

Hey there, beautiful! 🌸 Before you dive in, a quick heads-up: this transcript is a super close-to-verbatim buddy from our podcast, but it's got its quirks! We didn't call the grammar cops on it, so you might bump into a typo or two. But hey, that just adds character, right? 😊 Embrace the wild side of language and enjoy the read! Happy exploring! 🚀



Become Your Own Personal Stylist

Carmen Hecox: Have you ever looked in the mirror and thought, this just isn't me anymore. That's the moment when you realize what you're wearing does not reflect who you are or who you aspire to be can be a real eye opener. Today we'll explore how style can be a powerful form of self-expression and empowerment with a New York City Personal Stylist, Guru, Alison Bruhn. Alison harnesses her passion for fashion to help women craft a wardrobe that makes them feel visible, vibrant, and transforms their style to reflect their true selves. Stick with us to uncover the science behind why the right outfit can actually change your life, including a little secret Alison will share about the perfect neckline.

Meet Alison Bruhn: Personal Stylist Guru

Carmen Hecox: Alison Bruhn welcome to Create The Best Me. I am super, super excited to have you on the show.

Alison Bruhn: I am so glad to be here. I really am.

Carmen Hecox: So, before we get into the reason you are here, can you please tell the audience a little bit about who you are and what you do?

Alison's Journey: From Alabama to NYC

Alison Bruhn: Sure, I'm Alison Bruhn. I'm from Alabama. You'll probably hear my accent. And I live in New York City. I'm a personal stylist. And I started my business at 50. And I worked by myself until six years ago on my mother's birthday when I merged my business with my daughter's, and we became The Style That Binds Us.

Carmen Hecox: How long have you been in New York City?

Alison Bruhn: Two years.

Carmen Hecox: Wow.

Alison Bruhn: Yes Yes. It's been two years. We were working together, but I was in Birmingham, Alabama where I lived. And, I had been married for 22 years to Delia's stepfather. Unfortunately, I've been through two divorces. But this was a 22-year marriage. And, you know, I think it happened so often in Covid that they called it the gray divorce. But I just felt like it was pastime, I should have done something before, and I never had the guts to do it. And I think sometimes it has to be when it's more painful to stay than it is to leave, that you do something big like that. But I left the marriage at 59, and moved to New York City, and now I'm 61, and I love it. I love being here and we're growing our business and it's very exciting.

Carmen Hecox: Well, I will say you do not look 61 girls. You are drop dead gorgeous.

Alison Bruhn: No, no. A lot of times I feel older than 62 or one. But a lot of times I really feel so much younger. I think it's just your, you know, who you are, I mean whatever it is. How you think, right, and I've always been an optimistic person, and I think that helps too. And then of course I work with my daughter and anytime I try and say anything, I'm tired, I think I have arthritis, anything I say she goes, don't even try to use that excuse again that you're 60. But I really am 60. She will not accept So, yeah.

Carmen Hecox: So, have you always been interested in fashion style?

Alison Bruhn: You know, that's an interesting thing because I think it might be our generation and above. I don't even know how old you are, my generation and above. But um, I also think it's more prevalent maybe in the south.

But it's just fine to collect antiques and make a beautiful home and all these things but if you care about how, you look if you spend too much time with that, that is shallow, but it's also vain. It's just frowned upon. However, you're always supposed to look exactly like you're supposed to look. The perfect mother, the perfect daughter, the perfect wife. So, I never really talked about it. I always knew that if I

talked about it too much, my mother, through no fault of her own, just from the social mores or whatever, or especially my grandmother would have said, that's vain. You're not supposed to put attention on yourself and spend so much time thinking about what you're going to wear and go and shop it and all that kind of stuff. And so, I tapped it way down. But I secretly loved it always, always, always, always.

And so, when I became an, an empty nester, I thought I wanted to start to do something new. I realized besides being sad, oh, but now it's also this new beginning. What am I going to do with that? Uh, I might work in a bookstore or something like that cause I love to read. But then I thought I really want to do something bigger than that.

I was a stay-at-home mom. I was a first-grade teacher for a long time and then I became a stay-at-home mom. So, I thought, well, mom and I will open an antiques shop. So, we did that and that was really hard, and I realized in the process this is my mother's dream not mine. And so, I decided that that was something I didn't want to do after all. And then I thought about being a travel agent and then I found out that's all computers and what if you messed up somebody's very special trip certainly didn't want that pressure.

And then I thought, well, I'm just going to look around.

The Science of Dressing: FIT and Image Consulting

Alison Bruhn: I think I'll look at FIT, which is the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, where Michael Kors and Vera Wang and all those people went to school and just see what they have for continuing education. And they had an Image Consulting Certification Program. So, I thought, well, what do I have to lose? I'm going to take a few courses and see what I think. And it was so exciting because it was still teaching but it was teaching grown-ups. However, grown-ups have the same insecurities and feelings that little children do. You know, so I made those little children feel strong and brave and important. And now that's what I do for women. And I'm able to be a part of the fashion world and go to fashion events and know fashion designers. And, you know, Delia is the fashion brand end because she started her career at a luxury store called Barney's New

York. And at Barney's she's on the buying team. So, she met all these amazing designers.

So, she had the designers who are looking for people to shop their wares and I had the women who were interested in knowing about new brands. And brands that fit their body type and stuff like that.

