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Fashion Fix

Lack wardrobe confidence?

Here's help

BY DEVON CADWELL BAZATA

PAULA Molino, owner of the full-service fashion consulting business Fashion Fix, says she is “a firm believer in making a good first impression.” She says, “My mother once told me and I live by it, ‘Never be embarrassed to be overdressed, just underdressed.’ I feel that no matter where you go, people admire you if you are more dressed than not. It’s a much more confident feeling even if you are slightly overdressed.”

Whether she is conducting a one-on-one Fashion Fix wardrobe analysis or fashion consultation, or is holding a seminar and speaking in front of a large group, she bestows upon her clients the ability to garner confidence in their fashion choices. Her work reflects the classic and timeless sense of style she says she has admired in such famous individuals as Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn and Jackie Kennedy.

Ms. Molino’s extensive experience in Manhattan and Philadelphia’s fashion industry has uniquely positioned her to be an authority figure in her field. Drawing on more than 20 years of work in the industry, Ms. Molino says she launched Fashion Fix as a way to share her knowledge with area residents interested in streamlining and targeting their wardrobes to fit and flatter their body shape and lifestyle.

Her work in fashion began after earning a degree in apparel design. A Maryland native, Ms. Molino moved to Philadelphia to work as a children’s wear designer for a company called Nanette’s. She eventually went to Macy’s and worked her way up the corporate ladder to the senior executive level as a buyer in Manhattan’s product development office. There she was the product manager responsible for the private label women’s accessories lines including Charter Club and Jennifer Moore. She traveled the world for the company, and says she looks back at her experience and feels she owes a lot to Macy’s because “it was a great opportunity.” She elaborates by saying, “I loved product development because it was the best of both worlds, it gave me the opportunity to do the design part of product development as well as the buying part.”

After Macy’s she worked in buying and product development for QVC, and

then as design director for several women’s accessories manufacturers and served as a professor of fashion design at Philadelphia University.

In creating Fashion Fix, Ms. Molino says she was motivated by both the earnest desire to teach people about the relationship between body shape and style. Ms. Molino’s Fashion Fix services often begin with a wardrobe analysis, which typically lasts for three hours, and an individual style profile of the client. In the wardrobe analysis she works to ‘weed out’ unflattering or outdated styles and colors, and performs a comprehensive evaluation of what’s to fill in gaps in the wardrobe. She develops a concise shopping list that outlines specific garments her client should have to round out their clothing selection. “The ultimate objective,” she says, “is to save the client time and money. It saves them time because they know what to wear when they open up their closet: They open the door and can see everything that’s there and spend less time getting dressed in the morning. It saves them money because they can go into the store with a shopping list, and focus on what they need to buy.”

She says of shopping for clothes, “You have to shop around and find a brand that works for you. It might take a while to find the right one because every brand has sizing that is different — every manufacturer has its own specifications.” She offers as an example the difference between three brands, “A size 8 in Liz Claiborne is not an 8 in Ann Taylor, or an 8 in Target’s “Exhilaration” private label. You just have to shop around until you find the right one and then when you do you have to stick with it.” She says she tells clients that if they find a pair of pants that fit and that they love, to buy them in more than one color, or buy two pairs in black. “If you find a pair of shoes that fit,” she says, “buy them in black, brown and navy.”

“Every item in the wardrobe should match three things,” she states, so as she is organizing, weeding out and making a list of what updated items are needed, she says she is discussing flattering styles and colors with her client and how different items, including jewelry and shoes, can be mixed and matched.

“If you educate people on what looks good on them, the styles and the colors,” she says, “it eliminates the crisis shopping that sometimes happens and often results in clothing that is seldom worn.”



Photo by Mark Czajkowski

Fashion Fix services by Paula Molino, above, often begin with a wardrobe analysis. In the wardrobe analysis, Ms. Molino works to ‘weed out’ unflattering or outdated styles and colors, and performs a comprehensive evaluation of what’s to fill in gaps in the wardrobe.

In addition to the wardrobe analysis, Ms. Molino works with new clients to create a profile, or in-depth study of their lifestyle, favorite outfits and how they feel when they are wearing them and if there is a style of dress (whether it be a celebrity or co-worker) her client admires. “I have to know the psychology behind the likes and dislikes to understand what kind of things they should have in their wardrobe,” she explains.

