

Ep #121: What You Wear



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With Your Host

Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success*, with Natalie Brown, episode 121.

Welcome to *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you're a successful woman who is ready to stop struggling with your weight, you're in the right place. You'll learn everything you need to know to lose weight for the last time in bitesize pieces. Here's your host, certified life and weight coach Natalie Brown.

Hello, everybody, as the seasons change so does my wardrobe, out with the jackets, and the sweaters, and the boots, and in with the dresses and the sandals. We have four seasons in Utah so I have a wide variety of layers, and options, and footwear to match, whether it's rainy, snowy, blustery or hot. And I really like at the end of winter/spring to take a minute and go through my clothes and see what I wore and what I didn't and get rid of stuff that I never chose.

The past few years I have just left most of my sweaters in my closet along with my spring and summer clothes, just kind of everything in there all year round. But this year I reached this threshold where I felt like I was being suffocated by my clothes, whenever I went into my closet. So I decided to take everything winter or fall out and store it. And anything that I wouldn't wear in the summer was getting put away which led to a huge overhaul of my wardrobe.

There were things hanging out that I was keeping even though they didn't fit quite right, they were too long or they were too tight in the waist but fit everywhere else, or they had a funky sleeve or neckline. But I was just keeping them hoping that maybe the next time I tried them on they would work or maybe they would work with a jacket over them or different shoes or whatever. Or a big reason I noticed for me keeping stuff around that I don't wear anymore is that it's a nice brand or it was expensive when I bought it.

But the reality is taking something through season after season that I don't like anymore and I don't wear is basically just expensive storage at this point. So, so much better to donate it and let it have a new life with a new

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owner. Anyway, six hours and a huge disaster pile of craziness and a million empty hangers later, my closet feels like a whole new place, a summer paradise full of colorful clothes that I'm excited to wear and enough space to make it easy to find and put away my clothes.

Rather than having to use all of my body weight to open up a gap in order to hang something back up after I wash it. That six hours with all of my clothes, plus a couple of comments my clients have made over the past few weeks about their clothes made me really think about clothes and what they say about our relationships with ourselves and our bodies. Most of my clients have a fraught relationship with clothes because of their current body size and shape.

And they have a big fun part of their goal that is to either be able to wear certain styles that they don't wear now or to walk into their closets and be able to put on anything and know it fits and it's comfortable. So I want you to think about your current relationship with clothes by asking yourself this question. Why do I wear what I wear? There are reasons that come from religious principles or expectations. There are reasons that come from cultural principles and expectations. But for most of us our focus is on the view of others.

Most of us are wearing what we wear based on other people viewing us, what's acceptable, what's fashionable, what's attractive, what hides the parts of us that aren't any of those things. I realize it may seem obvious that we dress to be seen, obviously clothes are on the outside and they are going to be seen. We have been taught to focus on the outside experience of our clothes and the outside experience is more for others than for you. Sure you can see your clothes when you look down, yes, and you have preferences in terms of style, color, pattern, texture, price point etc.

But much of our preferences have been influenced by culture and society and have some moral undertones. You like what you like, you buy what you buy, you wear what you wear because of what is in style. What is age appropriate, what looks 'good on you', what's the right color for you, is modest, isn't distracting, is professional. I'm not saying there aren't other

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reasons, like that it's well made, will last, is affordable, serves a particular purpose.

But I think more of our reasons are judgment based rather than rationally based, especially when we have body image and weight related insecurities. So think about your answer, why do you wear what you wear? Your answer may be, I wear what I wear because it's most flattering on me which is focused on how the view of your body is perceived. Flattering is not objective, it's subjective. Your answer may be, I wear what I wear because it hides my problem areas.

What makes them a problem is that you think other people seeing them will be unpleasant for them and embarrassing for you. Your answer may be, I wear what I wear because it allows me to not stand out too much. If you don't draw attention to yourself with style, color or pattern, people will not view you or will view you less.

Your answer may be, I wear what I wear because I don't deserve to buy anything new until I am at the size I want to be, which means that you have decided that you can only look the way you want to look when your body is 'right'. That deserving something or not is decided by a number on the scale. That spending money on you right now is a waste because you're not worth it unless you're smaller. Your answer may be, I wear what I wear because it's what I have and I refuse to buy a different size in clothes.

