

Dressing as if It Matters

While some Americans have trickled back to the office, a [large percent](#) are staying home, and with this new work-from-home reality, it seems we have forgotten how to get dressed in the morning. Without any expectation to dress up, it's easier to not put on proper clothing, leaving us to wander through our spaces looking disheveled and vacant.

It seems we don't know how to be home any longer. Specifically, we don't know how to be home *on purpose*. We have all donned sweatpants on the bottom half of our bodies, with the occasional crisp shirt only for the necessary work video call. Obviously comfort is king, but the lordship of comfort has become so unseemly, sloppy, and stretched out. When did our homes become places where we don't care?

What we wear—how we present ourselves—matters, a lesson I learned at a young age. When I was four years old, I couldn't wait to go to school. I believed that all things fun and mysterious and exciting happened at school, and I had my older brother coming home with books and projects and stories to prove it. But what I really wanted was to wear school clothes.

I adored the little skirts with tights, sweaters with animals on them, and dresses that my mom sewed. I wanted a high ponytail atop my head and a ribbon around it to match whatever color my clothes were that day. I had school clothes and play clothes and church clothes. Clothes told the story of what I was doing.

Changing into play clothes was always the first task to be completed when returning home from school. I had no idea what my mom did during our absence since I couldn't imagine her doing anything other than missing us, but one thing stood as a signal of her accomplishments: laying out our clothes for our return from school. Neatly folded and piled on each bed, our

play clothes were at the ready.

Clothes always interested me, and my life as a designer (interior and not fashion) draws inspiration from attire that can be seen everywhere and on everyone. I embrace dressing on purpose. This can fit a variety of styles—crisp and starched with an ensemble of vertical lines, color that pops out at you as if it wants to say something important, fluid and soft and gentle and draped, or studded and bold. But whatever the style, it is chosen; it is selected to be important and intentional. I am no stranger to the comfort uniform, but since when does comfort have to mean unkempt?

Each day, I dress casually when working in my home office. I will don a blazer for my conference call, shove my feet into boots for the trip to the store, put on sneakers at the gym, and finish up with a robe and slippers as night falls around me. I am ready whether the doorbell rings with an unexpected visitor or there's a quick change of plans to meet a friend for lunch. My day is not only decided and formed but fluid and amenable to the exquisite spontaneity of life.

The matter of dress can be thought of as a costume meant to convey a message to ourselves as well as others. Just as a repairman carefully selects the correct tool for the job—with the expectation that the orderliness of his tools showcases that he knows what he is doing—we should put the same care into our selections to cover our bodies as we begin our days. The right outfit shows ourselves and others that we know what we are doing.

In this way, dressing on purpose starts our days with a decision fulfilled—a good decision fulfilled. Putting on the right clothing puts us in the [right mentality](#) for the day. It allows us to solve problems, think big thoughts, debate ideas, fulfill responsibilities, and love those around us. Certainly, dressing at home has become optional, but this seems to be a disrespect of not only ourselves but also those around us.

Meanwhile, getting dressed in something more than flannel-patterned pants and a somewhat stale T-shirt signals that we are part of life and living it on purpose.

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