

Throw them... Out of the Closet

Spring is a fitting time to sort through your clothes

Clothes can hang around for years, if not decades. Why can't clothes come with expiration dates? If clothes were food, you would know when to toss them. Silks would become corduroys, and solids would change to plaids.

Trendy clothes would max out at six months. The label would say, "Best used by Sept. 22, 2009." Classic designs would be less perishable: "Better if used by May 15, 2010."

And if your significant other questioned why you are hauling out a garbage bag of clothing, you'd say, "Look – they all say use before June 23, 2010." No guilt involved. It is simply a matter of an expiration date.

But since a guiltless remedy hasn't been created, it's up to you to come out of the closet and make daily dressing a pleasure again. Here's how:



1 ESTABLISH AN IDENTITY:

Your image speaks volumes without saying a word. Decide today to wear only clothes that make you look and feel fabulous.

2 LIFESTYLE ASSESSMENT:

Add up your work/volunteer time, casual/sports time and special-occasion time. Decide the clothing you need for each. As a rule, work/volunteer is usually 65 percent of clothing, casual/sports is about 25 percent and special occasions account for 10 percent.

3 PHYSICAL INVENTORY:

It's time to take everything out of your closet and sort your clothing into four piles:

- **What was I thinking pile:** Clothes you give away or sell at a consignment store.
- **Mend your ways pile:** Clothes with broken zip

pers and missing buttons and that need tailoring.

- **A little weigh to go pile:** Clothes that are too big (for goodness' sake, give these away) or a bit too snug, but you love them.
- **Keepers pile:** The clothes you wear day in and day out – most likely about 20 percent of the items in your closet.

This is a painful step, but you have to remove all of the pieces you don't feel right in. They are taking up valuable closet space and causing you more aggravation than good. You are better off without them. Donating them to a charity will ease the guilt, plus allow someone else to enjoy them.

4 TAKE CONTROL:

Now is the time to act.

- Give away the giveaway pile. If you haven't worn the clothing in a year, there's a slim chance you will.

- Go to a tailor or get your sewing basket out and start mending.

- Put the weigh-to-go clothes in a box and label it by size – but only if you honestly think you will resume wearing that size. If not, get rid of the guilt.

- **Try everything on in front of a full-length mirror. Ask yourself:** Do I feel good in this? Do I really want this? Is it figure-flattering? If you answer yes to all questions, it's a keeper.

- Separate all suit items from each other. Hang each jacket, skirt and pant on a separate hanger. Suits may come married, but they do have affairs, so separate them to be able to mix and match.

- Put all like items together. Hang slacks, skirts, jackets, blouses and so on together. Then further separate by color.

5 READY, SET, GO:

Put the keepers back in the closet. Next, go through your scarves, handbags, shoes and jewelry to see what goes with your new look and what doesn't. Whether it's shoes that kill your feet, handbags that you need a flashlight to find anything in or jewelry that weighs you down, if it's not a right fit, it needs to be recycled to allow someone else to enjoy. While the closet overhaul may seem like a huge project, it will take only two or three hours. Think how wonderful it will be to not be overwhelmed every time you open the closet door – and to be able to go shopping in your own closet without spending a dime. ■



Susie Galvez is an international image consultant, speaker, author, beauty industry expert and radio co-host for "Girlfriend We Gotta Talk!" For more, visit www.susiegalvez.com or www.girlfriendwegottatalk.com