

## #280 - How to Find Your Personal Style

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast. I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 280 - how to find your personal style. A couple of weeks ago, I put up a very unofficial poll on Instagram asking what clothing-related problem was your biggest challenge, and finding your own personal style won out. This might feel like a problem no one else has, but just to kick this episode off, let me assure it is not. It is not a singular problem that you struggle with that most people already have figured out. In fact, I think that it's bigger than even I realized, so that's what we're going to talk about today - how to find your personal style.

Now there are a lot of avenues we could take here. You should have seen my white board trying to map it all out. There is a lot. And because there's a lot, we're going to cover a lot today. Next week we'll continue the conversation and talk about actually getting dressed and the daily decision of our clothes. But today, I'm going to share five quick encouragements on how to see your style, and then we're going to dive into a few practical things you can do to start small and figuring out what it is.

Now, first I am not an expert. I am just a person who has practiced and is still learning. But I am an expert at applying Lazy Genius principles to different situations, and there are so many at work here. I hope you'll find this structure helpful.

So first let's walk through the five perspectives I want you to consider when thinking about your personal style. Number one, your body is good. Your body is good. We're going to do a separate episode a little ways down the road about how to navigate a body that is changing because that happens to all of us, often many times, but almost certainly, every person listening struggles at some point with their bodies. I was talking to my friend Barrie the other day about this and she said, "You can't talk about clothes without talking about bodies." And she's right. Even when we talk about clothes with friends, we're also talking about bodies. We dress our bodies, sometimes according to certain rules we think we're supposed to follow, and to accentuate the parts of our bodies that are supposed to be highlighted and hiding the parts that we don't want anyone to see or we don't think people should see. How you dress is directly related to how you feel about your body, and I'm here to tell you that your body is good. No matter its shape, size, abilities... anything, your body is good. If you need a conversation around that, there is an episode - actually two episodes - for you. We'll put them in the show notes, but they are episodes 217 and 218, titled Let's Talk About Your Body, Parts One and Two. So we won't get into details on that here, but I just want to remind you at the top that your body is good. It is good as it is.

Number two, you don't have to be a fruit. Technically, I am an apple shaped human. I don't necessarily think of apples when I look at myself in the mirror, but according to style gurus over decades, I am an apple. Now, the best practices for an apple are wrap tops, v-necks, and a few other things that I decidedly do not like. I do not like the shapes of clothing I am supposed to wear for my body type. So the perspective here is you don't have to be a fruit. Namely, you do

not have to dress your body in the styles and shapes that are commonly suggested for you. You don't have to cinch in your waist. You don't have to elongate your legs. You don't have to hide your tummy. You don't have to do those things. You can if they make you feel good and feel like yourself, but you don't have to follow those rules. So many of those rules are made to create a body shape that is essentially the same. Everyone is trying to have some sort of hourglass body shape, and that is not the standard you have to follow. That is not an ideal shape. It was proposed as an ideal shape a long time ago, and sadly it has stuck as the thing we're all chasing. You don't have to chase it unless you feel the most like yourself when your body is dressed to exhibit a certain silhouette. But you're not a fruit, and you don't have to dress like one if you don't want to.

Number three, you don't have to follow trends unless you want to. There were so many questions and comments y'all shared with me on Instagram, and one of the biggest themes was trends. You don't want to buy that kind of pant or top or jacket. You like what you like. Guess what? You can keep doing that. You can keep liking what you like. Confidence in your own style transcends what you put on your body. Feel good, feel like yourself, when you get dressed, and if that means following trends or some of them or considering them and letting them go if they don't work, whatever it means, do what works for you. Part of the reason we are stuck in trends is because we're buying clothes at stores that respond to trends, and that can be challenge if you're looking for a straight legged pant but the only thing you can find at Target are wide legged pants or whatever. So notice that. Notice where you tend to look at clothes, and if it is a store that more or less turns over its styles often, it's responding to trends. That doesn't mean you have to. It just means you might need to find another resource for buying your clothes.

Number four, your personal style doesn't have to be stylish, at least stylish in the way you would likely define it. In other words, you don't have to care. Or you can care about comfort and simplicity. You can skip accessories. You can skip makeup. You can choose your own personal style, and it doesn't have to be "stylish."

And number five, and this is the golden nugget right here, dress the way you want to feel. How do you want to feel?

