



My Style, My Way

Top experts reveal how to create yours today

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Jana Rczucha • Dawn Stebbing • Judith Taylor • Divya Vashisht



My *Style*,



My *Way*



Top experts reveal how to create yours today





THRIVE Publishing

A Division of PowerDynamics Publishing, Inc.

San Francisco, California

www.thrivebooks.com

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ISBN: 978-0-9829419-3-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010942846

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

Dedication

We dedicate this book to you,
the woman who understands the value
of presenting a stylish image.

We salute you for wanting to
show the world your own unique style
and for being ready to step into
an authentic new vision of yourself—
we celebrate you!

The Co-Authors of *My Style, My Way*





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Acknowledgements

Gratitude looks good on everyone. Before we share our wisdom and experience with you, we have a few people to thank for turning our vision for this book into a reality.

This book is the brilliant concept of Caterina Rando, an image enthusiast and the founder of THRIVE Publishing™. As a respected business strategist who works with image professionals to grow their businesses, she realized how much she was learning about color, shapes, accessorizing and putting together a great wardrobe, and she wanted more women to benefit from our wisdom. The result was putting our tips and strategies into this comprehensive book.

Without Caterina’s “take action” spirit, her commitment to excellence and her highly-skilled professional publishing team, you would not be reading this book, of which we are all so proud. Our truly dedicated team worked diligently to put together the best possible book for you. We are truly grateful for everyone’s stellar contribution.

To Bernie Burson, whose experience in copywriting and copyediting proved invaluable, and whose magic pen and image expertise ensured that this book would be the best it could be.

To LynAnn King, whose positive energy, creativity and image industry savvy provided valuable support, we are truly grateful.

To Ruth Schwartz, with her many years of experience and wisdom, who served as an ongoing guide throughout the project. Your support to our production team and to all of the co-authors is deeply appreciated.

To Tammy Tribble, who brought her creative talent to the cover design, we say thank you for a job well done.

To Barbara McDonald, who brought enthusiasm, creativity, problem-solving and her attention to detail to the book layout, which looks refined and elegant as a result of her efforts.

To Karen Gargiulo and Hester Lox, who brought their keen eyes, their extensive knowledge of punctuation and grammar, and their commitment to clarity—thank you for your support and contribution.

We also acknowledge each other for delivering outstanding information, guidance and advice. Through our work in this book and with our clients, we are committed to enhancing the lives of women through the skills of style. We are profoundly grateful that we get to do work that we love and make a contribution to so many in the process. We do not take our good fortune lightly. We are clear in our mission—to make a genuine contribution to you, the reader. Thank you for granting us this extraordinary opportunity.

The Co-Authors of *My Style, My Way*



Introduction

“Fashion is general, style is individual; fashion can be bought, style one must possess.”

—Edna Woolman Chase, Editor-in-Chief, *Vogue* magazine, 1914-1952

Congratulations! You have opened an incredible resource, packed with great ideas that will guide you to a new vision of yourself. You are about to discover the magic of *My Style, My Way*.

Your personal style is so much more than clothes and fashion. Your style and your image combine to create the message you send out to your friends, family, clients and colleagues every time you walk into a room, a restaurant or an office. In fact, your image is the way you present yourself in all that you say and do! Of course you want your image to be the best it can be—as well as a reflection of your own unique personality and style.

With this book, you can quickly rev up your style, because as top experts in each of our respective specialties, we’ve joined together to give you the most effective image strategies we know. Some bits of advice are repeated in different chapters—that should tell you how important that advice is!

Each of us has seen how even small changes in your personal image can transform your self-confidence and uplift your spirit. New colors,

more flattering styles, a confident carriage and new ways of looking at the world and interacting with others will boost your self-assurance like nothing else. Learning some important travel tips and knowing how to dress and what to shop for during your trip will make your vacation or business trip a memorable one.

It's all here—how-to's for makeup, hair, accessories and foundations, and even how to dress for a date! You'll discover great tips for organizing your closet, building a capsule wardrobe and taking care of those all-important details.

All the image professionals you will meet in this book want you to have the confidence and style to go anywhere and feel and look terrific! We have shared our best tips and proven guidelines to help you reveal your beautiful new style.

To get the most out of this book, we recommend that you read through it once, cover to cover. Then go back and follow the tips that apply to you, in the chapters most relevant to your current situation. Every image improvement you make will make a difference in how you feel and in how others respond to you in your daily personal and professional life.

Developing your personal style can take some time. If you take action and apply the strategies, tips and tactics we share in these pages, you will reap many rewards. With our knowledge and your action, we are confident that, like our thousands of satisfied clients, you too will master the magic of *My Style, My Way*.