So, F I T teaches you the science behind getting dressed. Which means not just like, oh, that's really cute on you, I think you should keep that, that needs to go. It's more about like, there are certain ways to find out the right neckline for you that have to do with proportion. The texture in your hair has a lot to do with what you're wearing on this half of your body, which kind of fabrics you should wear. The size of your eyes and your other facial features, it's all this stuff. And it teaches you about what the person who is looking at you, what their brain is registering. Not like, oh she's tall, or oh she's whatever, but it's thinking about if you have something here that doesn't match what's going on here, that's called visual noise, and so that's distracting.

So, if I have super straight hair like I do, and relatively smooth skin, then I need to be wearing mainly smooth fabrics. If tweedy bumpy jacket or something here, a sweater, this looks like, there's a gnat. You know, the brain of the person is trying to get that noise out of the way so they can concentrate on what I'm saying. So that's especially important if you're giving a talk or, you know, if you're meeting with important clients and stuff like that.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, I remember when I was younger it used to make me feel good, or this was something I used to always tell myself is dress for success.

Alison Bruhn: I love

Carmen Hecox: People know how you feel based upon what you look like. And so when I was younger, I did that. But then as I got older, somehow that fell in the back seat or maybe the trunk of the car because I let go of that.

Alison Bruhn: Right. So many women do. It is remarkable. A lot of women talk to me about back in the day, back in the day. You know, I'm like, back in the day sounds wonderful, but guess what? This is you right now. You know, and I think between then and now, we get lost in the process, obviously, of taking care of all our responsibilities and we're just too tired.

You know, if you have kids, you're spending your money on their clothes. You're not thinking about, you're just barely getting dressed at all. So, then one day you wake up and you're like, this doesn't even work. This doesn't even look good. I feel terrible. When you feel good inside, when you put on a piece of clothing, then, you know, you just naturally stand up taller.

And you're in a good mood. If you wake up and you're running late and you can't find anything that looks good, that starts off your day in a very negative place. Right? But when you feel good about what you're wearing and how you look and everything, then you start out your day with energy. You know, when you walk into work or whatever, and you're in a great mood. Then just people don't know what it is, but they're, they want to join in and then they feel better and it just kind of multiplies.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, and I was reading something yesterday, the article was about the average age in America that people become empty nesters. And that's 48.7. Some places said 48.9. And I'm sorry, Alison, that age, 48, almost, you know, almost 49 years old. You got a lot of good years under your belt.

Alison Bruhn: Oh, yeah. You got good years under your belt. You've got good years coming ahead and smack dab in the middle of it, you go through menopause. So then, you have no idea what's going on. You can't figure out so many things. And it's crazy to me how you have, brain fog or we know about gaining weight and things like that, but there are certain things that we would never put together with that.

And doctors are just really learning about it too. So that's the thing if your kids go to college and at the same time that makes you sad. But then you keep being sad that could really be from, this physical thing that's going on in your body called menopause.

Or especially I feel for people that want to go back to work after their kids go to college. Or, they have to go back to work, and then they're older, and that's another cycle too. But I was laughing so hard, one of our sweet interns said she did research on empty nesters for me she's in college. And it said, empty nesters are between forty and sixty years old. This is a time when they no longer have financial responsibilities for their children anymore. And I started laughing I was like, well, you can be an empty nester for a lot longer than just sixty. But more importantly, most likely when your kids go to college, you don't just totally say I'm

never giving you any more money in your entire life. We know especially in this economy we keep helping our kids as they go along and some of them move back home. You can't get rid of them, so it was out of the mouth of babes. But it's a lot going on. And you're so trained to be selfless that when you think maybe, maybe, maybe I could take some time and do something for myself. You know, you just almost whisper it, you know, you're so conditioned. It's really hard to unlearn things. I feel like I've been unlearning a lot of things.

Carmen Hecox: Um-hum and I know like for myself I always try to dress older than I was. When I was younger, I tried to dress older because I wanted people to take me a little serious. And then when my kids left, they left the nest, I was like, how do I dress now?

Alison Bruhn: Right.

Carmen Hecox: And I was always afraid that I would get people that would say, don't you think you're a little too old for that?

Alison Bruhn: Oh, a lot of people. Yeah, yeah. Well, a lot of times I think our bodies tell us that. But what I always say, and I really believe this, if you put something on and you look in the mirror and you think, huh, I wonder if it's a little too short. That's your answer right there. Because if you wear it, you're going to go out and the whole time you're out, you're pulling down your dress. You're insecure. You're fidgeting. You can't remember what you're talking about. You know, if you ask a question, do I need to go on a diet? Do I need to get my hair cut? Any of these things, usually if you think I need to ask somebody. That's one of the things my daughter has taught me because when we started our business, I kept saying, we need to ask somebody about this.

We need to find somebody, and my daughter said, "it's inside of us, mom." I grew up in that time where your father knows everything. And he's older and wiser and all of that kind of stuff. And so that's the thing. I think it's inside of you. And I feel like if you even have the desire not to dress too young, then you're not going to dress too young.

Do you know what I mean? If you care about yourself, if you have self-respect, if you're interested at all in how, I think your kids will also tell you, you're wearing that, you know, that kind of thing.

But the thing I was going to say about, about all of this is, no one knows what fifty is now. No one knows what sixty is now because it's very different than what it was when our mothers and grandmothers were around. We don't have that example above us because we're so much more active. We wear more casual clothes.

