

# Fashion for Comfort and Confidence: Size Neutral Edition

by Pam Davis, RN, CBN, MBA



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“Fashion is easy. It’s about expressing your identity.”

**When you hear the word Vogue, what springs to mind?** Is it Madonna lyrics from nearly 30 years ago? What about a fashion magazine that highlights unrealistic body types? Let’s settle on a less controversial definition that most of us generally aspire to: popular and fashionable.

Fashion is easy. It’s about expressing your identity. But in the past, clothing designers haven’t exactly catered to men and women of larger sizes, and society has normalized a loose set of “rules” we’re supposed to follow when it comes to our clothes. Raise your hand if you’ve ever:

- Avoided wearing white or other bright colors.
- Avoided wearing print patterns.
- Avoided wearing horizontal stripes.
- Dressed in all black because it was “slimming”.
- Worn a jacket, sweater or coat when it was blistering hot.
- Bought clothing you didn’t like or love just because it fit.

Well, we’re going to put an end to that mess right here and now! When it comes to what’s in your closet, I want you to look and feel your best at any stage of your weight management journey. And yes, it’s easier than you think – despite cultural and retail “norms.”



## Step 1: The Purge

- Pull-out all of your clothes from your closet, drawers, laundry, etc. Pile them on your bed so they're in plain sight for you to finish this task.
- Repair or toss anything that has holes, needs buttons, etc.
- Toss anything that is stained beyond salvation.
- Donate anything you haven't worn in the past year or anything that makes you cringe when you look at it.
- All of the above applies to underwear too!

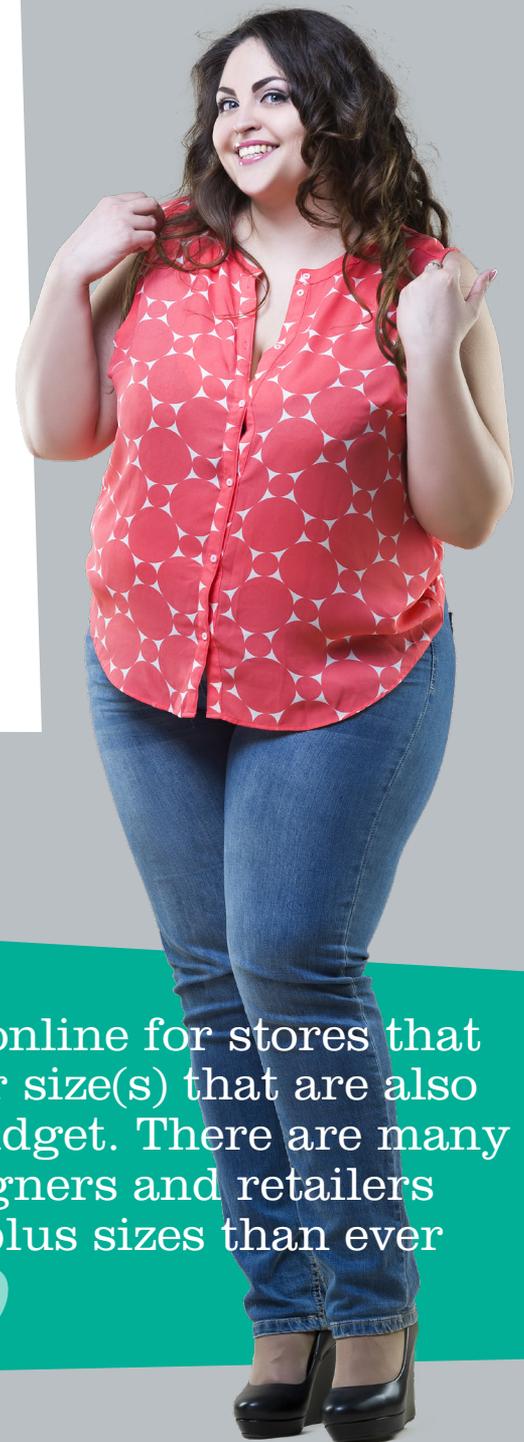


## Step 2: Carefully Assess the Clothes in Front of You

Try on every article of clothing that is left in front of you while looking in a full-length mirror. Take a deep breath and ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it fit? (*No, not that it hides/covers you up*)
  - ◆ If no, donate it.
  - ◆ If yes, move on to the next question.
- Do I like it? Do I like the color and style?
  - ◆ If no, donate it.
  - ◆ If yes, move on to the next question.
- Most importantly, do I feel good wearing it?
  - ◆ If no, donate it.
  - ◆ If yes, hang it back in your closet.

Repeat this entire process until the only items remaining in your closet are those that fit, you actually like and make you feel good. Don't flip out if there are only a few pieces! **Pinterest.com** has a ton of examples of "capsule wardrobes," otherwise referred to as minimalistic. The goal here is to work with what you have and what you like.



## Step 3: Make a List of What's Missing

- Do you need more professional options to wear to work?
- Do you need more casual, everyday clothes?
- Do you need more workout clothes?
- Do you need more sleepwear or lounge clothes?
- Do you need more underwear?

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## Step 4: Tackle the Fun Part!

