

Sometimes people ask me what to wear. Or ask me what they should buy. I am so flattered, but I don't know the answer, and I'm not in the place to offer fashion advice. Mostly because fashion rules- almost all of them. Are so stupid.

Amy: [00:00:47] Don't wear white after Labor Day or before Labor Day or whatever it is. Don't wear socks with open toed shoes. [00:02:48] Mixed brown and black don't do that. Don't wear socks with open toed shoes.

I don't believe in those rules. Neither does Amy Smilovic.

| Those are useless. Like they're just for no reason. Someone made it up? No.

Amy Smilovic is the creative director and the founder of the clothing brand Tibi. Which is a very practical-minded clothing company.

[59:37]we don't really dress the actresses. We dress the people in production and management. we dress so many doctors and people just who are doing really interesting stuff. Like really interesting people.

People who don't want to think about stupid arbitrary fashion rules.

Amy: [00:00:16] I hate fashion rules. I think that they really I think they like really traumafy people. Is that a word, Traumafy? [00:00:27][11.0]

Avery: [00:00:27] Hahah

Amy: [00:00:28] terrified, traumatized traumafy.

Although it's funny to me that Amy hates rules so much because she arguably published a book of them.

Amy: [00:05:19] I think in the book I use the word guidelines. I, I went outta my way. Like, I remember even like, I'm putting rules into synonyms and I'm like, what else can I say?Anything but rule. I really try and avoid that word.

Sometimes guidelines can help.

3:53: Yeah, it's, I always tell people that the rules are there so that if you are having a problem, [4:29] So it applies to you when you have a problem and when you don't have a problem, it does not apply.

So these are optional rules.

Very optional rules because they're not rules to judge someone by.

I found Amy's guidelines immensely helpful. So much so that I decided to release this as a little miniature episode. Just in case you're looking for some help or inspiration, or food for thought. Part 1 is about how to build a closet. Part 2 is about how to put everything together. Because really, these guidelines from Amy's book, *The Creative Pragmatist*, are some of the most succinct, twice distilled advice I've ever heard about what to wear. I'm going to share my favorites with you. So. Let's go.

First. How to build a closet. Like building up a good pantry- the ingredients are everything.

Amy: [00:24:20] Well, I divide up my closet into three categories

Think of your closet as like a food pyramid. With three sections. The big bottom part is what you need the most of, the middle part is much fewer, and the top is what you need the least of. And Amy has very specific categories for each. But it's important to know where all of your clothes fall on your pyramid.

Amy: [00:41:16] seeing it in that pyramid way is helpful because most people have an inverted pyramid and that's where they know where they need to start purging so that they can get that pyramid tipped upside down

So let's start at the bottom. Or what should be the bottom. The so-called basics.

Amy: [00:20:43] Okay, so basics. They are the pieces that you live in. So it's the most critical part of the closet, which I do think most people reverse it. And the basics they see is like two t shirts, a pair of jeans like to sprinkle in amongst all the greatness. But really, those basics should be your real foundation.

But but but! Basics are a misleading name because they are not, in fact, bland or basic. Not at all. You don't want to feel blah.

Amy: [00:21:05] And I think that's been the biggest misnomer, is that in order for something to be seamless and work with everything in your closet, that it should actually have no point of view | It is so critical that your basics. Have a point of view to them. It's still going to go with everything, only it's going to have a point of view.

So what's your point of view? To figure out your style. Amy recommends actually coming up with words for it.

Amy: [00:06:27] if you don't name your style, someone else will.

To name your style, come up with three adjectives.

Amy: [00:10:54] You know what would happen when I started telling people "tell me what your adjectives are?" The first thing is they're like, Well, they called my mom. Or they're like, I asked Suzy, my best friend, And I'm like, okay, that is the worst thing to do.

Because only you know what you want to project

Think about what's important to you.

And it might surprise your mom or Suzy. But it has to come from you.

[27:57] Because if you want to be that, are it. So if you feel like a creative person, you are a creative person and so you have a right to express that. This is why I'm like do not as a mom or anyone to say who you are!

[11:05] I mean, how do you find what your adjectives are? It makes it sound like there's some sort of sorting hat or some way to like determine them.

Well, one thing we do is, um, you know, I do ask a lot of people to tell me like their favorite quotes and quotes do tell a lot about people

Are the quotes you like pithy and simple? Or elaborate and verbose? Are they funny? Are they serious? Are they poetic? Are they factual? Maybe gather up a few quotes and look at them. That's what Amy did.