There's no one to look to. One time my mother gave me a dress and I said, gosh, mom, this is, awfully matronly. And she said, well, you're a matron. And I was like, no, I don't think I'm ever going to be a matron. You know, that's, that's kind of mostly in the past now. So, everybody's confused and everybody's trying to figure it out and we're all just going to figure it out together.

Carmen Hecox: And you know I was on your website, and I saw something that just resonated with me. I thought I got to ask Alison to elaborate on this. And it was, it was something about that you curate a style that helps you tell a story about who you are.

Alison Bruhn: Oh yes.

Carmen Hecox: So, I saw that and then I saw your pictures and I thought, well, okay, if Alison is telling me a story based upon this photo of her, what do I see? I see a woman who is comfortable with who she is. She is confident. She is not trying to look young. She is saying, this is me.

Alison Bruhn: I'm glad you got that.

Carmen Hecox: I'm like, I want some of that.

Alison Bruhn: Well, it's really true. And I think people underestimate the power of, I hate to say appearance. It's more about just your, your whole top to bottom. You know, they call it a visual brand or, a presence or whatever, because it does have to do with hair and a little makeup too. If you wear that, but it's mainly about kind of looking polished.

So that's why I've heard these same things over and over again, and it always comes back to body type. It always comes back to body type. And as you get older, your body type changes. I used to be kind of a figure eight. Now I'm more of a pair because gravity is happening. So how do you dress for that?

Um, and I that's what I hear all the time too. Now I have this stomach that I've never had before. Now I have this, or now I have this and the things that I used to wear don't work anymore. So finally, I was like, I've got to do something about this, besides just with my clients.

Empowerment Through Style: Body Type and Colors

Alison Bruhn: So, I made the course, it's called Body Type Fundamentals. And it is like, you got to know your body type and what colors work for you, what fabrics work for you within your budget before you can create your own style, and through that, you learn to create on your own style.

Let's say you want to look like Jackie Kennedy. But Jackie Kennedy had a boyish figure. She didn't have a curvy figure, just like Coco Chanel, up and down, straight. So, anything that resembles what Jackie Kennedy wore, or those little Chanel suits, those don't work on a lot of people, if you have hips, because of where that jacket hits, whee. Like, I can't, I can't wear those. I never, and I also can't wear that rounded collar because I have sloped shoulders.

I need things with a little shoulder pad in them. So, there's all this stuff. It's like putting together this puzzle and then it's like, aha, so now I know instead of all these things, these choices that I have that I don't know what to choose or how to put together or anything, you have just narrowed the scope of things way down.

I know I don't look good in those cropped tweed jackets. So, when I walk in a store and I see one, I'm like, that is so cute for someone else. And I go straight to the blazers that work for me. You know, so you work around that too. Like obviously wearing a blazer is a different style than wearing a little cropped ladylike jacket. But usually, it kind of works through the personality, which is weird, cause I want to be strong and brave and powerful because I don't think I was for most of my life. I always wanted that. And now I'm like, you've got to let that out. That's who you are now. And your clothing can show that, right? Whereas my daughter is more, she's definitely a powerhouse, but she is also, more petite, so she can do feminine things better than I can. I'm more of a minimalist, I guess.

So anyway, you just got to know your body type and even your coloring changes when you get older, right? The pigment goes a little bit out of your skin. When

you're coloring your hair sometimes if people don't know if they have warm or cool undertones, they're putting a hair color on that does not go with their face at all. And they can't figure out what's wrong. The colors don't work anymore for them, well, it's because of your hair color. And strong bold colors that you used to wear; you may need to soften a little bit. They may be too harsh. If you had like auburn hair and then you let your hair go gray, now you're not an autumn. You're not wearing these warm orangey teal browns. You need to go to these cool tones like white and royal blue and black. So, like your whole wardrobe has to change. We keep trying to fit back into back in the day. So, it's at certain points in your life it's good to pull back in and say, okay, now I'm going to do an edit.

And another thing I'm going to go through my closet. Well, you can't go through your closet and make the right decisions if you don't know your body type and your colors. You're just going to throw away things that you're going to regret or keep things in there that are never going to work. But that's my main advice to everybody is, if you don't want to have a personal stylist, if you don't have the money to have a personal stylist, whatever, you just need to make sure that you know your body type and your colors.

Carmen Hecox: And so, then if I understand you correctly, the first part of your course is reinventing yourself, discovering who you want to be at the end.

Alison Bruhn: Exactly we have a big course, that has a lot of, that's really intense. But we also have these smaller courses that are much less expensive because I want everyone to be able to take these courses and use them because its life changing. It really is. I mean once you know, you know. And then from now on you never make another shoddy mistake.

So, there's one course called “Body Type Fundamentals,” and that doesn't just mean oh, I'm a pear, I'm a V shape, I'm a this. It means you print out this whole like a form and the shape of your body is just the first thing. Then you go to your shoulders. Are they slopes? Are they square? Then you go to, are you short waisted, long waisted? We go through all of those things, so you have all the information. Then you know the size prints to wear. There's a list of what you should wear if this is you and what you should avoid if this is you. And then If you take the color course, then you, know more about your colors. But you may already know the colors that you get compliments on and stuff like that.

