an impulse buy, didn't really think it through, and then I think about it, usually that doesn't feel good.

So, elegant women really think about their wardrobes and they put effort into planning out what they need, what's missing. And then, they invest in the pieces that feel good to them. And they usually factor in a calculation like cost-per-wear to help them figure out, is this investment worth it?

The final style commandment of elegant women is that they constantly edit and refine. Here's the thing. As you evolve as a woman, so will your style. I am constantly going into my closet and asking myself, does this represent the next evolution of me? And that question causes me to continuously elevate my style.

Sometimes, I see pieces and it reminds me of who I was a year ago, or five years ago, or 10 years ago. Although, these days I don't have many of those pieces left in my closet because I'm

10 Style Commandments of Elegant Women

constantly editing and refining my wardrobe to elevate my self-image and therefor elevate my own personal style.

You know, every day, if we're open to it, we have new experiences that impress upon us. We have new dreams and new goals and new desires that call forth a different evolution of us. A trip to India may inspire you to add more color into your wardrobe. A new job may inspire you to add some new blazers.

A new love affair may have you investing more in your lingerie, although I feel like we should be investing in our underpinnings, regardless of whether we have a lover or not. But I will save that for another podcast because lingerie has also changed my life. Seriously. Facts.

But here's the thing. As we evolve as women and we discover more about ourselves, what we love, what we are drawn towards, our hopes and our dreams and our goals, we will be asked to elevate our style to represent those new elements that are now a part of our lives.

You see, clothes have a much bigger function than just to keep us warm. Style is all about making your inner self visible. It's a statement of how you uniquely put yourself together to present yourself to the world. Style is about how the world perceives you. But most importantly, it's about how you perceive yourself.

And how you think of yourself, how you see yourself is creating your self-image. And that, my friends, is creating your entire life. Being intentional with our style is all about courage; courage to break out of the unknown to try something new, to be thoughtful and purposeful and intentional. And it's also about creativity.

This is not about fixing yourself. It's that you have the opportunity to create yourself on purpose through how you think and how you show up in the world, with what you do, how you communicate, and yes, the clothes you wear.

Elegant women know this. So, the use style as a way to get to know themselves, through self-discovery, self-awareness, self-knowledge. And the deeper they dive into themselves, the more the true them is expressed through their style.

So, try on these style commandments and see how they fit. Have a beautiful and stylish week, my friends. And I cannot wait to see you in the next episode. Cheers.

Hey, have you grabbed your free copy of the School of Self-Image Manifesto? If not, what in the world? Head over to schoolofselfimage.com/manifesto and get a copy that teaches you how to think and show up in the areas of mindset, style, and surroundings so that you can transform your self-image.