[12:28] I didn't get a lot of quotes about butterflies or cleanliness or, and there weren't a lot of like zen quotes either, like, which all of this fits with this person who is chill, modern and classic.

Amy recognized that her adjectives are "chill, modern, and classic" - which, when I first heard it I was like come on those are so generic.

[14:29] I was like, come on. How can that really help you? Mm-hmm. Those seem so, uh, general to me. Yeah..

So if you're chill, modern and classic, then what you wanna do is make sure that nearly every element that you buy should be able to be described in those three ways

Take, for example, the black blazer Amy happened to be wearing that day. She can describe it with her three adjectives.

Amy: [00:14:28] I'm wearing a very modern jacket. It's got a modern cut to it... But it's black, it's a blazer, it's very classic and and it's stretch and it's comfortable and its very effortless at the same time. So what's key is when you know your adjectives, something really needs to encompass all three of those to feel so much like yourself.

My I just say, I had no idea what my adjectives were and I was having a really hard time coming up with it. But a fun place you can figure those out is with this style app called Indyx. They have a quiz to help you figure out your three adjectives. This is apparently a thing a lot of style people believe in. You gotta have the three adjectives.

[00:15:31] So really, when it embodies all those three things, when you put it on, it becomes your second skin. So you're putting on yourself.

So basics should meet your three adjectives. AND a good basic should be usable year round, in many different environments and situations, at different times of day and different times of year.

Amy: [00:32:55] Like my favorite blazer. I would I would wear [00:33:11] black tie over my shoulders and wear in the office. And I'm aware the grocery store in the vegetable aisle. Yeah. You should wear your clothing a lot. [00:33:18][7.5]

Essentially, if you're considering adding an item to your precious collection of rock solid basics, there's a little mental checklist that you can run through : does it meet the three adjectives? is it good for four seasons, is it good for different times of day?

Amy: [00:34:14] If you know that checklist, you really can distinguish between something that you're just really never going to wear. And you can just appreciate it from a distance and not feel the need to own it. versus something that you love and will wear a lot.

Ok, but, some things you just won't wear a lot. Like maybe its really seasonal or specialized- maybe you want to branch out and try something unusual that might not meet your three adjectives.

Amy: [00:36:39] You do want to experiment and you want to try new things.

But that's the next part of your pyramid. The next level above basics. A significantly smaller section that Amy calls in and outs.

Amy: [00:36:54] and I definitely have that as part of my closet is being able to try things out. And there are things that it's nice sometimes that they fold into my forever wardrobe, but there are other things I bought and I wore for two years or three years- no regrets, I got my cost per wear out of them.[00:37:20] And then, you know, maybe it goes to a friend or something like that and I shouldn't be buying too many of them. And it's not that I have a number in my head of how many I allow myself to buy, but just understanding that I'm not going to get much usage out of it helps me limit it.

And then at the tippy tippy top of the pyramid- the smallest section– are a small handful of strange things you just inexplicably keep. Things that probably don't meet your adjectives at all. That are not practical for any time of year or any location. That you will probably seldom wear. But you just love. Amy calls these Have to haves.

Amy:[00:40:07] but it's only like five or six pieces in my closet that are like that.

Like this Bra top thing Amy keeps.

Amy: [00:38:52] It's beaded. It's mint green. I have never put it on. My body once. Like, I love it. I'm never giving it away. I love it.

I have a matador jacket that inexplicably belonged to my grandma- I bet for *her* it was a have to have. I don't think she ever wore it. I probably will never wear it. These few items at the pyramid top are the things that remind me how fun clothes can be. How weird they can be. I just love knowing that I have them and can look at them.

So - most things in the closet are the basics at the base of the triangle, the in-and-out above that, and then at the tip of the pyramid, just a handful of weirdos to hold on to. That's your closet.

And if you're like wow, this is not what my closet feels like AT ALL, I need an overhaul. Don't rush it. Go slow. If you want to get new basics, start small. Think about these five things.

[30 mins], there are simple ones that I would, you know, I would right away go get the right jeans, the right tee, the right blazer, the right dress pant, and the right sweat pant like that I would do.

But, don't just go buy them all at once.

Amy: a lot of people get told that if something works for you you buy it in five different colors. You don't. You buy it. And congratulate yourself. And that is done. But don't go on repeat because then you'll feel repetitive and that's not how you want to feel.