But once you have that form filled out, then you go to your closet and you're like, oh, here it says what to avoid, that's why this jacket never worked. So, it's going, and then you end up for the first time in your life, probably with a closet that actually works, that everything fits.

And the other thing is, especially as we get older, I'm two different sizes now, I'm one size smaller up here than I am down here now. So, I have to get the larger size dress and then get the top part. Tailored to make it fit. And a lot of people don't take that step either or they don't hem their sleeves of their jackets and they're walking around with just their fingers hanging out. When you finally get that altered, you're like, wow, this is like a whole size smaller now. I look totally different. So tailoring is super important, especially as we get older.

The Importance of Tailoring and Embracing Change

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, and I think that another thing is that, maybe our shape when we were younger, maybe I was 40 or when I was 30, my shape was like this, but now I've hit, I'm post menopause. And so now my shape is more like this. I'm way more curvier than I was back in 20, you know when I was 30 or 40.

Alison Bruhn: Exactly, and we keep trying to make it work still. Cause that's what we believed we were. And so that's the thing, you know, life changes, shape changes, coloring changes, interest change. And also, you know you might be leaving a job or like I said, getting a second career or something. But the styles that resonate with you can change. A lot of times what used to feel, classic and traditional or whatever the word would be, I think classic is probably better at timeless. When we get older, that might look frumpy, just downright old lady. What I want for women is to learn how to dress in a grown-up way, but one that's relaxed, but elegant and a little sexy. And my daughter was like, mom! And I said, you know what, Delia we want to feel sexy too. I'm not saying inappropriate or anything, but deep inside we're still a person. We're not just a mom! And we don't mean we're going to be promiscuous or anything. We just want to feel in the game, alive and vibrant and all of the things.

And so, yes, it's just a fact. Our bodies have changed. Most of us have a tummy if we're in menopause or post. And like my OB said, you can work really hard, but I

think you'd be better off just enjoying life, because it's very hard to, you know, to get a flat tummy later in life.

So, there are ways, I talk about the ABCs of dressing. You **accentuate** things that you feel good about, and then you create **balance between the top and the bottom**. Like I was saying, if you're a pair, if you wear things that are tight up here, that's just going to exaggerate the difference. But if you wear something with shoulder pads here that comes in at the waist, then you have this hourglass figure

And then **camouflaging** is, for me, camouflaging, my hips and my thighs. I feel like I go out more like this now instead of, like I said, like this. So, if I wear something kind of like a jacket you're wearing, I don't know how long it goes. Or this blazer, it hits me sort of top, mid top of the thigh, not right at my widest point. Then you have this column because you have this part in the middle like you have the white column, I have this striped column so the person that's looking at you is thinking up and down long and lean you know legs for miles and all that thing. Simply because of how we're dressing and sometimes a long necklace does the same thing too.

Carmen Hecox: Um hum And I don't like for myself; I tell my husband because my husband doesn't understand. He's, he's a man, he doesn't get it. I say, you know what I don't care how old you are, whether you're fifty, sixty, seventy we want to attract attention. We want to be told, wow, she's pretty. Oh, wow. She looks a little sexy, but not in a promiscuous way. In a wow, look at, she's a girl, she's rocking it.

Staying Visible and Relevant at Any Age

Alison Bruhn: Right, I feel like it just kills me when my clients say, I'm just invisible. And there was actually an article in the New York Times about that where the lady said, I've become invisible, and I think I'm happy about it because I don't have to try anymore. And I thought, okay, well the minute you stop trying, you get old, right? And then you start looking in the mirror and you look old. That's just what your brain is registering. And a lot of times then you become cranky, and you start hurting and everything because you've just gone there, right? I'm not saying desperately hold on, but I'm saying, like my mother is so interesting to me. She is the most ladylike woman, and she has a very soft southern accent. She said, "I'm watching something called Breaking Bad." And I was like, what? That's a terrible show, why are you watching that? And she said, well, it is pretty

terrible, but I like to stay up on current things and it's very popular. Or she reads every book that's out there.

She comes to New York every time she says, I think this will probably be my last trip, so let's make it really special. She's been saying that for like the last five trips. She said she's coming in July. She said it again to me yesterday. I'm like, okay, mom.

And, I think stay in the game, just stay in the game. You don't have to obsess about your appearance or try to make yourself feel younger. But because your skin does change a little bit, it is good. I have a makeup artist that has worked with us, and she is a legend. Her name is Sandy Linter, she's probably 78 now. But she did all the Vogue covers when she was young and worked with the most famous fashion, photographers and everything. And now she does Christie Brinkley's makeup and she's done ours a couple of times and she said, every once in a while, you need to update, you need a refresh. You know, because formulas change, your skin changes, the color that used to work for years doesn't quite work anymore.

You need a different lip, you don't have as much color in your lips, but she said, I don't call it oh an ageless look or anything like that. It's just creating a natural glow. So, you look healthy and happy.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, and I think that's very important is, you know, keeping up, not becoming invisible, keeping yourself in the forefront, being aware of who you are and what you look like and embracing, you know, it's not like you're trying to look young. You're embracing your age, but you're also enhancing yourself by looking at your face and saying, hey, you know what, this color doesn't work for me anymore.

Maybe I should go in and visit a different brand of makeup because this one is not providing the nourishment or, whatever it that I need, that my face needs to look refresh.