This spring I had a couple of conversations, including a style consultation with Erin Stoll from Style Thief Fashion on Instagram, and this was my biggest takeaway from my time with her. I realized that so many of my clothes fit me fine and some might say were even flattering (which I honestly don't care about very much and think is a slightly bogus rubric anyway), but I did not feel like myself in them. For the longest time, that was my line. "I just don't feel like myself." That's why years ago - and I'm pretty sure I shared this in The Lazy Genius Way - I stopped buying things that other people liked which means I don't really go shopping with people anymore. Because even if something fits and someone else thinks it looks good, even amazing, if I don't feel like myself in it, I will not wear it. So I stopped going shopping with people or at least relying on their opinions. I want to trust my own opinion based on what makes me feel like myself.

So the question to ask as you figure out the particulars of your personal style are how do I want to feel? And much like many things we talk about here, you might have a few words to describe how you want to feel. But what word do you think matters most? You can write down some words to describe how you might want to feel, then how you do want to feel, and then how do you want to feel the most often? Chances are how you want to feel will change sometimes depending on your season of life or even what you're doing that day. You're not locked into this word or this feeling. You are the boss. You are the decider. But rather than starting from what looks good on my body - and the answer to that is literally anything if you feel good in it - the place we want to start is how do you want to feel? We'll dive into some specifics with that in a minute, but these are the five perspectives I want you to really sit with while we talk about the particulars of Lazy Geniusing your personal style. One, your body is good. End of story. Two, you are not a fruit and don't have to dress like one if you don't want to. Flattering clothes are based on a particular standard, and you do not have to be beholden to that standard unless that standard also makes you feel like yourself. Third, you do not have to follow trends, again unless you want to and they make you feel like yourself. Fourth, your personal style doesn't have to be terribly stylish. And fifth, dress, not based on what looks good, but on how you want to feel.

Now we're going to get super practical.

### **We'll be right back...**

I'm going to give you some personal style homework this week. You can do all of the assignments, you can just do one, or you can skip them all but notice what you would like to do to help you in this process if this process is one you want to engage in.

We are going to use our five steps to Lazy Geniusing anything, but we're only going to do the first two today and apply them very specifically. Next week, we'll do the next three of the five steps. So today we're going to prioritize and essentialize. Next week, we'll organize, personalize, and systemize.

The first thing you could do to help you prioritize or name what matters about your personal style is to create a Pinterest board. I made one several years ago where I just pinned outfits that I thought were cool. And as I say that, that's my biggest word. Cool. I didn't know it at the time, but I think it's funny that that is the word I'm choosing right now as my decider. I pinned outfits that I thought were cool. Not pretty or classy or feminine or stylish. Cool. Again, I didn't know that I liked cool outfits or wanted to feel cool in what I wore, but if you were to look at my Pinterest board and I'll plan to post it in stories or something this week, but you would see a lot of black, a lot of leather jackets, tailored masculine details, torn jeans, choppy haircuts, aviator sunglasses... scrolling my board, there is an obvious vibe. There's an edge, often a masculine edge, and the simplest word to describe it is cool. Now, I am personally not very cool. Not in personality or hobbies or social choices. I'm a big reader who loves game nights and apple pie and not going out. I have gone out for drinks twice in the entirety of my life, and the last one was about the chilliest version of that one could ever have. So use me as an example to demonstrate that you don't have to feel weird about your word. Your word is for you, it's not for anyone else.

If you want to feel pretty, it doesn't mean you need to be Regina George yourself and be like "oh, so you think you're really pretty." I mean, I'd personally love for you to feel really pretty. I want that for everyone, or at least for everyone to feel like the word they choose, whatever it is, but the point is you're not being cocky or something by saying you want to consistently feel beautiful or pretty or cool or stand out or something. These are not true things. Don't let those faulty perspectives get in your way.

Back to the Pinterest board. Now, what's funny as I look at my board now, there are outfits that I like fine, but the ones that are just fine don't have a cool element. The dress is pretty but because the person in the photo is wearing classic pumps with the dress instead of combat boots or sneakers, I don't love it as much. There's one photo where it's not really the outfit I like because the outfit is a fairly feminine dress which I don't do. It's the woman. She's got a rad haircut and cool sunglasses and is barely smiling. I want to feel like she looks like she feels. So a Pinterest board is a great place to gather what you're drawn to and then look at it. Scroll it quickly. What are you noticing? What patterns do you see? What outfits or photos jump out? What are the textures or colors or details that keep showing up? What do they make you feel? I think it's such a low risk place to start and pays off pretty well.