Take the time to find them and then wear the hell out of them.

And then you're kind of done for a while [18:58] So it's not about starting from scratch with stuff, it's just not, you know, figuring out like how can you twist, how can you manipulate what you already have? how can you just be smarter about putting things together in your closet?

So that's the next part.

You know, you, you really are like, then it's about like building out textures and colors and things like that.

So how do you do that? How do you build out textures and colors and things like that? Quick break and Amy will tell you.

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So. let's say you have your closet set up. All your tools in your toolshed, the ingredients in your pantry, the paint in your paintbox- how do you put them together on yourself in a way that feels good and cohesive and feels like you.

Amy has a load of tricks and tips, but these two are my favorites- one is a trick about proportion, and one is a trick about color. But let's start with the one about proportion. Proportion is secretly so important.

[00:44:06] what happens is a lot of people don't feel good about the way that they're dressed because the proportions are off.

They'll be drowning in their clothes, or they feel like their clothes don't fit.

[00:44:50] T And then what happens often is they will... attribute the drowning feeling to. I am short or I'm heavier or I'm tall, and everyone will attribute it to something different about their body shape. And what I have found is no matter what the body shape is. It all comes down to having the balance of big, slim and skin on the body at all times.

Big slim and skin. In an outfit, it helps to have a little of each. Big is something chunky or oversized. Slim doesn't mean skinny, it just means a narrower, tighter fitting thing. For example a puffy coat is a big. A wool coat is slim.

[46:53] And even down to the shoes. I mean, shoes are a big part of it as well. And there are big clunky shoes and there are slim shoes.

Clogs are a big. Loafers are a slim. You can probably tell if you have too many oversize things and you feel like you're drowning in them. But too many slim things is just sort of boring. The variety is what makes a good outfit.

[00:46:19] if I'm wearing big wide pants, for instance, then maybe on the top, I've got a jacket that is a little more narrow through the arms

And then skin is .. revealing a bit of skin. But not necessarily in a sexy way.

Amy: [00:45:41] by revealing skin, like if you've got on a big jacket, it's just pushing up the sleeve of the jacket where... you're just seeing the forearm or it's maybe a little bit of an ankle coming out or maybe even a little bit of a neck

So that's a fun trick. Big Slim skin. The other one that really stuck with me is a trick with color. It's an idea that Amy has for how to make a harmonious outfit. It's called "one ton or none"

Amy: [01:06:40] when your eye is forced to dart around, it's unsettling. So the idea is that your eyes should land in one place on the body

And an easy way to avoid that is just wear entirely neutrals .

So if I'm wearing like all shades of navy, black, brown, all these like dark neutrals, then if I walk up, you're gonna just land on me. Right?

That's obviously easy on the eyes and nothing is standing out too much- Amy calls that "none"

Amy: [01:07:08] but if I were wearing all of that and maybe I had on, like, a white belt
[01:07:21] My eye is just going to one place to just the white belt.

That's "one" if you have one pop of color. But just one.

Amy: [01:07:26] If I had on all of this beautiful dark stuff and a white belt and a bright green shoe, I'm like, Am I looking at the belt? Am I looking at the shoe like it's my eye doesn't know where to look

BUT alternatively, if you really go for it and just have a lot of colors and things going on, it doesn't feel so jarring for the eye to travel.

Amy: [01:07:52] The notion of ton is that you have like maybe you've got on this weird printed pant and this white belt and this green shoe and this like... And it's so full on that, like I'm not looking at the belt or the shoe or that like there's so much going on that my eyes just landed [01:08:17][25.3]

One ton or none. That's just one of the many guidelines from the book *The Creative Pragmatist*. But you don't have to follow these guides. They're just here to help. They're little ways to get good at tossing together outfits, the way a good chef throw together a meal.

Smilovic: [00:03:16] I do not believe that fashion. I do not believe that style is something that you're born with. Really? Yes, absolutely. I think that you have to be born with curiosity and passion. But if you have that, then you can have style. Without that you're fucked I'm sorry.

And clearly you have style, if you've been curious enough to listen this far. Amy Smilovic's book, *The Creative Pragmatist*, is the bible and the workbook for these fashion guidelines. There are pictures and excerpts at articlesofinterest.substack.com. And Indyx, that style app, is spelled Indyx. . Thanks to Brittany Mileo of Tibi for making this happen! And thanks of course to my sounding board, Charles McFarlane.