Alison Bruhn: Right, exactly.

Skincare Tips for Dry Skin

Alison Bruhn: Go to a dermatologist and talk to them about the best way to take care of your skin now, because our skin, ah, my skin is so much drier. It is unbelievable. It really is. I put on heavy, like, CeraVe cream or some heavy cream in the morning and then I have to put it on again at night. But that's okay, I think that there was a saying by Karl Lagerfeld.

Fashion Icons and Their Influence

Alison Bruhn: He said, you lost control, you gave up, so you bought some sweatpants. And I thought that was so funny because another one, Iris Appel, who died at like a hundred and she some people may know who she is. Some people may not but she became sort of a fashion icon when she was older.

She wore these big round glasses, and she always had tons of bangles and jewelry on and everything. She was a real character, but she said if you can't bother to get dressed don't leave the house, and that's kind of what I feel like too.

Effortless Style with Yoga Pants

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, and I think that COVID has changed us where I think a lot of us have adopted yoga pants as an everyday attire that you wear everywhere.

Alison Bruhn: Yeah,

Carmen Hecox: But then I've seen some people that, they're in their yoga pants and they know how to rock it.

Alison Bruhn: Right,

Carmen Hecox: You know, they still look elegant. They still look girly.

Alison Bruhn: And you can do a look around that too. But like yoga pants and a matching little jacket, your hair still brushed, you have on cute sneakers that and sunglasses and, that's a great look for running around. It's still, it looks effortless, but it's a look, you know, it's, it's like if I wear something like that and I, even if I go to exercise, people are like, wow, look at you, you look so good, cute or something.

I'm like, what do you mean? And then I look around and I'm like, oh, I see what you mean. I put a little effort into this. So, you're right. It doesn't have to be uncomfortable. It just has to be a little polished. You know, there's so many cute, like tracksuits and things like that. There's so much great, even like, uh, I saw this little It was like a jumpsuit, and it was t shirt material, I think. And the shirt was a little bit oversized. It came in at the waist with elastic and then it was culottes. You know, it went not all the way down out like this. It was so cute. And then later she could belt it and put on a better shoe and some earrings. And it became like a much more dressy look.

Wardrobe Essentials for Every Woman

Carmen Hecox: What are some tools that you think women should have in their wardrobe right now. That they can just quickly pick up and make it an outfit and they can either go on a picnic or they can change their earrings, put a different necklace and all of a sudden, they can go out to dinner with friends or drinks.

Alison Bruhn: Well, you want it to be effortless and you want it to look effortless. The French women that look at, that seem so effortless, they work probably harder than anybody to look like they didn't do anything, if that makes sense.

But I would say, it depends on, let's say, it depends on so many things. It depends on where you live, obviously, and what the climate is and what you do. If you are in an office and you're an executive position, I would say a very simple, high quality, well-fitting black dress. Because you can wear it with flats or you can wear it, for cocktails. If it's really simple, you can put a blazer over it. Depending on the material, you can even wear like a trench coat over it and some sneakers to go get coffee on a Saturday morning like Audrey Hepburn with the black sunglasses at Tiffany's.

And then if it's other parts of the country or if you work in a more casual atmosphere, I think a great pair of pants.

The Importance of Tailoring

Alison Bruhn: It's so much harder to find pants than people think. And once again, getting them altered is something that's important. For example, if you're like me,

if you buy a pair of pants to fit your hips, they're going to be too big at your waist or right below your waist.

And so, you need to get that tailored going down the back right here. And then other people who have a little bit of a belly now, but no hips, the pants legs look too big because they had to get a bigger size. So, they need to go and get an experienced tailor who can trim down the side of the leg. So tailoring are main things that I think grow more important as we get older.

Building a Foundation Wardrobe

Alison Bruhn: And then also simple, simple pieces because there are probably a lot of things in your closet that you don't know how to put them together. And it's only because you don't have the piece that goes underneath. Once you get a few pieces like that, like the top you're wearing, a little silk shell or white button down, silk blouse, whatever it is, t shirt, whatever it is that you feel comfortable in, all of a sudden, you're going to realize, okay, I have these pants that I've had altered. I have a couple of these different little bottom layer tops. Now I can wear all my fun jackets, and I can wear all my scarves and then you start adding in, well, I've got the plaid pants. I never knew quite how to wear that, but now I have all these basics that I can mix with it.

It's just, you have to have that foundation. You have to know your body type and you really do need a core wardrobe. That doesn't mean that's your wardrobe. I don't even know if I would call it a core wardrobe. It's more like your foundation wardrobe, right?

The Power of Proper Undergarments

Alison Bruhn: Undergarments that fit, shapewear that works if you wear, you know, if you need it, because that's a huge thing too. We did a blog post about that.

You remember that brand Wacoal? It's a bra brand. They invited us to come to Bloomingdale's and have a fitting like they used to fit women for the bras. So, they did. And the difference in the bra that I have now and the one that I was wearing, I probably look 10 years younger.

I really do. I mean, it is so much more lifting, and it does not have an underwire, which I was so sick of. So, it's all, I mean, these are, you know, sensitive things to talk about, but I think that they make a huge difference, and you put on a dress and instead of looking like a matronly person, you look like yourself again.

So those things, think super basics.