Ms. Molino also offers fashion consultations that can be geared to target specific goals of a client. With her devotion to the power that fashion and style hold for instilling a sense of confidence in the wearer evidenced in the sincere and al-

most urgent tone of her voice she says, “Suppose a client wants to look taller, there are secrets I can share that help to create the illusion of height.” Specifics include wearing anything vertically striped such as pin striped suits or striped blouses, clothing with seam details that are vertical, vertical zippers, buttons, a strand of pearls, a longer rectangular or oblong scarf worn around the neck and left to hang and monotone dressing are suggestions she makes. Monotone dressing, she explains, is wearing a top and bottom that are either both the same color, such as black.

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Photo by Mark Czajkowski

Fashion consultant Paula Molino, left, talks with client Donna Sandfort about wardrobe choices.

When it comes to black, the color synonymous with the Manhattan mode of dress, she says, "black can be fashionable but it can also be boring." Her recommendation is to "Splash it up with color: Use an accessory (scarf, belt, a fun piece of jewelry) or a blouse or sweater in vibrant colors like red, periwinkle, royal, or purple — they all look terrific with black." "For a softer look," she says, "try pure pastels (for the people who can wear them as not everyone can) such as lilac, pink, powder blue." And for a more classic look, she suggests pairing black with camel, ivory or white.

"Never," she cautions, "wear navy with black — it looks like you got dressed in the dark and looks like a mistake." She says red shoes, red boots or a red handbag can be fun with a black ensemble, and offers as another option a scarf tied around the neck or chunky necklace.

Ms. Molino says that while "silver accessories look best with black, gold jewelry looks best with warm colors like red, browns, ivories and other natural warm colors." When analyzing a client's wardrobe she says she does make references to color and tends to classify clients as an "Autumn" which would mean they can wear the warm colors of pumpkin and rust well, or a "Winter" which are cooler-toned colors. In terms of general advice, Ms. Molino says every wardrobe needs a "little black dress" or a black dress that can be dressed up or dressed down, a good pair of black dress pants, and a well-fitting pair of jeans, khaki pants and a pair of in-style shoes. She says "Jeans in style right now include a lower cut waist (but not obscenely low) with a little bit of stretch added to the denim and a boot cut (a slight flare to the leg, but not the bell bottoms of the 1970s).

Ms. Molino will conduct two seminars in March: "Dress to Impress," "What Clothing is Right for Your Body Shape?"

and "What Swimsuit is Right for You?" In "Dress to Impress," she will discuss clothing appropriate for the office, both regular business and business casual. "Business casual is a nice pair of pressed khaki's and a pair of loafers with a nice blouse, sweater or twin set, not a pair of jeans and a T-shirt," she says. She will also talk about the different types of fabrics and accessories that are well-suited to working wardrobes. In her seminars "What Clothing is Right for Your Body Shape" and "What Swimsuit is Right for You?" she will talk with her audience about the six body shapes: rectangle, oval, triangle, inverted triangle, hourglass and diamond, and how they relate to style, fabrics and accessories. For the swimsuit seminar, she will bring along a couple of dozen swimsuits to illustrate what styles work for each shape.

For more information, including a wardrobe challenge, testimonials from clients, a calendar of events, contact information and registration information for personal consultations and upcoming seminars, visit Fashion Fix online at www.fashionfix.com, e-mail Ms. Molino at pmolino@fashionfix.com or call her at (215) 321-7399. She can also be reached by mail at Paula L. Molino, Consultant, Fashion Fix, 45 Angela Ave., Yardley, PA 19067.

Upcoming seminars:

Dress to Impress: March 3 — 8 a.m. at YWCA Business Over Breakfast, D'Youville Manor, Newtown, PA. Contact: Carolyn Naaman (215) 968-2080.

What Clothing is Right for Your Body Shape?: March 11 — 8 p.m. at Community Barn, Langhorne PA. Contact: Melissa Luksic (215) 741-4211.

What Swimsuit is Right for You?: March 25 — 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Bucks County Community College, The Community School of New Hope/Solebury. Contact: Bucks County Community College (215) 968-8409.

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