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## Are You Bored With the Basics?

By Ginger Burr



*An image consultant reveals her secrets for updating a wardrobe full of fashion classics.*

Michelle sat down on the bed with a sigh and said, "Why am I so frustrated every time I get dressed?" What a perfect question! As we started going through Michelle's wardrobe, she pulled out item after item that she wears frequently and that still fits. One of the things Michelle was most proud of about her wardrobe is that she takes good care of her clothes and keeps them for a long time. She has typically been a classic dresser – she has lots of navy blue and black trousers, button down shirts, a few patterned vests, simple sweaters and cardigans (she tends to run cold), and a selection of jackets (mostly in neutral tones with a hint of color here or there).

She had called me for help, so obviously something was feeling out of sorts for her. She admitted that she had tried and tried to figure it out on her own, but in the end she just felt like she was spending more money buying the same clothes and not feeling any better. As a result, instead of 3 pairs of black pants she had 8 and instead of 6 button-down blouses she had 14 (mostly white!). Her boredom level was off the charts!

### **Classic Gone Awry**

Can you have too much of a good thing? When it comes to fashion, absolutely! A few polka dots are fun. Polka dots on everything are overpowering. You might like red, but wearing a red pantsuit, red shoes and a red necklace (let's not even think about a red handbag on top of all that) and you could end up looking like a walking popsicle (not usually someone's major objective when she gets dressed).

The same thing is true for a classic wardrobe. Having the basics that you can mix and match with ease is fabulous. Wearing everything in black, beige and navy and few, if any, prints or interesting details is just downright dull, as Michelle and many others can attest.

You have no idea how many times I've asked women to tell me how they feel about outfit after outfit in their wardrobes only to have them say, it's okay or fine every time. No, no, no...please say it isn't so. This is a sure sign their wardrobe wins points for being functional but not much else!

Your wardrobe is a direct reflection of who you are – a beautiful expression of all that makes you *you* – and that's where so many women **get lost**.

I am not, in any way, belittling a classic wardrobe or style. The problem arises when the classic pieces turn dull, inflexible or frumpy. A classic style might be the mainstay of your wardrobe but what about the rest of you? How do you reflect that quietly radiant, luminous, colorful or sassy part of you?

### **Are you suffering from classic-itis? You are if:**

1. **You're bored.** The World Dictionary defines classic as: "characterized by simplicity, balance, regularity, and purity of form." Being sure you have the basics covered in your wardrobe is critical. But if that's all there is, your eyes glaze over and you feel like you blend in to the woodwork. Yes, you want to have the basics – a beautiful cardigan you can easily toss on over a sleeveless top or pretty dress...a fitted blazer you can wear when you're called away to meet with a client or going to a networking meeting...a great pair of pumps and knee high boots, etc. But, don't get carried away. It's your personality that makes your wardrobe interesting, so be absolutely positive your personality shines through!
2. **You're color-deprived.** The point of something being classic and basic is that you can wear it with a lot of things. So, it stands to reason that most of these items will be in neutral colors (your *best* neutral colors, right?). But, for instance, when we surveyed Michelle's wardrobe, what do you think we saw? Yup, a sea of black, navy and white (with a smattering of taupe thrown in). Egads...no wonder she's bored! (Adding color doesn't mean you have to go for fluorescent pink to make a statement. Chances are if you are drawn to a classic style that you will wear your colors in a way that is more understated and not the least bit overpowering. Depending on your natural coloring you might look amazing in eggplant, a beautiful wine tone, periwinkle, forest green or a delicious teal. Wearing your best colors will bring out the best of you.)
3. **Your closet is overflowing.** More often than not, the career classic dresser will keep buying things each season in an attempt to freshen things up. As with Michelle, that often means adding more of what she already has. Then, her closet gets filled to overflowing, she has no idea what's really in

there, and yet she's bored. It's the classic... "closet full of clothes and nothing to wear" syndrome.

### **Making the Classics Work For You:**

Here are a few tips to help you create a gorgeous, classic wardrobe with a twist:

1. **Pat Yourself on the Back.** Yes, you have mastered art of a basic wardrobe (not everyone has), so good for you!

2. **Spice It Up!** It's absolutely critical that you add some of your personality into your wardrobe. Otherwise you'll find yourself sitting on your bed wondering what happened or seeing yourself in a photograph and wondering why you look so dreary. That doesn't mean you have to go super trendy. It can mean adding a fabulous necklace that you adore; a jacket in a color that makes you sparkle; a cardigan with lace, ruffles, interesting buttons, rosettes, or an unusual shape; maybe a wide belt or an elegant pair of platform pumps...you get the idea – this is the very personal part of creating a signature wardrobe, and the options are endless. **The true delight is in allowing your beauty to shine through all those great basics!**

3. **Know When To Retire.** The idea of a wardrobe is not to keep it for a million years. No matter how well you take care of your clothes if you wear them enough they will wear out. Yay! That's the idea. Your lifestyle changes, your body changes and fashion changes – often not all at the same time! Buy fabulous pieces that you love so much that you wear them over and over until it is embarrassing to be seen in public in them and then you can replace them. It's a win-win. You feel great every day and you get your money's worth out of every article of clothing!

Some examples:

Accessories are a great way to add pizzazz without feeling over the top. Check these out:

Often the default "classic" necklace is one or two gold chains. How about [this fun twist](#) on that classic look:

Do you always carry the same basic handbag? How about shaking it up a bit with a red one? (If red is too big a leap (or not one of your colors), [this handbag](#) also comes in black, charcoal and white...or there are plenty of other fabulous handbags out there to choose from.)

Or, how about a [fun shoe](#) in a deep color (it's not black but it's not screaming red either...understated elegance):

These are just the tip of the iceberg for ideas, and they certainly won't speak to everyone. But, if you want a great wardrobe, determine what that special quality is that makes you *you* and express it.

We know you have the classic thing down, right? Now make it sing. Rather than look like you stepped out a catalogue, for instance, how about using your basics and adding your personality using the tips above to create a personal style and a wardrobe you delight in wearing.

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