Fashion tips for moms and daughters

by Sharon_Mosley

Memo to baby boomer moms everywhere â€” who says you can't look just as stylish as your daughter?

Yes, we've all heard the moans and groans from our daughters as we step out the door â€” "You're not really going to wear that out, are you?" Sounds vaguely familiar, doesn't it? It wasn't all that long ago that our mothers were asking us the same thing.

A frumpy floral skirt and heavy wool blazer/turtleneck combo is "never cool" according to Sherrie Mathieson, author of "Steal This Style." Photo courtesy of "Steal This Style" by Sherrie Mathieson. The pantsuit and the skirt-and-sweater look on this mom and daughter stand the test of time. Mother and daughter could steal each other's outfits and accessories, allowing for fit. Photo courtesy of "Steal This Style" by Sherrie Mathieson.

But when we hit middle age, we can easily get "off track" when it comes to our wardrobes, says Sherrie Mathieson, a style consultant and former costume designer whose book, "Steal This Style: Moms and Daughters Swap Wardrobe Secrets" (Clarkson Potter; $22.95), is set for release April 14.

"A lot of us are confused, and as a result are either stuck in the past or have simply given up and wear what's easy, which is not necessarily what's most flattering," admits Mathieson, a boomer herself, who warns against settling for "instant old" outfits. "You know the ones," she says: "dowdy, boxy, voluminous jackets, pull-on pants, gaudy floral blouses, gauze broomstick skirts and faux ethnic jewelry." Yes, we know the culprits, don't we?

Matheison knows it can become trickier as women get older to choose clothes that are modern and yet age appropriate. But she does think that women over 50 can take some cues from the younger generation and still dress with flair. In her latest book, the stylist assembled 20 sets of real moms and daughters (and a few grandmothers, too) from a variety of backgrounds, body types and ages ranging from 21 to 86. "Steal This Style" is filled with youthful remedies for common fashion mishaps â€” from moms who try too hard by wearing an abundance of prints, mismatched styles, and overly revealing attire to moms who don't try hard enough, sporting frumpy, oversized and outdated clothes.

"The message we send should not be in the form of a red and black knit suit, pink and gray velour sweats or a snowman sweater vest," she says. "Let's banish the word 'senior,' and the looks that conjure the word, from our vocabulary and our closets."

Matheison's style philosophy is about bridging timeless, core pieces with items and accessories that are "in" right now. "I call it the 'art of the mix,'" she says.

Her suggestions include pairing a classic long-sleeve white blouse with a very-dark, denim, knee-length straight skirt. Then accessorize with a thin black patent belt "low-slung" at the waistline, black patent ballet flats and black opaque tights. Fling a fuchsia or soft nude pink classic cashmere cardigan upon your shoulders, and wear the outfit with a large slouchy faux or real snakeskin bag in neutral tones. Finish off with a chunky silver chain bracelet stacked with a large masculine silver watch, and large silver hoop earrings.

Matheison also feels combining "analogous" colors provides a modern way to dress. For example, she says a tomato-red pencil skirt paired with a bright orange blouse, a chunky cantaloupe beaded necklace, and gold slides makes a winning combination and a bold style statement. Or combining white jeans and white T-shirt with a bone-colored V-neck cardigan and neutral snakeskin accessories presents a classic and streamlined look.

The style guru warns against shopping at stores that specifically cater to boomers. "I have always loved J.Crew, and I also find good things at Ann Taylor and Banana Republic," she says. "All women, and ladies who need larger sizes, should seek sales at better department stores and designer shops where there are good opportunities to get real value."

What are the most common wardrobe mistakes we make as we age? Here are Matheison's top five boomer blunders:

â€” Keeping the same clothes year after year without reassessment.

â€” Not observing good fit and what's hip and modern.

â€” Trying so hard to look young â€” they end up looking inappropriate.

â€” Not building a core wardrobe of ageless and classically oriented styles.

â€” Not identifying or investing in quality items and accessories that they could wear forever.

And what does Mathieson suggest daughters steal from their moms' closets?

â€” Vintage clothing and accessories.

â€” Classic accessories like the Chanel quilted bag with chain/leather strap; great shawls and scarves; or a necklace of quality pearls.

â€” Classic clothes that bridge generations like safari jackets, tunic tops, simple cashmere sweaters or trench coats.

â€” Trendy, stylish clothing and accessories that are beyond their budgets!

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