To a more stylish new you!

The Co-Authors of *My Style, My Way*



Radiance—The Finishing Touch

By Monica Brandner

In 1998, I was privileged to represent the magnificent state of Alaska in the Mrs. United States Pageant. Many would consider my experience a Cinderella fairy tale and in some ways, this is true. However, I compare my story more to Sleeping Beauty, for I was asleep in certain areas of my life before this experience. Transformation and an “ultimate makeover” were part of the preparation I underwent for my spectacular, red-carpet event.

As a pageant queen, part of my training included learning to be radiant. Investing in this area of my life has paid big dividends and was well worth the effort. It has been about finding the balance between authentic beauty—what I wear on the outside, and authentic grace—that with which I “wardrobe” my heart. I am a walking billboard. What I do and say, and what I wear, all tell the story of me. Likewise, what you do and say and wear tell the story of you.

We often compliment women on their shoes. I have a pair of black Stuart Weitzman’s, with rhinestones up the back, that turns heads. However, what really catches a person’s eye is a woman who walks tall and confident.

Radiance can take an ordinary woman and make her extraordinary. I believe your desire is to look better, feel better and create a winning image. Consider this chapter as life lessons from a pageant queen. My intention here is to inspire you to take action to experience illumination in your style, your way.

Crowns made of gems sparkle! What follows is a chapter of “gems.” When you find your true, unique beauty—inside and out, and adorn yourself with grace, you will be highly sought after.

Let’s get started!

A Queen Has a Positive Outlook

“If you want your life to be more rewarding, you have to change the way you think.”

—Oprah Winfrey,

American television host, producer and philanthropist

Why do so many women struggle with issues of self-image and worthlessness? The view you have of yourself will direct your life! When I decided to run for Mrs. Alaska, my self-perception was distorted. My mirror spoke: “You’re inadequate, . . . you don’t measure up, . . . you don’t have the perfect body.” In other words, I thought I wasn’t good enough. Okay—stop! To whom was I comparing myself? Possibly to images from:

- Hollywood
- Magazines
- Television
- Friends

What do *you* want out of life? Insecurity and inferiority can extinguish your dreams and steal opportunities and abilities to believe in yourself.

When inferiority speaks, looking in the mirror can be painful. As we listen to inferiority's voice, we focus on how imperfect our bodies are and how ugly we think we look. It takes tenacity to overcome these toxic emotions. Let's hear from one such tenacious woman:

“How I see or value myself fluctuates like the stock market. I was selling myself short. Now, I set my own value. It is what I say it is! Self-value should not be defined by magazines, movies or what others think, but by what I think and know in my own heart to be true. I am not defined by my looks, accomplishments or failures. I am defined by my choices. When I get knocked down, I get back up, recover and try again. When I changed my outlook, I started liking who I am. I now have healthier relationships, and opportunities have opened up for me professionally. The mirror doesn't define who I am anymore. I do! I stopped listening to its deceptive lies.”

Guard your thought life so it won't shake your confidence. This is our challenge—to let go of the negative and think about those things in your life that are lovely. When you have a bad hair day, focus on your assets. Yes, you *do* have assets! Think: which of your features elicit compliments from your friends?

- Hair
- Eyes
- Complexion
- Teeth
- Waist
- Legs
- Ankles
- Lips (*lipstick is a woman's main accessory*)

Self-acceptance can be a struggle. But when you are at peace with your body, it will begin to show. One key to looking fabulous is to dress according to your body type or to camouflage problem areas. Here are some ways to do just that!

1. A jacket is a wardrobe star. It adds instant polish and hides problem areas with ease.
2. If you have a thick waist and want to create an illusion of looking thinner, wear a tunic top.
3. Are you bigger on top? Wear a scoop or V neckline.

Remember, we all have things we don't love about our bodies. The good news is we don't have to live life naked! For more on dressing for your body type, see Johonna Duckworth's chapter, *Be True to Your Shape*, on page 61.

Relax. Look for clothes that fit your body type and make you feel amazing. Purchase only those items you absolutely love. Remember, self-acceptance will make you shine brighter.

Gems:

- Every woman has something she does not like about her body.
- You were born with a certain body type, coded into your DNA.
- Your body is unique. You are not a cookie cutter of someone else.
- Don't let society or culture dictate how you should dress, walk, talk, look or act.
- Take care of your clothing. Use wooden hangers, steam the wrinkles out and sew on buttons that fall off. Note—Nordstrom® will sew on your buttons free if you've purchased your clothing in their store.