The second thing you could do after your Pinterest board or just start here is to make that list of words of how you might want to feel. Then hopefully you can narrow down the one that you'd like to feel the most. Now I remember someone asking if you could change your word every day. Of course you can. You are the boss of you. There are no style police going to come after you. Unless it's the early aughts and Clinton and Stacy are chasing you down at a Bloomingdale's because they don't like your pants.

Side note, I loved that show, but I think it messed us up. It was rare that someone post-makeover looked like anything other than a person properly dressed based on their fruit-shaped body with some sophistication added in. It was all about things that were flattering. And while it was so fun, maybe some of these people who didn't care about style genuinely didn't have to change that. They could've kept wearing no makeup and hair a ponytail and soft pants and been fine. We don't all have to be dressed to the nines in order to feel like ourselves. There is a wide spectrum, and we need to let ourselves and others exist on it. It's okay if the mom at the playdate has on cute jeans and a top and you're in a sweatsuit. You're not a hot mess, and she's not pretending or trying to be better than you.

Okay, that was an unexpected soap box, but it is so important that as we choose words about how we want to feel that we are relentlessly, desperately kind to ourselves in what we choose and relentlessly, desperately kind to others in what they choose.

So back to the style words. Maybe you could have a little sticky note on your closet door or something with your main words of how you want to feel on most days and pick one each day. How do I want to feel *today*?

Your style words will directly impact the types of clothes you buy which, over time, will be enormously helpful because you're curating a closet that fits you and how you want to feel.

Let's see how many times I can talk about feeling cool, but this is another example. We need to give ourselves permission to define our word or words the way we want to. For example, my word of cool. Right now I'm wearing one of my five pairs of Oxford shoes because I have decided that Oxford shoes are incredibly cool, and I'm obsessed with them. By my definition, they are cool. And I own zero heels. Zero. Why? Because to me and for me, heels are not cool. Some people might say that heels are very cool, but I get to decide what cool means to me, and heels do not fit that definition. So I literally do not own any. Your word or words will impact the clothes you buy. They totally will, especially as you let them sit with you and get comfy over time.

So, start to write down words, maybe inspired by your Pinterest board, that describe how you want to feel. Classy, pretty, confident, at ease, whatever comes to mind. Try and create a short list of feeling words because honestly that's going to impact your style more than anything else.

I'm guessing there are a lot of definitions of personal style out there, but mine is clothes that make me feel effortlessly like myself. You can do that with super casual outfits, super dressy ones, and everything in between. In my experience, specific styled outfits or formulas or capsule wardrobes or trends are not going to be your personal saving grace, especially if you don't know how you want to feel. You have to name what matters to you in how you feel about yourself in your clothes. It's not really about the clothes themselves, not at first anyway.

Now we're going to finish up by essentializing. We're going to get rid of what's in the way and make sure you have what you need. So the first thing I want you to do is name your season of life. What are you getting dressed for? This is a common question in a lot of style blog posts and books and stuff for good reason. You don't need a closet full of office clothes if you are home with little kids. Your clothes need to reflect how you spend your time. So how do you spend your time? Now does that mean that if you're home with little kids that you should only have sweatpants and soft things? Zero percent. In fact, I already alluded to this. I think a lot of women in particular who love to express themselves with clothes and put a little more thought into outfits feel badly doing it because the badge of honor of being a stay-at-home-mom is that you're kind of always a mess. Yoga pants are the uniform. Now, yoga pants can totally be your uniform, and you can choose it with confidence. But if another mom chooses a different uniform that's maybe dressier or something different than you choose, let them. Celebrate them. Let's cheer each other on in whatever makes us feel like ourselves.

So as you name your season of life and how you spend most of your days, there might be things that you know right away you can remove from your closet. There are things that don't your body or your life right now, and it might be a good idea to remove them from your closet. If you are nervous that that means you are getting rid of literally everything in your closet, that's okay. Don't throw it all out or give it away right away. Just remove the obvious from your closet

and drawers or wherever you keep your clothes. Remove the things that don't make you effortlessly feel like yourself or are just not suited for this season of life.

Now I want to name that this particular process can be overwhelming and guilt-inducing. It's overwhelming because you're like "the whole closet?!" No, you don't have to do everything. I talk about this in *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* in the context of the kitchen obviously, but do what I call a first pass. Just grab the obvious things that do not belong in your closet right now. You don't have to throw them out. Just remove things from your closet that don't make sense right now with your body and your season of life. Lovingly dress the body you have now in the season you are now in.

