

Get clothes you can wear over and over

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A lack of tension - as in, tension lines - is imperative to a good fit. Notice how this dress fits across the chest and middle without any pulling at the buttons. Belted shirt dress, Reitmans, \$56.

We all have it sitting in our drawer or closet. That item. That regret. That "what was I thinking?"

You might as well have taken money out of your wallet and stuffed it into a pile at the bottom your wardrobe, or more appropriately perhaps, simply thrown it in the garbage.

Or, better yet, you could have bought something that actually fit you.

Reitmans, the specialty women's retailer, estimates that more than one-third of women wear clothes that don't fit, despite statistics that 92% of women are concerned about finding clothes that fit their shape.

If you're fit up with these regrets, there is help.

Erin Nadler, image consultant and owner of Better Styled in Toronto, knows these concerns well.

"Finding the right fit is a big challenge, because there are so many out there and women so often get overwhelmed by all the choices," she notes. "It doesn't help when your favourite store changes the cut of the clothing from one season to the next. This can make even the most seasoned shopper frustrated."

Often women will defend a poor purchase with one of three "but" arguments: "But I got a great deal," "But it's comfortable!" or "But it will be perfect when I lose weight."

Ladies, it's time to "but" out.

As Nadler explains, "Just because it's on sale doesn't make it a good deal. For me, a good deal equals a great fitting item, plus a must-have piece for the season."

And when it comes to comfort, it must be fit for a queen.

Brigitte Martin is the merchandise manager of Reitmans. She notes, "Often what governs (women's) choice is comfort, and they don't realize that sizing down will still be comfortable."

"If garments fit well, they <i>will</i> be comfortable."

And you can't dress the body you don't have - but you can help create it with the right clothes.

Nadler agrees. "The amazing thing is that a properly fitted garment can not only make you look 10 pounds thinner, but also an inexpensive pair of pants that fit perfectly can look twice as expensive as a pair that does not."

Another problem Martin finds is that women can get in a rut. "They continue to buy the same brand of pants, for example, year after year, and just keep changing the size -- they don't consider that there are other options out there that will work better for them."

You will never know what else can work on you, unless you try things on.

"It is always amazing to me how women will see something on a hanger and already make up their minds about it. Try it on," says Nadler. "Sometimes the most flattering shapes have no hanger appeal. You don't know until you try."

Knowing your body type, accepting that your body is the one you have to dress right now and realizing that there are different sizes among manufacturers are the three main components. Bring a trusted friend shopping with you, and always, always try on clothes - in different sizes. And don't let that store mirror fool you - if it's slanted back, know that it's automatically taking a few pounds off and not reflecting you accurately.

Remember, you are not defined by the size on the tag, but you are remembered for how you look.

Top Reitmans tips to find the right fit:

1. Pants with "smile lines" or "whiskers." If the front of the pants isn't flattering, something isn't right with the rise of the pant. Try a different rise, or a different size.
2. Muffin top. If there's a fleshy perimeter at the top of your pants, they're too small, or the wrong shape for your body.
3. No room to move. There should be no tension lines in the fabric; garments shouldn't pull across the chest or hips or stomach.
4. Getting some height. Petite women can lengthen their frame by showing some skin with open shirts, scoop necks and v-necks.
5. Accentuate the assets. For plus-size figures, look for fabrics that drape and fall away from the body - they gently follow curves, allow ease of movement and won't cling in all the wrong places.

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