Now, smile! Look in the mirror and say, “It’s a new day, so . . . hello, Gorgeous!”

A Queen Radiates Vitality

Depression, worry, anxiety and anger never look good on anyone. When our hearts are broken and full of negative emotions, we lose our ability to shine.

Life happens and sometimes, “It is what it is.” According to the American Institute of Stress, 75 to 90 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related problems. Stress extinguishes the luminescence in our life.

Although we may try, we cannot change others, or even our own circumstances at times. We can only change ourselves. Take responsibility for yourself only. Don’t try to change other people. Say, “I am tired of my old life! Today I am going to change my attitude, my approach, how I treat others, and my thought-life.”

Gems:

- Pick up the book, *The Happiness Project*, by Gretchen Rubin, published in 2009 by Harper, or *The Creation Health Breakthrough* by Monica Reed, MD, published in 2007 by Center Street.
- Ask yourself, “What would make me happier—a cleaner closet, less yelling, a closer relationship with my spouse?” Now do something about it.
- Laughter is good medicine. Lighten up!
- Seek out a counselor, spiritual leader or life coach if you need help.
- Always remember—new beginnings are available at any moment, 365 days a year, and it’s never too late to begin again.

Toxic emotions kill, steal and destroy relationships and your happiness. Without happiness, you will not experience radiant living. Activating forgiveness, love, joy and peace will bring vitality to your life.

A Queen Plans what She Needs

Taking care of ourselves—body, soul and mind—is key to becoming radiant. Do you want to stand out in a crowd and go from worn-out to WOW? Embrace these winning combinations if you wish to look luminous.

Drink Water. Try adding lemon, sliced strawberries and a green tea bag. The tea and water combined create a natural power boost. Anti-aging is another benefit.

Exercise. I build stamina by incorporating walking, Pilates® or a “boot camp” style workout into my day. Stretching gives me an instant boost of energy. Using a personal trainer changed my life. Don’t be intimidated. Your trainer may become your best friend.

Nutrition. Shop at farmers’ markets. When in a grocery store, shop the perimeter and stay away from pre-made and packaged foods. Eat fruits, vegetables, fish and nuts, and don’t forget milk. There are some great recipes in Prevention® magazine. Healthy eating should be a lifestyle, not a diet! And every once in a while, a girl has to have her chocolate, so I indulge. It puts a smile on my face.

Sleep. When I’m tired and worn out, it shows. Get seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Sleep helps us stay sharp, focused and

energized all day. Sleep also helps us heal from the demands of the previous day.

Rest. Ever feel like you want to run away from life? Burnout is real. Take time to get away, whether it's in your back yard, lying on a hammock, taking a nap, watching snowflakes fall as you drink something warm by the fire, floating down a river on an inner tube with the sun kissing your face or checking into a hotel with a day spa. I call it “rejuvenation therapy” and it will definitely look good on you!

Prayer/meditation. I am passionate about prayer. Prayer is a great release for me. When something concerns me, I pray about it. I see it as a call for help—my petition. Prayer is a great remedy for worry and anxiety. When I meditate, I think of what is true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious, the best (not the worst), the beautiful (not the ugly), whatever is admirable—anything excellent. Remember to count your blessings. Gratitude is transforming. Studies show that thankfulness is a key to happiness. When self-confidence exudes from a joyful person, she is dazzling! Try prayer or meditation or some form of quiet reflection, focusing on gratitude. You will love the results.

A Queen Is Never Dressed without Her Smile

One way to stand out in a crowd is to smile. A smile is magnetic. Don't be afraid to use tooth-whitener if needed. A fresh smile is an accessory you don't want to leave home without.

Gems:

Benefits of a smile:

- Smiling makes you look younger.
- A smile improves your health and stress level.
- Your smile is welcoming and makes others feel they are worth your attention.
- Smiling is the trademark of a happy, positive person.
- Smiling people appear more confident, are more likely to be promoted and are more likely to be approached.
- Radiant women can change a moment with a smile!

When a Queen Rushes, She Falls

There is something to be said about having good posture in high heels. I learned to carry myself with confidence, turn on the balls of my feet, walk slowly and elegantly glide across the floor. My walk had purpose.

If I'm in a hurry, I seem out of control and can easily trip or fall. I practice walking slowly so I don't lose my composure. My appearance is my introduction to the world; it tells everyone who I am. Feeling at ease shows I am controlled and polished.

Gems:

Relaxing tips

- Sit in the sun and close your eyes (of course, put on your 30 protection sunscreen first) and drink something cold.
- Take a friend to coffee, tea, lunch or dinner.
- Listen to soft music and light a candle.