Shopping Tips and Practical Advice

Alison Bruhn: When you go shopping, that's not what anybody does unless they're on a mission. When you're shopping with friends, no one's going to say, oh, I need to find the perfect black pants. They're, oh, whatever pops out at them, and then they get home and they're like, I don't know how to wear this. Why did I do this? And the stores aren't making it easy for us because especially now they don't even have the basics in the stores. You have to get those online. They just have these pieces that really jump out at you that it's an emotional thing.

So do the practical things first and then you can do all the emotional purchases you want knowing your body type, so you don't make mistakes.

Client Success Stories

Carmen Hecox: Tell me about a client that you worked with, an empty nester, who kind of was becoming the invisible woman. After she began working with you, she's now in the spotlight everywhere she walks.

Alison Bruhn: I have had many of those, but one in particular, we had worked several seasons just talking about her body type and clearing things out. She had accumulated a lot of clothes because we do by this time in life have a lot of things that we just never got rid of or they're in another closet or you know, sometimes they take me all over the house. Some in the guest room, some upstairs some in my children. So, she also had her figure had changed and everything and so she was not comfortable with wearing shorts and things that she used to be go to pieces and stuff like that.

So, we created updated looks and everything. And then her son was getting married. And so, we went together and picked out a dress and it had to be altered. And she went back once it was altered. And it still didn't fit. And so, she called me,

and she said, there's only two weeks and I don't know what to do. And I said, don't worry, I'll go with you. I went with them and the tailor was like, no, this is fine. And I said, no, actually it's not fine. You can see as well as I can that it's too big in the back the top, whatever. So, we got back to her house, and she almost started crying. She had tears in her eyes, and she sat down.

She goes, I don't know what's happened to me. I was a lawyer. I was a trial lawyer and now I can't even stand up for myself. You know, and I said, you can't be hard on yourself. We got lost along the way. And it's more women do it than don't. But now because we've been doing all this work, and you have all of these looks that we've created that make you feel good, and that dress is going to be fabulous. That wedding's going to be so special.

You can get that back, but also more than the body type. What I talk to women about too is how to reinvent.

Rediscovering Yourself in Midlife

Alison Bruhn: I remember someone said, how are you going to reinvent yourself when Delia goes to college? And I thought, well, I don't think I really need to reinvent myself. Start all over, I just need to pull out those things that I tamped down for a long time. But taking care of yourself. I was in this salon the other day and the woman sitting next to me said to the stylist, I haven't had my hair cut in two years and she had let it go gray and it was long and straight, and she was 78.

She told me later, she was in private wealth management, and she was really good at her job. But the stylist is this sort of legendary older hair stylist. And he looked at her and he said, first, we have to get some color back in your hair. Second, we need to chop it off. We need to make it into a bob.

And she said, no, I've worked hard to get my hair to finally let it all grow up. So anyway, but she was fine with the cut. So, she got the bob, and it looks great. And when we were leaving, she introduced herself and she said, do you think I need to put color back on my hair? I really don't want to go through the hassle at my age.

And I said, if you look in the mirror and you don't feel old or like, I old, old, you know what I mean? Not I mean, I know she's 78, but if she doesn't look a haggard,

whatever the word would be. If that gray hair brings you down, then sure, put some color on it. If not, rock it. You're 78, you're still at the top of your game.

You know, you're one of the most sought-after investment. She speaks to, to groups all over the country and stuff too. And so, she felt great.

Empowering Women Through Courses

Alison Bruhn: The good thing about these courses is you don't have the time to work, like I said, several years, a couple of times a season, and spend all that money working with a stylist. You can take these courses, and we also talk about how can you find time to explore who you are. How can you go to a new beginning rather than saying, is this it?

And then also, how can you take time to take care of yourself now too? You know, it's probably gotten out of control. It's probably been so long you have no idea. You can get dressed in two minutes and that's something you brag about. Then you realize maybe that's not something I should brag about; I probably could spend a little more time and feel better.

So, it's an emotional thing as well as the practical part is knowing your body type and being able to pick the clothes that go in the closet, but it's the woman wearing the clothes that's important. So that's, that's the thing.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, and I look at it, when you say reinventing, I don't look at it as reinventing, it's more of a rediscovery. Who am I now? You know, when I was 20, I was this person, and I had these goals and dreams. But now that I'm here, they've shifted. And how have they shifted? And who do I see myself five years, ten years, twenty years down the road?

Cause I'm going to live a long life. Women nowadays live longer than we used to. So, who do I want to be? And that's, you know, when I hear the word reinvent myself, that's what I mean when I say it.

Alison Bruhn: Yes, I agree totally. And some of the things that you thought you wanted to do, before you got married and had kids, you might explore them again and decide, that's not exactly what I want to do anymore. So, I'm gonna see how I can tweak that, to make it something that appeals to me now.

We're probably more sophisticated now than we were. And some of the dreams that we thought would be so fabulous, now we realize, they wouldn't be so fabulous. They might be really hard and make you very uncomfortable. So instead, you would want to do this. For example, so it's just endless.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah. And you're a perfect example of that because you were a schoolteacher, you were a stay-at-home mom and then midlife hit, and you said, hey, I want to do this now. I want to do what really inspires me, what really lifts me up, what sounds crazy to everybody else, but crazy lights me up.

Alison Bruhn: Right.

Carmen Hecox: And here you are.

