

Wearing Nothing New

Part 1

I'm Jessi, and this is my suitcase. But before I show you what I've got inside, I'm going to make a very public confession, and that is, I'm outfit obsessed. I love finding, wearing, and more recently, photographing and blogging a different colorful, crazy outfit for every single occasion. But I don't buy anything new. I get all my clothes secondhand from **flea markets and thrift stores**¹. **Aww**², thank you. Secondhand shopping allows me to reduce the impact my wardrobe has on the environment and on my wallet. I get to meet all kinds of great people; my dollars usually go to a good cause; I look pretty unique; and it makes shopping like my own personal treasure hunt. **I mean**³, what am I going to find today? Is it going to be my size? Will I like the color? Will it be under \$20? If all the answers are yes, I feel as though I've won . . .

Part 2

I'm also going to tell you a few of the **life lessons**⁴ that, believe it or not, I have picked up in these adventures wearing nothing new.

So let's start with Sunday. I call this "Shiny Tiger." You do not have to spend a lot of money to look great. You can almost always look phenomenal for under \$50. This whole outfit, including the jacket, cost me \$55, and it was the most expensive thing that I wore the entire week.

Monday: Color is powerful. It is almost **physiologically impossible**⁵ to be in a bad mood when you're wearing bright red pants. If you are happy, you are going to attract other happy people to you.

Tuesday: **Fitting in**⁶ is **way overrated**⁷. I've spent a whole lot of my life trying to be myself and at the same time fit in. Just be who you are. If you are surrounding yourself with the right people, they will not only **get it**⁸, they will appreciate it.

Wednesday: Embrace your **inner child**⁹. Sometimes people tell me that I look like I'm playing dress-up, or that I remind them of their seven year old. I like to smile and say, "Thank you."

Thursday: Confidence is key. If you think you look good in something, you almost certainly do. And if you don't think you

¹ "Flea markets" are markets that sell used items. Similarly, a "thrift store" is a store which also sells secondhand goods.

² The utterance "Aww" in this case expresses that Arrington thinks something is nice. She is saying it as a response to the audience clapping for her. Notice Arrington's intonation when she says this.

³ When Arrington says "I mean" she is indicating that she will now explain in more detail what a "personal treasure hunt" is.

⁴ A "life lesson" is something that you've learned in your experiences that influence the way you live your life.

⁵ When something is "physiologically impossible," your body can not do it. Arrington uses this serious scientific term to make her comment about red pants both funny and memorable.

⁶ When you "fit in," you are a member of the group and don't stand out. Someone who fits in would not be considered unique or different from others.

⁷ Something that is "way overrated" is not as important as people think it is. The modifier "way" is a common colloquial expression for "really" in American English.

⁸ When someone "gets" something, they understand it. In this case, Arrington means that your real friends will understand you and not judge you no matter what you wear.

⁹ The term "inner child" refers to the idea that a part of our true self, the person each of us was as a child, becomes lost inside us as we become adults.

look good in something, you're also probably right. I grew up with a mom who taught me this **day in and day out**¹⁰. But it wasn't until I turned 30 that I really got what this meant. And I'm going to **break it down**¹¹ for you for just a second. If you believe you're a beautiful person inside and out, there is no look that you can't **pull off**¹². So there is no excuse for any of us here in this audience. We should be able to **rock**¹³ anything we want to rock. Thank you.

Friday: **A universal truth**¹⁴—five words for you: Gold sequins go with everything.

And finally, Saturday: Developing your own unique personal style is a really great way to tell the world something about you without having to say a word. It's been proven to me **time**

and time again¹⁵ as people have walked up to me this week simply because of what I'm wearing, and we've had great conversations.

So obviously this is not all going to fit back in my tiny suitcase. So before I go home to Brooklyn, I'm going to donate everything back. Because the lesson I'm trying to learn myself this week is that it's OK to let go. I don't need to get emotionally attached to these things because **around the corner**¹⁶ there is always going to be another crazy, colorful, shiny outfit just waiting for me if I put a little love in my heart and look.

Thank you very much.

This is an edited version of Arrington's 2011 TED Talk. To watch the full talk, visit TED.com.

¹⁰ The term “day in and day out” simply means every day, but it emphasizes the fact that whatever took place was a commitment.

¹¹ When you “break it down,” you explain something in clear terms.

¹² If you “pull something off,” you succeed in doing something difficult.

¹³ The verb “rock” is used in regards to clothes and fashion to say that someone is wearing something well—that they look especially good in it. It is always followed by an object: He is rocking that hat.

¹⁴ “A universal truth” is something which the speaker believes is true in any place, at any time.

¹⁵ If something happens “time and time again,” it happens repeatedly.

¹⁶ Something that is “around the corner” is going to happen soon.