

Saving the World, One Closet at a Time

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One of the most preventable causes of resource waste can be found lurking in the closets and drawers of people across the planet: It's the massive amounts of clothing, shoes, and accessories we purchase, hoard, and never end up wearing because they don't fit us right, they don't match our personality or our lifestyle, or we just don't have the time.

In fact, studies show that, on average, most people only regularly use about 20 percent of what's in their wardrobe, leaving the other 80 percent just hanging in the closet gathering dust and taking up room. Yet even with all the excess most people have amassed, it seems that "I have nothing to wear" is still a very common complaint. We're influenced by what our friends are wearing, lured in by fashion trends and slick advertising, and enticed by can't-be-missed sales to spend even more. Before we know it, our closets are stuffed full of garments we never wear, and all of it represents money wasted that could have been used for something else. Buying more clothes than we need wastes money, time, storage space, and the precious natural resources that were used to manufacture, package, ship, and sell them.

I founded the international image-consulting firm Style Innovators in 2001, and we now have offices in New York, Chicago, and Denver. Through this company, my staff and I facilitate in-person and online consultations, small-group sessions, and virtual workshops and webinars. In the past 20 years, we've inspired more than 10,000 consumers on five continents to stop for a while, take stock of what they already own, and rethink how they're managing their closets, as well as the important image they present to the world. I've also trained and certified more than 2,000 style consultants all around the world so they can establish their own consulting business and effectively apply the proven Style Innovators methodology to assist their own clients.

The purpose the Style Innovators methodology is to discover what women own and teach them how to shop more sustainably in the future. During our consultations, which often consist of weekly appointments for six weeks, we use proven tools, testing methods, and strategies for eliminating wardrobe waste. We strive to give the utmost personal attention to every client, and the cost for our services range from \$280 to \$1,200, depending on exactly what the client needs. Most consultant-client working relationships are comprised of six important components:

1. Initial Style Consultation
2. Color Consultation (more on that in “Tools and Testing” below)
3. Wardrobe Audit (more on that in “Tools and Testing” below)
4. Reduce/Reuse/Recycle Information Session
5. Organizing a “Swap Party” with the client’s family and friends
6. Donating clothes and shopping for missing items

Tools and Testing

Our online tools and tests help us easily identify what clothes women already have. Using the **Wardrobe Wastage Calculator**, we have women enter the approximate number of items they own, what percentage they wear regularly, and the average/approximate cost of each item. This simple test’s results are quite eye-opening, showing the total cost of the items that are never worn. Example: If you only use 30 percent of 150 items, and the average cost per item was \$50, you’ve wasted a whopping \$5,250. This valuable tool can be found here: <https://si-myprivatelist.com/wardrobe-wastage-calculator/>

Next, I have them create their own **Lifestyle & Wardrobe Pie** by entering the number of hours per week they wear garments in each of several categories (dressy, casual, etc.) and the number of items they have in each category. The two color-coded pie charts automatically adjust to show them how closely the wardrobe they have matches their current lifestyle. This is a good way to efficiently identify waste, since a busy mom of four probably doesn’t need much formalwear, while a busy corporate executive with no children likely doesn’t need a high percentage of casual clothing. An example of the results is shown below, and the tool can be found here: <https://si-myprivatelist.com/lifestyle/>

LIFESTYLE & WARDROBE PIE

Your closet should contain the same or similar percentages as your lifestyle pie.



● Work: Professional
● Work: Business Casual
● Social: Dressy
● Social: Smart Casual
● Social: Formal
● Sports: Gym
● Home: Relaxed Casual



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Lifestyle Pie: Fill in the number of hours you dress in each dress level of clothes.

Your average daily sleep time (Hours):

Sleep (hours per day):

How many hours do you spend each week:

Work: Professional

Work: Business Casual

Social: Dressy

Social: Smart Casual

Social: Formal

Sports: Gym

Home: Relaxed Casual

Wardrobe Pie: Fill in how many garments you have in each dress level of clothes.

