



EPISODE NO. 343

# The Emotion of Clothing

Does your outfit tie you to the past or pull you towards your future? Does it weigh you down or lift you up? Does it hold you back or propel you forward? In today's episode, we are discussing the emotion of clothing and more specifically, we're talking about enclothed cognition. So let's dive in.

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

Rise and shine, my beautiful friends. Happy Wednesday or whatever day you're listening to this. I am sitting in a hotel room in Las Vegas. I arrived a couple of nights ago and whenever I arrive at a hotel or a place that I'm staying away from home, the first thing I like to do is unpack. I like to get all of my things out of the suitcase, hanging up, put in drawers, put on a shelf, wherever it needs to be put. So a couple of days ago when I did my little routine and all of my clothes were hanging in the closet, I took a step back and I just looked at my closet and I thought to myself, what did these clothes symbolize and what did these clothes make me think about myself?

And so today that's what we're talking about. We're talking about a concept called enclothed cognition, and what this refers to is the influence that clothing has on your cognitive processes, how you think, on your psychological states, how you feel, and therefore your behavior, how you show up in the world. This concept suggests that the clothes we wear affect our thoughts, our emotions, and our behavior by triggering certain associations and expectations that we have with those clothes. So right now I

## The Emotion of Clothing

am coming to the end of the style experience, which is a five-month immersion into discovering our personal style and using clothes to reinvent ourselves and show up in a much more expansive way. And during one of the months, we all did a closet clean out, myself included, and there was a dress in my closet that I have hung onto for years. It's beautiful and maybe you've seen it.

I wore it years ago in a photo shoot in front of the Eiffel Tower, and I remember doing that shoot and feeling on top of the world and feeling like a queen and feeling like this moment, have you ever had those moments where you're like, this is it, I feel so aligned. I feel like... It's perfect moments. And so I was wearing that dress during that time. And when I was doing my closet clean out, I looked at the dress and I had so much ambivalence around it. On one hand there was a sense of pride in thinking about who that woman was and how she got me to where I am today. And so, so much love for my past self, and I was even thinking about when I was wearing that dress where my business was then that's when I had French Kiss Life and I was running retreats in Paris and it was such a beautiful time.

But there was also sadness associated with the dress. There was the sadness of years gone by. There was the sadness of my daughter being in school then, and now she's an adult, out on her own. There was also the sadness of going through a divorce and leaving North and South Carolina and moving out west and reestablishing my life there. There was so much and embodied in a dress hanging in my closet. And this is why for a lot of us cleaning out a closet isn't just about pulling material out and putting it in a box. It's about an emotional journey, and it can bring up a lot. In fact, when I was doing this closet clean-out with my clients, many of them had very similar experiences of looking at letting go of a past. So let's examine how that plays out with and clothed cognition.

You put on an outfit that symbolizes your past. How do you think you're going to show up? How are you going to think? Who are you going to be? Are you going to be your future self or are you going to be your past self? Are you going to think new thoughts, feel new ways and show up in new ways wearing something that is pulling you literally to the past because of what it symbolizes and the energy that it holds?

When you continue to wear the same things day after day, month after month, year after year, never questioning why am I wearing this, never questioning does this represent who I want to be, never asking yourself, does this help me to elevate my mood, what you end up doing is looking at yourself and seeing the same version of you over and over and over, just reinforcing, this is who I am. Now listen, if who you are right now is helping you get the results that you want in your life, keep doing it. But if not, you need to start transforming how you see yourself. And one of the best ways to do that, my friends, is through your style.

## The Emotion of Clothing

So yesterday I was getting ready because I'm here in Vegas for a business workshop, and I was looking at the clothes hanging in my closet and asking myself like, how do I want to feel today? How do I want to be seen by myself and by others? Those questions led me to choose this beautiful suit that, to me conveys, I'm here for business. It conveys I'm confident, it conveys, I've got this, it conveys strength, but also because of how the suit is cut, it also displays femininity, which I love having that strong feminine persona. And here's what's crazy, you all. You can shape how the world sees you. You have a direct influence over the narrative that is built around you, and a big part of that is in what you wear.

So not only does enclosed cognition change how you see yourself and how you think about yourself and how you feel and how you behave, it also has an effect on how other people think about you, feel towards you and how they behave towards you. An example is, I walk into this room yesterday and I'm here because of my business manager. She's the one who knows the guy who's leading the workshop, and she's like, "I really feel like you need to be here." So I've never met him. We have some mutual friends, but I personally have never met him or anyone in this room. And I walk in and sit down and we go around and they are asking us about our business. And so I'm sharing with them that I have the School of Self-Image, and this is my passion to help 5,000 women create their after stories.

And over the course of the day, I noticed how the room was viewing me based on things that were being said mostly from the guy who's leading this workshop. He started to make style references towards me. He was like, "Yeah, Tonya would probably never wear that, right?" I've never met this man. And our interaction has been limited to one day, and he's already getting a sense of who I am based on the words that I've used and how I showed up. That's powerful, you all, and a lot of you aren't leveraging that. And I've seen this many times in my life, and I'm going off script here, but many times in my life I've noticed after the fact of how I helped shape the narrative. For example, when I first got into the world of food and wine and I went to sommelier school and I was doing food and wine writing, I positioned myself as someone who was a foodie and a sommelier, and I talk about food a lot and wine a lot.

And all of a sudden people are handing me the menu in the restaurant to order the wine. All of a sudden I'm getting text asking me, "Hey, I'm at the wine store. What wine should I get?" I created that narrative. The same goes with Paris and France. My love and my speaking of it so much led people to believing that I was an expert in France, in French culture. I'm not French, but I loved it so much and I talked about it. And I showed up in such a way that people started to associate me with Paris, with France. And now people are doing it with style. Why? Because of how I'm showing up. So think about this for you all. Think about what it is that you want to create and what

## The Emotion of Clothing

do you need to be associated with to create it because you have control of that narrative a hundred percent.

Now for me, this is not something that I've sat down and strategically tried to put together, although some people do. It's what PR agencies do. But it's just been me showing up and talking about what I love and wearing what I love and being associated with what I love is just a byproduct of that.

So back to enclosed cognition. You can use clothing to help make associations. And number one, the association should be the ones between you and you. What do you want these clothes to associate with in your mind? What do you want them to trigger, to spark? What is the emotion? What is the belief that you want to cultivate about yourself? How do you want to behave and start choosing your clothes accordingly? It is powerful, and it's why it's one of the core pillars within the School of Self-Image. I see it over and over. When a woman changes her style, she changes her life because it's all connected. So what do you want to believe about yourself? Do you want to believe that you're beautiful? Do you want to believe that you are wealthy? Do you want to believe that you're smart? Do you want to believe that you are powerful? Do you want to believe that you're confident? Do you want to believe that you are loving? How do you want to feel? What is that state that if you could just get in, you would become unstoppable?

And then finally, how do you want to behave? How do you want to show up? And get a picture of that version of you in your mind and try to see what is she wearing? Is she wearing the holy T-shirt? Is she wearing the sweatshirt from college? Is she wearing her PJs all day? Probably not. So go change. Get clothed in the state of being that will change your life. Have a beautiful week, my friends. I will see you on 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](http://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.