Alison Bruhn: Exactly right. Yes, definitely. And I realized in the process I was having a good time, but it was the evolution of the woman. Seeing her come back, remembering herself. You know, we're standing there, she's looking in the mirror and she puts on something and all of a sudden you can see it and she says, I remember you. And I'm like, wow, this is amazing. You know, it just gives me chills because they're back, she's back, you know, or she's ready, she's ready for new things.

Carmen Hecox: And she's telling her story visually.

Alison Bruhn: Right. Yes, sending the messages, crafting her story.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah, so I know, you know, a lot of famous designers and stylists and all this stuff and makeup, you, you know all the big people. What if I don't really want to buy from the you know the Vera Wangs

Alison Bruhn: I don't wear Vera Wang. No, no, no, no definitely. You just need to, it's good to find a brand that fits. Some brands, knowing your body type, like if you have a straighter body type, there's certain brands that are for that at different price points. And if you're curvy, there's certain brands for that at different price points.

And then, when you need a piece of something new, then you can check that brand first because you know they might have something new that you really like. It has nothing to do with the amount of money you spend. I will say that most of the

time, better quality lasts longer. So, some of these things, especially these boring things that I was talking about, like the black pants, the shell, the black dress, whatever those basic things are, those are going to be workhorse pieces. They are going to be worn over and over and over again and hopefully you don't have to replace them until they literally fall apart ten years from now.

So, invest in those things. Invest less you know, in trends or even like evening gowns and stuff. I mean those things you're not going to wear very often if you have, those things. So don't, worry about size because every brand is different now, they've made up crazy sizes.

And when you see a piece on the hanger at a store, you can probably tell if it looks well made. You can be at Zara or H & M and see something and think, wow, that looks just like some designer coat or something. And then you can also look at the pieces and think that looks and feels cheap. This feels hot, this would make me itch. It's sewn incorrectly. And also personally, I think about if a shirt is ten dollars or twelve dollars, most likely, somebody has been negatively affected along the way of making that piece. So that's, sometimes it's too good to be true, and people will say, I bought ten things, and I spent a total of thirty-five dollars, you know, and you're like, why did you need ten things?

First of all, why don't you buy two things that are not almost, but are, pieces that you're gonna be proud wearing, you know, going to feel good in them.

So yeah, it's and makeup the same thing I mean there are makeup brands at Target they're great, you know, and there are makeup brands at drugstores. It's a little bit more complicated since there's no one there to help you try on. Sephora has one of those things, where they can help you match your skin. You can get a makeup lesson there. And you go to the drugstore and buy the things for less, thinking about how they did it there. Or at the very least if you're warm or cool tones then you know when you're going to shop for a blush. You need a peach blush rather than a pink blush and things like that. It's not about the money, but it is about taking the time. It's, what is that expression? Front load heavy or something like that. In the beginning, it's going to take some time to build this updated, revamped wardrobe. Especially if you're going to have a wish list of, well, I really need a new coat, but I don't need it. It's summer right now, and I know they actually go on sale at the end of the seasons. So, that's on my wish list for next February. I'm going to find a new coat, for example. Be thoughtful about everything you bring in your closet.

Go get, in larger cities, there's something called Glam Squad that actually, they'll come to your house and do your makeup. If they do that, or if you go to a store and ask someone to do your makeup, video it, ask them first. Some of them will automatically do that for you. Same with a haircut, blow dry part. And then go home and study it. I did that with my haircut, and I went back to her, and I said, I still cannot figure out these bangs. And she said, American women give up too easily. Practice, practice, practice. I was like, you're right. I tried once and decided I couldn't do it. So, yeah, we have a little more time now, hopefully, so we can take a little time to learn how to do new things and then it's done. Then it's like shopping in your closet is fun.

Carmen Hecox: So, your program, you work with women, refresh their look, celebrate the body they have now. Not the one they wish they had or the one they want to have, the one they're currently in. And then, well, first of all, I'm sorry, reinvent themselves, figure who they are, refresh their look and celebrate the body they have and embrace it and love it and nurture it.

Alison Bruhn: Right. That's exactly right.

Carmen Hecox: For the lady who is listening or watching right now, what is one key advice that you would like her to hold close to her heart and remember it? Every day.

Alison Bruhn: Well, one thing is you're amazing. That's really the truth. And you need to say that to yourself in the mirror every morning. Hello friend, you're amazing. Something like that. Because you just are. And life is so short. So, tell yourself you're amazing and then maybe spend a little more time on yourself than you have been in the past. In a nice way, in a way that shows you that you're still important. And other people notice it too.

Alison Bruhn: I remember one man said, you have to help my wife she looks like she has the flu. And then he said, she's always in her workout clothes, but I don't even think she works out. And I was kind of like, look, you try living the life she's lived with four kids, and putting you through med school or whatever it is.

But, you know, it is true that women are, judged by their appearance and we don't want to get obsessive about that for sure. But like you said, when you look good, you feel good.

Carmen Hecox: And how can women begin to work with you? I'm pretty sure you have different ways.

