

Closet Confessional

Lisa didn't just help me organize my closet, she changed my life!

My friend and organizing guru, Lisa Reep, flew in from Northern California to help me clean out and organize my closet – or at least that's what I thought! Instead, she changed my life in ways I could have never imagined.

Lisa sent out an email a few months ago announcing her new business, [Closet Concierge](#). That email got me thinking about my mess of a closet – actually, my closet wasn't all that messy, but I had a lot of clothes that I wasn't wearing for various reasons: too small, too big, out of style, no shoes to match, no pants for the jacket or blouse, etc. In talking with my friends, I am not alone in this. I was also an inveterate sale shopper, which left me with a closet full of clothes that didn't work together. I had some beautiful pieces, but didn't have anything to wear with them. The end result was endlessly feeling like I had nothing to wear (even though my closet was overflowing with clothes)!

I had previously invited my girlfriends over to help me go through my closet and get rid of those items that weren't working for me anymore. I served champagne and snacks and they gave me the thumbs up or thumbs down when I would appear in a new outfit. This was helpful, and I ridded myself of some out-of-date pieces, but it just scratched the surface of what needed to be done.

In The Closet

Before Lisa arrived on Friday, I imagined we'd hang out and catch up that afternoon, go to dinner in the evening and then maybe do some sightseeing on Saturday before the dinner party I planned so my friends could meet her. Then, Sunday we'd get down to work and Monday we'd finish up before I had to take her to the airport.

Well, Lisa had other ideas. On the ride back from the airport, she suggested that if I was up for it, we could start right away. Wow, I thought. She's really serious about this. Not that I wasn't, but she knew what this job would take and I had no clue.

So, we started with the smallest section of my closet, the jackets and blazers. I took out the pieces that I wasn't sure of keeping and I tried every one of them on, looking in the mirror and getting Lisa's professional opinion about fit, style, color, etc. She created separate piles for the pieces I didn't want to keep: donate, give to someone I know, re-purpose and send to the tailors. She also suggested a "maybe" pile for those pieces that I just couldn't make a commitment about one way or the other.

I've "cleaned out" my closet many times before, but having Lisa there to keep me focused and on track made a world of difference in the outcome. It's like exercising; I can exercise at home, but never at the intensity as when I'm in a class or with an instructor. We just need someone to keep us focused and push us to make decisions. Without the professional, most of our clothes end up in the maybe pile and then back in our closet or some other closet in the house!

We finished the jackets pretty quickly, so we moved on to the blouses and shirts. Again, Lisa took all the pieces I wasn't sure of out of the closet and we began the process all over again.

Not only did Lisa help me select the pieces that looked best on me, she also did the hard labor of hauling my clothes out and back into my closet, putting all my clothes on matching hangers (you have no idea how much neater and cleaner my closet looks just by using all the same color hangers!), and folding the clothes in all the piles. All along the way, she asked me questions and listened to what I was saying (and not saying) about each item. She took notes about components I needed to purchase to complete an outfit so when we went shopping, we would have a plan (I didn't even know we were going to go shopping – what a treat!).

Cleaning out and organizing your closet is physically and emotionally draining – one of the reasons not to attempt it alone! Having someone there guiding you through the process; keeping you focused and on track; encouraging and helping you make decisions; doing the physically demanding work of taking your clothes in and out of the closet, taking them off and putting them back on the hangers and hanging them up again; sorting the clothes into piles, and bagging the clothes for donation isn't just helpful, it's absolutely necessary.

The next day, we continued with my dresses and trousers. We even went through all my scarves and shorts and shoes.

Out of the Closet

With Lisa's shopping list in hand, we headed to the Galleria on Sunday. Because we knew what I needed, Lisa recommended stores that would likely have the items and styles that would suit me. With Lisa at my side, I didn't head straight to the sale racks and instead, scanned the stores with laser focus. It was like a military mission, if we didn't see what we were looking for, we were out of there. We also didn't browse or enter stores that were unlikely to have what I needed. This saved us a huge amount of time.

