

Life

Reduce your stress by editing your wardrobe into a 40-piece capsule collection

Busy women overwhelmed by overstuffed closets hire stylists to minimize choice and make simplify getting dressed



AARON HARRIS / TORONTO STAR

Erin Nadler, Better Styled fashion consultant, sorts through Maria Lianos-Carbone walk-in closet choosing no more than 40 seasonal items both clothing and accessories.

By: Brandie Weikle *Special to the Star*, Published on Mon Jun 22 2015

Maria Lianos-Carbone looks nervous. She's agreed to let a wardrobe stylist not just into the bedroom of her home in Aurora, but right into her walk-in closet.

Here among the tightly packed rods, stacks of shoeboxes and bins of out-of-season clothes, Lianos-Carbone will watch as years of purchases are reduced to a small edited collection of pieces — a capsule wardrobe.

“I have a hard time letting go of things. I don't know if I'm necessarily attached to them, but I think, ‘Oh, maybe I can wear this down the road,’” says Lianos-Carbone.

Nevertheless, today she'll allow Erin Nadler, a fashion consultant who runs [Better Styled Inc.](#), a personal shopping boutique at 50 Eglinton Ave. E, to pare her clothes and accessories down to a selection of mix-and-match items scarcely bigger than the amount required for a two-week vacation. The practice is part of a resurgence of the capsule-wardrobe concept that's taking both fashion blogs and average closets by storm. The term was first coined in the 1970s, and popularized in 1985 when designer Donna Karan released her “seven easy pieces” collection. Today, faced with small urban closets and more fast-fashion purchases than they can possibly store, women are embracing the capsule wardrobe once more.

The idea is to donate or pack away all but the essential and most-loved pieces one needs for a given season, usually netting out around 30 or 40 items, including all accessories and shoes. Doing so cuts through the visual noise and simplifies getting dressed in the morning, says Nadler, who over the last year has seen more of her clients downsize their wardrobes.

“They’re being smarter in the choices they’re making and asking themselves, ‘how do I make as many outfits as I can from as few pieces as possible?’ ” she says.

Lianos-Carbone is a mom of two boys who play hockey. “So I’m on the go but I still want to look presentable even though I’m in a rink,” she says. But she also needs to kick it up a notch for the events and meetings she attends for her website anotherworld.com “I’m finding it frustrating to choose a nice put-together outfit because I’m just so overwhelmed by the choices that I have, so then so I end up wearing the same sort of things.”

She’s certainly not the only woman to fall into that pattern. Lisa Canning, an interior stylist who helps homeowners make their spaces work, says “organizational pain points” like an overstuffed closet are common everyday stressors. In fact, Canning, has just adopted the capsule wardrobe system herself. “I want to get dressed in the morning as easily as possible, and I know I only wear a quarter of my closet.”

Jennie Vlietstra, a professional organizer with [Positive Space Living](http://PositiveSpaceLiving.com), says curating a closet to the key pieces that work for your daily life and reflect your personality reduces “decision-making fatigue.” She believes it represents a shift away from fast-fashion culture.

“I feel like this capsule wardrobe trend is definitely connected to a movement toward conscious consumerism and mindful purchasing.”

About three hours after the makeover of her closet began, Lianos-Carbone is beaming. She’s got 40 items —from clothing to sunglasses, shoes and jewelry — arranged artfully in her closet, and was instructed on how to combine them into around 60 different outfits.

“I feel lighter. It looks so nice!”

How to create a capsule wardrobe

- Decide on a number of items between 30 and 40 including shoes, jewelry, sunglasses, scarves and bags, but not undergarments, swimwear or pajamas.
- Make a list of categories (pants, sleeveless tops, T-shirts, jackets, etc.) that you’ll need for the coming season.
- Go through your clothes, with a stylist or discerning friend, and pick the items you love best and find most versatile, and that combine to make many outfits.
- Fill in the gaps with strategic purchases like a sleeveless white blouse or pair of cropped pants you can wear with almost anything.

- Donate or pack up the rest of your clothes. Use storage bins or attractive boxes with lids to protect them from dust.

Maria Lianos-Carbone's capsule wardrobe:

1 trench

2 blazers

3 dresses

1 cardigan

2 lightweight sweaters

5 blouses

a layering tank

4 T-shirts

1 skirt

2 pairs of shorts

1 pair of white linen pants, full length

3 pairs of cropped pants (one coral, one khaki, one black)

1 pair of boyfriend jeans

2 scarves

3 necklaces

1 set of bangles

1 cocktail ring

1 pair of sunglasses

1 neutral handbag

4 pairs of shoes (nude peep-toe pump, neutral animal-skin wedge, coral sling-back wedge, flat beaded sandal)