



Change Your Clothes, Change Your Life: Because You Can't Go Naked

By George Brescia

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Open the door to harmonious, powerful, and positive dressing with a guide that's like *The Secret*—for your wardrobe. In this groundbreaking how-to book, style expert George Brescia shows you how to transform yourself from the inside out.

More than a style guide, this revolutionary book by a seasoned stylist teaches a method of conscious dressing that begins with a powerful internal change. Instead of just grabbing for whatever's on hand, you'll learn to set your goals for the day, determining how you want to be perceived, and then dress in a way that helps manifest those intentions. *Change Your Clothes, Change Your Life* reveals the true power your clothing has to affect your life, showing how this second skin impacts your job prospects, your romantic life, your income, and even your deepest sense of self. Translating his styling methods into a philosophy anyone can apply on her own, Brescia also delivers tips and tricks of the trade to help convert even the most hapless dresser into a happy and educated shopper. Because the goal is to have you not only looking great, but feeling more confident, too. From major closet overhauls to a whole new philosophy on color, this is a comprehensive manual for anyone who's ever looked at her closet in despair.

Accessible, direct, honest, and thought-provoking, *Change Your Clothes, Change Your Life* takes an eye-opening look at the intersection between our clothing and our emotions, hopes, and dreams, showing us how improving our external appearance can have life-changing effects on how we're perceived by others—and more importantly, on how we perceive ourselves.

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Change Your Clothes, Change Your Life: Because You Can't Go Naked By George Brescia Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #261452 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-08-19
- Released on: 2014-08-19
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

“This easy-to-read, entertaining guide will appeal to women looking to make a real change to their wardrobe.” (Publishers Weekly)

About the Author

George Brescia has spent the last twenty-five years working with top fashion and beauty leaders, including Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan, Tommy Hilfiger, and the fashion directors at Bloomingdale's, Bergdorf Goodman, and Lord & Taylor. As the man behind George B Style, he's also a top-tier NYC-based stylist and image consultant with clients ranging from A-list celebrities to everyday men and women looking to improve their appearance and gain confidence. He has also appeared as a resident fashion expert on NBC's *Today* show, CBS, Fox 5, and NY 1 as the official red carpet fashion critic for the Tony Awards. In addition to penning a regular column for Resident and Venue magazines, George has also been featured on radio segments such as Garrett Miller's nationally broadcast Blog Talk radio show and NPR's Marketplace. In addition, George can currently be seen on Stage 17.TV in his own web series, Dress Up with George B Style, a show about George styling Broadway stars for all their glamorous events.

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Change Your Clothes, Change Your Life

chapter 1

the secret language of clothing

learning to read your wardrobe

Style is a simple way of saying complicated things.

—Jean Cocteau

Whether your starting point is a full-blown style crisis or just a sense that your current wardrobe is in need of improvement, if you've picked up this book, you're looking for change. Maybe clothing has been a lifelong struggle and you've finally decided to tackle the issue head-on. Maybe you're contemplating a career or personal transition that has you anxious to put your best foot forward, but unsure of how to do it. Or maybe you've always wondered what it would be like to have a personal stylist of your very own.

Whatever your reasons, I'm glad you are here. Welcome to the world of George B Style!

For me, clothing is nothing but pure fun, but I've seen firsthand how very much my clients struggle with style, how fraught and emotional and personal and deep this subject can be. Yet so often, style is treated as though it's a problem with a simple solution: a formulaic makeover with a side of increased consumption.

The idea that you can simply buy your way to a better closet is highly flawed. While I do believe there are certain core elements every woman needs in a fully functioning wardrobe, it is also my belief that most style problems start on the inside. They start with long-held beliefs about our limitations, whether physical or mental. They start with fear—whether it's a fear of being seen, a fear of being ignored, or a fear of change, aging, progress, and responsibility. They start with confusion about their identities and the various roles they play in their lives.

Why is clothing so emotional, and for many of us, so fraught? Well, first off, clothing is what literally keeps us from going naked. It is a second skin, and its proximity to our actual skin cannot help but bring up a wealth of emotions surrounding body image, self-worth, confidence, and identity. In a very real way, it hides our most vulnerable selves.

It is the bridge between our private, interior worlds and the public, external world through which we travel.

It is a shape-shifting cloak with a symbolic power that works in two ways: deeply affecting our sense of self while simultaneously informing the perceptions of strangers, acquaintances, and loved ones alike. Clothing, more than any of our possessions, has the power to define our identity.

Your Style Is Speaking for You

Here is the central truth of this book: Our clothes speak for us before we do.

Countless studies have proven the sway that first impressions have over our perceptions of the people we come into contact with every day—and over their perceptions of us. Within ten seconds of a first meeting, an impression is formed, and an opinion begins to coalesce.