You're hoping that people viewing you won't notice the view has changed if the clothes stay the same. Your answer may be, I wear what I wear because it's the only thing I can wear that fits. I have so many clients that only wear sweats, or big sweatshirts, or leggings, or dresses, or whatever, not because that's what they want to wear, but because they think it's the only thing they think they can wear. People their size can't wear skinny jeans because they're called skinny and they are not skinny.

Or they can't wear things that button or wear pants because those things won't fit them. If you at this point are like, "No, Natalie, I wear dresses because I like them, or I like how they twirl or they are cooler in the

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summer, not because I can't wear pants." I'm not really directing this podcast toward you because you are already tuned into what I want the rest of you to think about which is not how your clothes look, how they will be perceived, what it will be like for them to be viewed and if it's right by whatever outside standard you are judging it by.

But how do they feel and how do you feel when you wear them? That's the why I would love for all of you to embrace eventually because it's the only why that matters. Someone else's experience of your clothes has no real effect on you unless you think about it or interpret it. Then you will experience a feeling about what you think they think. I know it sounds complicated, it's really not. You buy a dress because you think it accentuates your waist and it hides your thighs.

You walk into a room and you notice someone looking at you and you think to yourself, they think I look good and you feel proud. Or alternately, you buy an oversized hoodie and some baggy sweats to cover all of it, your whole body is a problem area in your opinion. You walk into a room and someone looks at you and you think they think I look frumpy and then you feel ashamed. Now, dresses and sweats do not elicit this reaction on their own. You could flip these two scenarios.

Walk in, in the dress and think, they think I should not be wearing something this form fitting at my size and then you feel ashamed. Or you could walk in, in your sweats and think, they wish they were wearing this too and feel proud, either way. The point is, it isn't the clothes. It's you thinking about you being viewed and basing how you feel on that. The anticipation of that, us being viewed in our clothes by others, and what it will be like for us to have that experience, it's usually how we go about choosing our clothes to begin with.

So the focus on being viewed runs all the way through the experience of buying, dressing in and going out into the world in clothes. And it also pervades our private spaces too. How often have you put on pajamas in your house alone and thought if someone saw me in this I would die of embarrassment? We're already feeling a little embarrassed at the mere

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thought of being viewed. So if clothes are on the outside and I'm saying the focus of being viewed is problematic then how the heck are we supposed to think about them? What could an alternate why be?

Well, just like with your body, there is an outside experience, what you look like to others and to yourself in the mirror and what it feels like to be inside of your body, moving around in the world. Why do you wear what you wear? What if the answer was, because of how I feel in the clothes I wear, not how confident, or proud, or sexy you feel? But how does it actually physically feel to put on, wear, move around in, sit down in the clothes you are wearing, regardless of what people see, what size is on the tag or how you think your body should look?

Think about comfort, think about fabric feel, think about the weight of the clothes. Think about the weather and/or the temperature. Close your eyes and just be in the clothes you're wearing right now. Is there anything physically tight, or digging in, or pulling when you move? Are you having to sit up straight or suck in, or not bend your legs, or any other unnatural position in order to be comfortable? Are you hot, or cool, or just right? Is anything itchy or irritating?

If you answered yes to any or all of those questions, what why are you operating from right now? What drives you to ignore your physical comfort? This is not a judgmental or sarcastic question. I want you to genuinely get curious about it. What is currently more important to you than your own physical comfort and why is it more important? This is one area where you will not hear me advocate for navigating discomfort. Well, I guess one of two, I also think how food feels in your body physically should be primary when eating but that's for another podcast.

I tell you all day long that when it comes to emotion, when it comes to your goal and doing the work of change, learning to allow, accept, hold space for and navigate through discomfort is key. We have to learn to ride the waves of uncomfortable emotions in order to regulate and change our responses, meaning not run away, or avoid, or numb them with food. Accepting and processing discomfort when it comes to emotion is for you. It's loving and

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when we practice it we grow, we move forward, we are strengthened, and we're lifted.

We say to ourselves, "You matter, you are important." But accepting discomfort when it comes to your clothes, that doesn't serve you, or move you forward, or contribute to your growth. It just punishes you, and disregards you, and sends you the message that you aren't important and you don't matter because it is not for you, it is against you.

What if the answer to why do you wear what you wear was because I just prefer it, or I like it? Not because it fits a particular style, or trend, or age category, not because it is in your correct color profile. But just because it sparked some joy when you saw it and it's fun, or it's peaceful and calming, or it represents something you are passionate about, or you love how it moves. How you feel and if you like it, those two reasons have nothing to do with your body in its current state. You don't have to do anything to deserve it or to afford it.