How many garments do you have in these categories:

Work: Professional

Work: Business Casual

Social: Dressy

Social: Smart Casual

Social: Formal

Sports: Gym

Home: Relaxed Casual

Total Garments: 70

Action Plan

Once I've identified the contents of a client's closet, it's time for my proven action plan. First, I offer guidelines on how to sustainably reduce the number of clothing items that aren't being used, so they're able to make room in the closet for clothes they'll actually get use out of. Rather than being tossed into jam-packed landfills, unused clothing can be sustainably:

- Recycled:** Unwanted textiles can be turned in to a number of different recycling programs. Many well-known brands, including North Face and Levi's, offer their own textile recycling programs that help consumers keep their unwanted clothing out of overflowing landfills. One woman's "trash" is another woman's "treasure," so unwanted clothing can also be swapped with friends or family, and we can help our clients arrange a successful Swap Party.
- Repurposed:** The internet is full of fun and creative ideas on how to give clothing and accessories a new life. For example, T-shirts can be made into tote bags, sweaters can be transformed into pillows, and boots can be used as funky planters in the garden. If a

woman isn't crafty herself, or doesn't have the time to repurpose her items, we offer advice on where to send items to be made into something else.

- **Reduced:** "Thoughtful consumption" is the best solution for reducing someone's fashion footprint. That means not only committing to buying less, but also buying from sustainable brands and shopping at thrift, secondhand, vintage, and consignment stores whenever possible. Selling clothing online (through eBay, ThredUP, Poshmark, etc.) or donating clothing to local charitable organizations as a tax deduction are also good ways to recoup some of a clothing investment.
- **Remixed:** Few women take the time to explore all the outfit possibilities they already have, or they simply forget about everything that's already in their closet. By helping clients "edit" their closet and creating wardrobe clusters (more information on those below), we help them reduce needless consumption.

Next, I teach clients how to shop more efficiently and sustainably in the future, with the help of more handy tools:

What Type of Shopper Are You? Do you shop because you like to, or because you have to? Do you choose trendy fashions with fancy labels and high price tags, or do you choose budget items? Our thoughts related to shopping affect the choices we make, and this tool defines our shopping habits so that it's easy to make wise choices that save money and eliminate waste. <https://si-myprivatelist.com/what-sort-of-shopper-are-you/>

What's Your Style Personality? The clothes we feel truly at home in are those that express our innate style. Once you pinpoint what suits you, you'll discover more clothing items that work for you and you'll be one step closer to achieving a wardrobe that reduces waste. <https://si-myprivatelist.com/your-style-expression/>

Splurging is fun... but it's nice to know if you'll be getting your money's worth. The **Garment Cost Per Wearing** tool lets the client enter the price of a garment, its expected lifespan, how often they'll wear it, how much it will cost to clean, etc. It then calculates the total cost per wear. For example, if you want to purchase a nice winter coat that costs \$500, you think you'll own it for five years, you'll wear it every day during the three coldest months each of those years, and you'll get it dry cleaned two times per year, that breaks down to \$1.94 per use. <https://si-myprivatelist.com/garment-cost/>

At Style Innovators, I also use proven tools that assess important factors like a woman's body shape and coloring. Women learn which styles flatter them, so they can stop wasting money on clothes they'll never wear because they just don't look and feel right. I show them how a few carefully selected pieces can be worn multiple ways:



I also offer advice on wardrobe budgeting, and I've had great success with helping my clients develop **Wardrobe Clusters**. These are groupings of five to eleven pieces of coordinating new and existing garments and accessories that can be creatively mixed and matched to create multiple looks. A wardrobe cluster can make a closet seem more manageable, because clothing is arranged in small groupings, and any gaps in the overall wardrobe are much easier to identify.

The Style Innovators research project can sustainably reduce the size of women's wardrobes and encourage them to shop less in the future, thereby significantly lightening each woman's carbon footprint. My hope is that our clients will tell other women, and those women will tell more women, and so on... meaning that by the year 2030, the differences will be noticeable.

Changing one wardrobe at a time is just one small way that Style Innovators can make a big impact on the planet.

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