Think about it: In your daily life, how often do you make assumptions about the people you come across? You spot a man in his mid-forties in the checkout line at your neighborhood grocery store. I can guarantee you that in a matter of seconds, you have taken in enough about his clothing, hair, and general appearance to process guesses as to what he does for a living, how much money he makes, how much you might or might not have in common, and maybe even his politics. These guesses go way beyond the difference between a construction worker in paint-spattered work boots and a banker in a manicured Brooks Brothers suit—our eyes are extremely discerning, quickly taking in very subtle details. If he's wearing jeans, it doesn't take a professional stylist to make a snap judgment as to what those jeans mean. You do it all the time, whether you're conscious of it or not. Are they beat-up dungarees that have seen their fair share of drywall, or carefully distressed artisan denim with a price tag north of \$150? What does the style of the jean, the hair, the shirt, and the shoe say? "Architect" or "entertainment lawyer"? Serious and ambitious, or laid-back and fun-loving? Possible future husband or commitment-phobe with a Peter Pan complex? Your brain is constantly collecting visual clues and arranging them into patterns—patterns that turn into assumptions.

And here's the rub: The same thing is happening to you, every time you step outside your home. The outfit you casually threw on in an early morning haze? It's being assessed by strangers and acquaintances alike as a clue to your character, your identity, and your overall appeal.

That's why I believe that everything we put on our bodies is a "statement piece," whether we're talking about the ten-year-old sweats and scary flip-flops you threw on for a grocery store run or the drab office uniform you haven't tweaked since *Designing Women* was still on the air.

You're probably familiar with the concept of the statement piece. The term sprouts up all over the place in

fashion magazines and on makeover shows—it's stylist code for an eye-catching, colorful garment or accessory that defines your entire look in one fell swoop. But if you think about clothing through the lens of that ten-second rule, you'll come to realize that there is no such thing as a non-statement piece.

Everything we wear makes some kind of a statement, whether it's a dull army-green puffy coat paired with faded black khakis or a great-fitting pair of jeans flanked by a crisp white tee and a classic navy blazer.

Whether we like it or not, we are being seen. Our statement is being deciphered. And the reach of that statement goes far, far beyond the fleeting impression of a stranger on the checkout line.

Learning to “Read” Your Own Statement

Here's the good news: Your clothing may be speaking volumes, but what it doesn't have is a mind of its own. That is to say, your outfit didn't simply slip off of its hanger and fling itself onto your body—somebody selected it for you, and that somebody (YOU!) can choose to make different decisions, more educated decisions, more conscious decisions. Better decisions. You have the power to change your statement, and it's a change whose effects will ricochet throughout your entire life.

But before you can tweak the statement your clothing is making, you're going to need to learn to read it. Learn to decipher the statements your clothing is making and you will know exactly how to dress.

It starts with a very simple shift: paying attention. If there's one activity you are going to hear me endorse again and again, it is being more attentive—for it is my sincere belief that the difference between a fantastic outfit and a not-so-great one is largely a matter of consciousness. Ask any guru, philosopher, or psychologist and they'll tell you that real change begins with mindfulness—which is just a fancy word for paying attention and being present to your life.

Where do I get off making it sound as though if you simply get in touch with your third eye, you'll instantly morph into a modern-day version of Jackie Onassis? Because I know that every woman has the ability to piece together a great outfit, a skill she tends to demonstrate when the stakes are high or when the event requires it. Think of the last time you went on a job interview or attended a wedding. Whether you shopped for the occasion or simply pulled that go-to power outfit out of your closet, I'm quite certain you turned up in something that showcased the best of your style, figure, and personality.

Your proven ability to turn up the heat, using nothing more than a little forethought and some extra effort, proves my point: When we pay attention to what we are wearing, to the statement we are making, our outfits wind up telling a different story. A much, much better story.

On some level, the greatest gift I give my clients is my undivided attention. When they work with me, they gain an extra set of eyes that objectively evaluates the statements their outfits are making, urging them not to settle for the ill-fitting, the good-enough, or the timid. If you cultivate your awareness, you will learn to act as this objective witness for yourself—and you will soon hold the key to controlling the story that your clothing tells about you.

Cultivating that awareness begins with a very simple question.

“What Does It Say?”

This is my golden question, the question I want you to ask of every single outfit you put on your body. It's such a simple question, really, but it's one I find to be incredibly powerful. Instead of just throwing outfits together and hoping for the best, you're going to be interrogating your clothing in order to come to a deeper understanding of the statements it is making.

Though it requires a major shift in perception and will eventually entail an entirely new approach to your wardrobe, this process of interrogation will come far more easily than you may imagine.

Think about the speed with which you made those snap judgments about that handsome architect in the grocery store line—one quick look at the cut of his jeans told you so much. Now you will be turning that razor-sharp perceptiveness around and applying it to yourself. If it only takes you ten seconds to “read” the signals put out by strangers you cross on the street, it shouldn't take you much longer to submit your own reflection to the very same scan. When you are the stranger in the grocery store line, what are other people seeing?

Does your clothing communicate success, happiness, hopefulness, and confidence, or does it betray insecurity, bashfulness, confusion, and fear? Is it true to the life stage you inhabit or hope to inhabit, or does it speak to a long-gone self of decades past?

If you're looking down at the outfit you have on right now and drawing a blank as to what it communicates, don't worry. Throughout this book, I am going to be teaching you how to evaluate the message of your clothing based on its colors, its overall harmony, and its fit and form. All I am going to ask of you is that every morning as you are getting dressed you begin to pose the golden question—“What does this say?” Eventually, the answers will emerge. And when they do, nothing will stand in your way . . .

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Esther Price:

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Jose Weitzman:

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