No matter where you are in your journey to health and weight loss you can dress for how you feel and what you like. It's that simple. But it isn't that easy. It isn't that easy because you have lived in a world that has told you that women should or shouldn't wear certain things, that you need to cover parts of you, or that what you wear will earn you a label that you may or may not like, or even be accurate, or a treatment that may harm you.

You've learned that there is a right and acceptable body to have or a store to shop at, or a size to be. And that if you don't fit into those parameters you don't fit in here. You've been shown and have seen one type of woman in the media, in ads, in stores, and so not seeing yourself reflected has sent the message that you don't belong and aren't what people want to view. You've been encouraged to conform to certain standards and fit into a mold and do what is expected all while disregarding the very things that matter most, how you feel and what you want.

You've been shown and told what your preferences should be and discouraged from expressing your own. For most of your life you have been

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excluded from being able to even try to fit in and look 'right' because they didn't carry your size or didn't make the clothes you like that fit your body. It's important to acknowledge and work through any of this that comes up for you, it's valid. But that doesn't mean you have to continue to operate based on what you were taught.

You can learn and you can create a new way of operating that is supportive, and generous, and realistic, and honors who you are right now without having to wait until your body conforms to what you think it should. The beauty is that the world is changing. There are fun, comfortable clothes in every size and price range. Wearing what you like is more common than ever. Most of us are starting to see ourselves reflected in the world in more ways than ever before.

At the beginning of my journey to love myself no matter my size over 10 years ago, I made a decision that I was no longer going to wait for my weight. That I was going to start dressing like I wanted to, not like I thought I could or should determined by my size. I remember one of the first outfits I bought, that branched out of my typical jeans and oversized t-shirt wardrobe.

I bought some black slacks like that businesswomen wear, this was a big deal because I had a belief that because I was just a stay at home mom. I use that minimizing terminology because it's what I used to believe at the time, not because it's how I think and feel about full-time mom work now. Anyway I didn't think that I had any business wearing businesswomen clothes, especially being the size I was but I wanted to.

So I bought the pants and I bought a green floral cardigan with gold buttons and some gold jewelry, which I had never worn before because I was told at some point by someone I delegated authority to that I looked better in silver. And I even bought these cute green flats to match with a dainty little ankle strap which I didn't think bigger girls with bigger ankles should wear but I wanted to so I did. It was the first time in my life that I just bought and wore something so very different that broke so many of my rules and norms just because I wanted to.

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Now, I realize this may not seem like such a rebellious outfit to you based on its description. But the point is not what I chose, it's why I chose it. I wanted to wear it. I liked it. It was fun. Green is my favorite color, matching shoes just for fun was my dream. And I remember loving it and being so excited about it that I wore it in February on a super snowy cold day even though it was not very weather appropriate. And even though the only place I was going that day outside of my house was to pick up my toddler from preschool.

It's been an ongoing process for me since to shed the ideas, and expectations, and rules I always governed myself by and really learned to wear what feels good and what I like. I don't conform to any particular style or color palette. I don't stay away from anything besides things that are uncomfortable or that I don't like. I look at myself in the mirror, sure.

I build outfits that I think look good together, yeah, but just for me, based on my preference, based on what I feel like wearing that day to that event, not for my husband or girlfriends, or for my image on social media or for random strangers at the store, just for me and you can too. Look at your reasons for your clothes now, get curious and question them, and play around with a focus on how they feel and what you like.

I mentioned on a previous episode that I had a photoshoot coming up and that I was anxious about seeing the images. Well, I just got them back and I love so many of them. Part of that is because I am and have been consciously choosing that when I see them I was going to find ways to love them and me, and be kind to myself. And part of it is because I wore fun outfits that I felt good in and that I loved, hats and platform Converse and animal print jackets, all sorts of fun.

So just a little tease for you all, applications for my group program are closed until July while I refresh my website with a new look, a new message and some of my fun new photos. I am so excited for it all to come together and to be revealed. And my waitlist will most likely get first access just as applications open and they come in the site to apply. So head to itbeginswithathought.com/waitlist to hop on and I will see you soon.

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Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you want to learn more about how to lose weight for the last time, come on over to itbeginswithathought.com. We'll see you here next week.