Now, last piece of homework, and this is really fun and positive. You're going to play dress-up. I want you to find one outfit, maybe even two or three, that are made of pieces that you already own that you make feel like yourself. Chances are you have something in your closet that you really enjoy wearing. Put on that outfit, take a photo if you want, find another two or three, take photos, and then I want you to look at those photos and or just look at yourself in the mirror and name what you like about the outfit. How does it make you feel? What are some of the things you love about the outfit? What's the shape? How do the pieces work together? Be specific.

Chances are you can replicate those outfits and their shapes and details and feelings, but we'll get to that next week.

So a big ol' recap of this big ol' episode. First, remember the five perspectives that are super helpful when thinking about your personal style which we define as clothes that effortlessly make you feel like yourself. One, your body is good. Two, you are not a fruit. Three, you don't have to follow trends but follow yourself instead. Fourth, your personal style doesn't have to be particularly stylish. And five, dress the way you want to feel.

Then this week, make a Pinterest board. Pin like crazy and remove later as you find what you like. Make a list of style words that describe how you want to feel and see if you can identify any patterns or colors or fabrics or details that support those words so you can prioritize shopping for the right kinds of clothes in the future. Then essentialize by dressing the body you have now in the season of life you're in. One of the fun ways to start identifying how to do that is to play dress-up with 1-3 or however many outfits and specifically name how they make you feel, what you love about them, and details you might want to replicate in any future clothing purchases or discoveries.

Next week, we'll talk about getting dressed, and it's going to be a lot of fun.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it is Mallory Fiord. Mallory sent me this on Instagram. "We have a local organization that will pick up donated clothes and household items from your home but they are always booked out several weeks. Whenever I'm in "clean out" mode, I'm never able to get an immediate appointment and inevitably forget to actually donate the items I've gathered. For reasons unbeknownst to me, I continuously put it off

and have compiled an embarrassing amount of stuff that I do not need to have in my house. I just went on their website and realized they accept appointments up to six months out. I scheduled an appointment for the last Friday of every other month for the next six months and entered each date on my calendar. I hope this will help me to unload the items taking over my spare bedroom and also give me a deadline to go through the kids clothes each season and give away items we have outgrown.” This is such a great message and idea, Mallory, and I want all of us to quickly break down all the Lazy Genius principles at work here. First, ask the magic question. What I can do now to make something easier later? It sounds like Mallory was going on the website to try and make an appointment and saw that she could schedule ahead of time. But her initial attempt to schedule was something that would help her in the future. Second, batch it. She made all the appointments at once instead of when she needed them. Third, Decide Once. She decided one time that the last Friday of every other month would be her deadline cleanout day. Four, live in the season. She has kids who are growing out of clothes, and rather than get frustrated and hamstrung by that, she is living in the season and - fifth principle alert building the right routines. She wants to have a home full of things that matter, and now she is creating a routine that will regularly help her clean out the things she and her family no longer need. Sixth, put everything in its place. The spare stuff is in a spare bedroom which is a great thing to have a singular place, but always remember as Mallory has that stuff you no longer need should never have a final resting place in your actual house. It’s hard because you want to put everything in its place and give those donated things a home so they’re not everywhere. But remember that that can never be their final home, and it takes another step or two to get those things out of the house. That’s why I love the tidying tip of having one path out. I’ve talked about that for years. Mallory is having one organization get everything. She’s not saving this pile for this person and gonna try to sell this pile and take this pile to the thrift store. One path out. It’s usually so much easier that way. And I think I’m seeing a lot of kindness in here too. Mallory is adjusting her approach little by little to find a solution that works and is being kind to herself about it. So that’s eight lazy genius principles in this one message, and I love it so much. Thanks for writing in, Mallory, and congratulations on being our Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, y’all, that’s it for today! Thank you so much for listening, and I hope you enjoy moving toward a better sense and comfort with your personal style. Remember that next week is essentially part two where we’ll talk about the practical side of getting dressed. Also we’ll have a lot of fun stuff on Instagram this week, including the 30 Days of Closet Permission. If you’d like little tidbits of encouragement as you dress yourself and move into the world as your truest self, follow me @thelazygenius, and I hope you get that encouragement. Thanks for listening, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don’t. I’m Kendra, and I’ll see you next week!