- Bake cupcakes and be creative with your decorations. My daughter does this to relax. She is like the “Ace of Cupcakes.”
- Take your daughter or granddaughter to high tea. Plant some time and love into the next generation. If you do not have children, tea with your girlfriends can be exquisite.
- Hang out in a garden or visit nature.

Remember, if you fall it’s never too late to get back up again. Do something nice for yourself, and don’t forget to put your feet up and relax every once in awhile.

A Queen Walks in Authentic Grace

The votes for Mrs. Congeniality came in and they called my name. I was shocked! “Me?” I thought. “Wow! What an honor.” The dictionary defines congeniality as “a pleasant disposition; friendly and sociable.” Being congenial causes others to notice and want to be around you. Kindness and respect are always a winning combination.

I love this quote from my mentor, Deborah King, of Final Touch Finishing School, Inc.: “Civility—Always in style—Wardrobe basic—Perfect accessory—Fits everybody!”

Grace is civility—a very attractive quality because it showcases itself in the form of beautiful actions, words or deeds. Having *authentic* grace can pay dividends in your relationships, both personal and professional.

We each have a reputation. Rude behavior is never stylish or attractive. If I asked people about your style of behavior, how would they describe you?

- Kind
- Patient
- Loving
- Considerate
- Giving
- Encouraging

Avoid being gossipy, judgmental, angry, jealous, a backstabber, prideful or bitter. Our behavior impacts others. It draws people *to* us or pushes them *away*. We don't always realize that what we say and do affects others.

Gems:

- If you struggle with rude behavior or low self-worth, seek some professional help from a counselor, spiritual leader, or life or etiquette coach. There is nothing wrong with realizing that sometimes we need help.
- Our words and actions bring life or death, light or darkness to others and ourselves.
- A kind word refreshes like a spring shower.
- None of us have arrived. We all have room for improvement.

Ladies, change requires change, and that first step to change is to wake up! The progression looks like this: Wake up, stand up, get ready and walk out the door. When you have an “Aha!” moment, make a decision, study and practice—then transformation comes.

Becoming radiant takes work. But remember, for a diamond to be brilliant it must be polished. When the process is finished, it is valuable.

Find a mentor. This book is a great resource of North America's top image and etiquette experts who care about you.

Our goal: We want *you* to shine and be crowned with success!

Remember, a woman who finds her true, unique beauty and adorns herself with grace is a woman highly sought after. Her self-worth and confidence is attractive. Her value is compared to rubies. She has the power to turn ordinary moments to extraordinary ones by:

- The way she dresses
- The words she speaks
- Her gestures
- Her acts of kindness

Now, arise, shine and watch the room light up when you walk in!



MONICA BRANDNER

IMAGE by m. brandner

*Etiquette and image can open doors,
but integrity keeps them open*

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Monica is president of an image and etiquette business located in Juneau, Alaska, and Spokane, Washington. She is certified through Final Touch Finishing School and is a member of the Association of Image Consultants International and Toastmasters International.

As Mrs. Alaska 1998, Monica spent her year speaking to and encouraging women and youth to recognize their value and worth. Wearing pageant shoes taught her life is full of opportunities and being prepared is crucial to one's success. Whether it's a job interview, promotion, potential business client or a pageant, doors can open or close based on messages we send in our dress and behavior. The combination of a polished image and strong social skills is important for prosperity in today's global society.

Along with owning her own business, Monica works for Alaska/Horizon Airlines and provides professional etiquette training to their customer service team. She is also a source of expertise for radio, television, newspaper and magazine articles. Monica has a heart for the next generation of women and volunteers her time organizing events for teen girls, ages 12–18, called "Radiant."

"It is more important today than ever before to establish your own personal brand. As a busy entrepreneur, I've learned that your attitude and your presentation matter in most every situation. My Style, My Way is packed full of great ideas and is a must read for anyone who wants to give themselves a clear advantage in all life's situations."

—Joan Lunden, TV host, creator of Joan Lunden Home and Camp Reveille

My Style, My Way is the key resource that will show you how to create your best, most authentic personal style. Style is more than clothes—it is your overall appearance, your behavior and how you communicate. Plus, great style cannot occur without confidence. In this valuable resource, twenty top style experts lead you on an incredible journey of self-discovery and decision-making about who you are and how you want to present yourself to the world. This treasure trove of wardrobe and image wisdom is sure to rev up your look, enhance your overall image and be your personal secret style source that you come back to over and over.

See What's Inside

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ISBN 978-0-9829419-3-5

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