Alison Bruhn: Yes, and I don't work one-on-one very much anymore. I'm mainly concentrating on these courses now because I feel like, there are so many women that don't have the time or that are uncomfortable having a person come into their house or working on Zoom. So, I'm making these courses and I'm I sat down, and I went through exactly what I go through with people in person, but I added more. Because I knew there needs to be more instruction since I wasn't there I'm there on the video and I'm there with all these lists that I give and bolding the you know the words and really trying to get hone in on what I'm trying to teach because I believe in it so fiercely. So that's what I'm doing right now. I have that Body Type Fundamentals Course, I have the Color Course, and then I'm working on An Executive Women's Course. We sent out a survey to everybody on our email list. And that's another thing, get on our email list if you want, because from the survey, we were able to tell what are the biggest groups of women that have issues.

And a young mom, that was a big one. Busy executives that were trying to pull it all together and look the part, with life that they were juggling and then empty nesters and beyond. And so, I've done an entire series that talks about those things we just talked about. So, you get an email, you get multiple emails and each one addresses each subject and then I'm going to start having an email that goes out that is about shopping. Because like I told my daughter, what everybody really wants to know after they figured out their body type is where can I find this stuff? Because everything is so expensive now.

And so many of the brands, even more than, than in the past, I feel like are dressed for 11. They look like they wouldn't even fit 15-year-olds anymore. They certainly wouldn't fit us. Everything is cut out and all this stuff. So where is this? I want to give concrete information. So, I'm going to send out emails with, here are the trends this season, but this is how you wear them over 40. And then I suggest pick one or two if you like it and play with that. And then I have clothes that they can choose from if they want to.

Practical Fashion Tips for Women Over 50

Carmen Hecox: Another thing is being a woman, in our age is that we still get hot flashes. We might get hot flashes and so wearing this, little sweater I'm wearing

right now, I might have to take it off in a few seconds because I'm going to start sweating.

Alison Bruhn: Yes. And also, we don't love showing our arms, especially from the elbow up. Some people don't even like their elbows. They really don't like their knees, but they sure aren't going to wear something that hits mid-thigh, most likely. And so, where do you find those things that you can feel more covered up, but you're not burning up in the summer. So that's always been a major thing because it relates to me all of this, that's how I figure out things. Either I hear them from clients several times then I realize this is the thing or I'm experiencing it myself. And those are the two things that I go after hard. Like, okay, this is an issue with a lot of people. And that's the reason I'm doing the courses too. I want to reach as many people as I can to help us.

I feel so, I felt like this with my clients too, especially my older clients. I just wanted them to know I had their back. I wanted them to know that they can do it. And to give them the answers they need. I wanted to help them feel fabulous. And so, that's what I want to do on a bigger scale with these, emails, and those courses, that [Body Type Course](#), and the [Color Course](#). It's not something that everybody takes the same thing. It's not something like a mass thing. It's like here's the, the body types, and then you learn about them enough to know, okay, this is definitely who I am, and then after that, you just go on your path. The next person goes on their path, and stuff like that.

So, it's as close to me being there as I could possibly make it. And these emails will be too.

Carmen Hecox: Sounds amazing. It sounds like you've built a system, or you have this vision of empowering women in the areas that they need the most support.

Alison Bruhn: Right, we have so much on us. You know, still today, it still, it still seems to be us.

Carmen Hecox: You also have a podcast; you and your daughter. So, when does that air and where can people find your podcast?

Alison Bruhn: Well, we have, it's just the two of us. And then we have an army of interns who are fabulous, but they change every semester. And then we have a VA. So, we are a small, but mighty business. And right now, we only have the

bandwidth to work on these courses. So, the podcast right now is on pause. It's not like over but right now We're taking a pause until we get these things going and then I have so many ideas for the podcast, but it is everywhere you would find a podcast and we've interviewed all kinds of people. Most of them are fashion related, but a lot of them aren't.

The website is the hub. At the very least, I would suggest signing up for our emails.

But, go to the website, [The Style That Binds Us](#). And then, you can see the courses, you can see the podcast, there's all kinds of blogs too.

Carmen Hecox: Wow, tons of information, tons of awesome resources for whatever it is you're looking for.

Alison Bruhn: Yes.

Carmen Hecox: Yeah. Well, I will make sure to include all of your information in my show notes so that people can sign up for that amazing newsletter that will provide them with little bite sized tools that they need to feel less invisible. And I strongly recommend people take your course, take your course to begin their journey of reinventing who they are.

Alison Bruhn: We have a money back guarantee if anybody's not happy with it But I think that when it's over you're going to be so happy that you took it and you're going to think, if only, if only I'd had this information about 20 years ago. You know, all the money I would have saved.

But anyway, I really appreciate you inviting me to be on podcast and I think what you're doing is amazing. I do it's so important.

Carmen Hecox: Thank you so much, Alison. I look forward to getting more information about you and working with you in the future.

Alison Bruhn: Yeah, that sounds great.

Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Carmen Hecox: Reflecting on today's discussion with Alison Bruhn, we've seen just how transformative and empowering a thoughtful wardrobe can be. Remember the secret about the neckline that Alison talked about? It turns out that the right proportions can influence not just how others see us, but how we see ourselves. It's not about fashion, it's about embracing and expressing our true selves at any age.

For more insights from today's episode, the full transcript and links to Alison's work, make sure to visit the website, createthebestme.com/ep082

Thank you for joining us on this transformative journey. Be sure to tune in next week for more insights that will help you pivot into the best half of your life. And as always, keep dreaming big, take care of yourself, and remember you are beautiful, strong, and capable of creating the best version of yourself.

Thank you for watching. Catch you next week. Bye for now.