It's time to figure out what you like to wear so we can determine your clothing style. And no, "whatever fits" isn't a clothing style! It's a default that we're no longer subscribing to. If you haven't explored Pinterest yet, now is the perfect time to do so. Whether you choose to make a Pinterest board or write a list on paper, let's start with the following:

- What colors do you prefer?
- Do you like prints?
- Do you like stripes?
- Do you like neutral solids?
- What style(s) do you prefer? Examples include:
  - ◆ Trendy
  - ◆ Casual
  - ◆ Bohemian
  - ◆ Preppy
  - ◆ Elegant



## Step 5: Make Your List and Check it Twice

When you go to make a list of what you want and need, be as specific as possible. For example:

- Work clothes
- Dress, red, sheath/long-sleeve/flared/A-line
- Pants, navy, wide-leg/cuffs/no pleats
- Sweater, animal print, cardigan/V-neck
- Dress shirts, white, cuffed
- Casual clothes
- Jeans, black, boot leg/wide-leg/cuffed/high-rise/low-rise/boyfriend
- T-shirt (*possibilities are endless*)
- Jacket (*for warmth, not as a cover-up!*), grey, fleece



## Step 6: Let's Go Shopping!

Despite what prior experience may have taught you, shopping can be fun! It's a chance to start new and add some spice to your wardrobe. But first, look at your list and shop your closet:

- How many items are there? What do you need?
- Are they basics or a little more specific?
- What about accessories? Do you need those as well?

Now let's see if you can mix and match those items. For example: a well-fitting pair of pants in a solid color like navy, gray, brown or black can be dressed-up for work with a nice blouse or shirt. They can also be dressed down with a T-shirt or sweater. Unless it has some type of unique detailing, no one will realize if you wear the same pair of pants multiple times in a week.

Next, what's your budget for shopping? Prioritize the items you need and those that will give you the most bang for your buck. If you love to shop (*like yours truly*), no further advice is necessary. If, however, you either hate to shop or you need a little extra advice, keep reading.



## Step 7: Important Words of Wisdom

- Research online for stores that carry your size(s) and that are also within your budget. There are many more designers and retailers carrying plus sizes than ever before! My husband laughs at how I go to the mall to try on more expensive items and find the brand/size/style I want, but then go online to look for those exact items on-sale or on eBay. You can do that – it's okay.
- Are you afraid of shopping online because you're not sure items will fit? Once you identify your styles, sizes and brands that fit you best, consider signing-up at: **ShopittoMe.com**. This website lets you choose your brands and sizes so they can send you a daily email with matches and what's on-sale where. You can still shop at a store!
- If you feel like you need some honest feedback, take a friend with you. I prefer to shop alone so that I can take as long as I want and try on as many items as I want.
- Don't stress out over clothing sizes. Remember all those items you just tossed because they don't fit? That was done intentionally. If you find something you like, keep going down/up in sizes until you find the size that fits. A number doesn't define your worth (*or your health*), but if the number on the tag stresses you out, cut that sucker off when you get home.
- Don't go to the default: safe black. If you truly love black, then by all means, buy black. If you like pink, purple, zebra stripes or highlighter yellow, buy that. I recently stepped completely outside my comfort zone by buying a pair of leopard print jeans. Yes, that's right. I love them!
- If you're in an active weight-loss period and want to maximize your clothes, knit items such as "ponte jersey" are incredibly flattering because the fabric is thick. Ladies, one to two ponte knit dresses and one to two pairs of ponte jersey pants with a mixture of tops can get you through nearly every occasion with comfort and style.
- Accessories are your friend! Even if you're not ready for bright, bold colors or prints, you can still add these elements with scarves, sweaters or shoes. Personally, I prefer long, lightweight scarves that wrap around in a variety of ways. We won't discuss how many pairs of shoes I've accumulated throughout the years.
- Guys, I know you love your khakis. I do too! But don't forget to consider others shades of khaki like brown, green or navy.
- Find your signature color(s) and style(s). I always wear some red, even if it's just red lipstick, and usually some leopard print.
- Shopping does not have to be expensive! My favorite pair of sandals came from a hospital gift shop in Viera, Florida. TJ Maxx is amazing, as are Marshalls and Ross. One of my favorite red dresses is from Walmart. My winter coat came from Goodwill.

## Clothing Combinations at a Glance

### Basic Items:



- Solid colored pants (*navy, brown, grey, red, black, tan, etc.*)
- Ponte jersey dresses (*any style and color that you love*)
- Jeans (*Try on as many sizes in as many brands possible to find your perfect pair*)

### Work/Dress it up



- Button down shirt/blouse/blazer/cardigan; bold jewelry
- Blazer/cardigan; heels/boots; statement necklace
- Choose darker solid colors in a trouser or boot style and pair with a blazer/button down and heels/boots

### Casual/Dress it down



- Polo shirt; non-logo T-shirt; sweater; flats
- Scarf; flats
- Any wash/finish; any style; any top; any style shoes

### Fun



- Logo/statement tees; bold prints
- Funky jewelry; sneakers
- Animal prints, any prints, any color and anything you want that makes you feel amazing!

## Final Thoughts:

At any weight or size, it's possible to love your wardrobe and find comfortable clothes that give you confidence! If you're in a fashion rut, don't be afraid to break out of the box. No longer should you wear only "what fits" or hide parts of your body. You are entitled to a style that matches your needs, budget and personality!

### About the Author:

*Pam Davis, RN, CBN, MBA, is a Certified Bariatric Nurse and a bariatric surgery patient. Pam has 15 years of experience working with those affected by obesity. She has authored articles, patient education materials and practice guidelines for treating those affected by obesity. Pam has also served in various leadership roles including Chairwoman of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC), President of the Eating Disorders Coalition of Tennessee, ASMB's Executive Council and Chair of the Integrated Health Clinical Issues and Guidelines Committee.*



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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