Fortunately, we found many of the items we were looking for in the first store, so off to the fitting room we went. As I tried on each piece, Lisa would ask me what

I thought and then give me her opinion. Basically, if I wasn't excited about it, I didn't buy it. One pair of pants made the cut and we moved on.

With Lisa's guidance, we continued this process until I had purchased everything but one item on my list. It only took four hours because she knew what I liked and which stores to recommend. She also didn't take me to the most expensive stores because, while I love beautiful, well-made clothes, I was a longtime sale shopper and wasn't likely to spend the money.

We finished up on Monday and came home to put some outfits together to give me options for how to wear each piece. Lisa had me choose the pieces I was most unsure of and together we pulled pieces from the closet to coordinate. I tried some combinations on and laid others out on the floor, taking pictures of all of the outfits for future reference. This will be such a help for me because like most women I know, I tend to wear my clothes with the same thing over and over. Now, I have seen other options and have gotten confirmation that they look good on me - so I'm more confident in switching things up.

Take-Aways

Four pearls of wisdom I learned from Lisa during this process:

1. Buy it only if it makes your heart sing;
2. It will never look or feel as good on you as it does in the store – so if it's not perfect, don't buy it; *and*
3. Don't buy something just because it's on sale
4. You deserve to buy full price!

It's hard to describe how freeing this process was – it felt like a heavy burden was being lifted off my shoulders. Cleaning out and organizing my closet has made me feel lighter and more energized. The clutter is gone and it has freed me up for other things. Now when I walk into my closet to get dressed, I know that every item fits me, I can wear everything because I have coordinating pieces and shoes to match, every piece looks good on me and everything is in style.

I feel more confident in putting outfits together and enjoy getting dressed again. I also save a lot of time because I can find what I want and I don't stand around sorting through pieces I can't wear or wondering if I have shoes that will work. All my clothes are hung by category and color, making it fast and easy to find what I want. And, while I only bought a few new pieces, I feel like I have a closet full of new clothes!

If you haven't gone through this process, you **HAVE** to do it. I know it can be pricy, but it is so worth it and actually pays for itself. If you're like me and you shop for reasons other than to clothe yourself (you know what I mean – you shop

because it's on sale, because you're bored, unsatisfied, unhappy, happy, for the rush, any excuse you can find) take a moment and try to add up all the money you've spent on those clothes – those clothes that you didn't love, that you didn't wear or only wore once or twice because they weren't quite right.

Think about all the clothes you've donated or thrown away in the past few years and how much money you spent on them. I would bet that the cost of hiring a closet organizing professional would come to much less than what you've already spent on items you don't wear. And, once you get organized you won't feel the need to hit the sale racks or binge shop because you'll have so many fantastic outfits already hanging in your closet.

Finding “the ONE”

A good professional closet organizer/stylist is your shopping and style advocate. Look for someone who will:

- Talk with you to determine your style and goals
- Be organized, task-oriented, focused and honest
- Provide encouragement, support and helpful feedback throughout the process
- Keep you on track with your goals
- Do the heavy sorting and lifting (literally)
- Make notes and shopping lists
- Organize and re-hang all your clothes by category and color
- Change out your hangers to ones that match
- Act as your personal shopper and shop with you or bring you items to try
- Style your wardrobe and construct outfits for you
- Offer accessorizing suggestions
- Take photographs of outfits for future reference
- Offer follow-up services such as seasonal closet organizing, personal shopping, etc.

Follow-up

It's been three weeks since my closet organizing weekend. I want to report that I have stayed on track and have not purchased anything that was not on my list. In fact, I had some spare time while I was in Nashville recently so I went into Anthropologie and tried on a really cute blouse that was on sale. There were so many things I liked about it except that I didn't like the way it looked from the side. I looked at it from all angles and spent quite a long time in the dressing room, trying to decide to buy or not. In the end, I was very proud of myself that I used the “do you love it” test. It didn't pass, I put it back on the rack and left the store. Success!

~ Carol, Fine Jewelry Designer