



Look Good, Feel Good: Unlocking Confidence From the Inside Out

Kathleen Walsh

Happy New Year Thrivers! It is truly amazing how fast time flies! With the start of a new year, many have a reset of intentions. This month we have a focus on **Looking Good, Feeling Good**. We are all professionals, some in an office, others at home, but as Amy Finegold points out in her article.... Fashion is not just about a belt matching the shoes, there is real psychology behind it.

Look, I work at a YMCA. Some people likely think I wear a swimsuit every day. (To be clear we will not sell a single membership if I happen to be in the lobby dressed like that). But as part of my role as CEO and as a mentor to our staff, I try to dress professionally, neatly, and stylish ("in my own way" according to my daughters)! There is no better time than January to purge the closet, the bureau, the trunk and everywhere else you hide your wearables. And as a bonus, we now have THRIVE Closet to donate gently used or new items too! These can be delivered to the Chamber or to Beverly Bootstraps and someone else will have the opportunity to wear "your lucky blazer," "your skinny suit" or even your "perfect for age 30 high heels".

Make this your intention. **Look Good, Feel Good** in 2026! And, at the same time, you will be helping someone else do the same! Bring on 2026!

Kathleen Walsh, editor of Rise & THRIVE, is CEO of the YMCA Metro North. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the North Shore Chamber of Commerce and member of the THRIVE Advisory Council.

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Thriving Together





The Psychology of Style: Dressing for the Woman You're Becoming in 2026

by Amy Finegold



I want to introduce you to a powerful, yet often overlooked, tool for personal transformation: **style**.

As we step into a new year, many of us set resolutions. We promise ourselves we'll eat better, lose weight, work harder, or finally make this our year. These goals are well intentioned, but they focus on **actions**. And here's the thing: actions don't stick unless they're rooted in **identity**.

We spend a lot of time thinking about what we want to do differently, but rarely pause to ask the more important question: **Who do I need to be in order to follow through?**

"I am a healthy person."
"I am a focused, driven person."

When you become clear on who you are becoming, the right actions naturally follow. You begin to prioritize choices that align with that identity.

One important part of identity is what we, and others, see when we look in the mirror. **Our clothing speaks before we do.** It sends a message to the world and, just as importantly, back to ourselves. That's why focusing on what you wear isn't frivolous. It's strategic. Style is a tool - and a powerful one - for reinforcing identity.

You can even use style to become someone before you fully feel like her. Clothing can help you access confidence, authority, and ease - even when those qualities still feel like a work in progress internally. You don't have to wait to feel different to dress differently.

So instead of making resolutions this year, I invite you to reflect on who you are right now, and who you want to be moving forward. What kind of woman are you stepping into in 2026? One of the simplest ways to begin embodying that version of yourself is by editing your closet.

Let go of what no longer fits - your body or your life. Consign pieces that don't reflect who you are now, even if you once loved them. Release anything worn, sloppy, or uninspiring. What you're left with should be clothing that supports you - pieces that make you feel confident and strong.

What we wear directly influences our behavior, focus, and decision-making. When we feel empowered by our clothing, we take empowered actions. We show up differently. We take ourselves more seriously. We act in alignment with who we believe we are.

Think about how you feel staying in sweatpants all day versus getting dressed in something elevated but comfortable. Ill-fitting or uninspired clothing reinforces playing small. Clothing that fits and flatters reinforces presence, intention, and confidence. That shift changes how you move through your day and how you interact with others.

This is where the real magic happens. Once you start embodying that elevated version of yourself, you naturally begin making other aligned choices. Style becomes a **keystone habit** - one small shift that positively impacts many others.

You may find yourself making more supportive choices around nutrition, movement, or managing stress. Dressing with intention sends a powerful signal - to yourself first - that you're prioritizing yourself, setting off a chain reaction in how you care for your body, your energy and your mind.

So many women wait until they've lost the weight or gained the confidence to dress differently. But confidence often comes after the action. Dressing for who you're becoming creates momentum. Style becomes a daily rehearsal for your future self.

From there, the actions follow. You nourish yourself. You take chances. You say yes to opportunities that align with who you are—because they now feel natural, not forced.

Style isn't superficial.

It's self-respect in action.

It's a daily affirmation of the woman you're becoming.

So let's start there. Put on something that reflects your strength, your confidence, and your potential—and let this be the year you fully step into it.

And if you want support bringing that vision to life, a closet edit can be a powerful place to begin



THRIVE *Luncheon Recaps!*

by Victoria Mederios
Chamber intern, SSU Bertolon School

Our January 2026 THRIVE Luncheon was a tremendous success. With more than 120 guests in attendance at the Peabody Marriott and an outpouring of generous clothing donations, we couldn't be more grateful for the support of our community as well as our sponsors.

Guests were inspired by our speaker, professional stylist **Aricia Symes**, founder of **Unfoldid**, who shared valuable insights on how to dress to impress.

With the help of our models – Gayla Bartlett, Luisa Coppola, Michelle Kempskie, Shelley Murray and Stacey Palovich – Aricia showed us how professional attire can boost confidence and make a lasting impression, as well as how to choose what works best for you.

We were also thrilled to announce the launch of the new **THRIVE Closet**, in partnership with Beverly Bootstraps Thrift Shop. This initiative allows THRIVE women to donate gently used business attire so those items can be purchased by those looking to jumpstart their careers. Feeling professional can make all the difference — and sometimes, it starts with the right outfit.

You may donate clothing to the THRIVE Closet at either the Chamber office or Beverly Bootstraps, 198 Rantoul St., Beverly. Thank you to the very generous sponsors of this luncheon:

- Presenting Sponsors: Institution For Savings, Rockland Trust, and Abiomed
- Silver Sponsors: InSource Services, YMCA of Metro North, Constitution Financial Partners and Silver Lining Solutions
- Bronze Sponsors: Salem Five Bank, Comm Ink, Harborlight Homes, Groom Construction and RP Headshots





Getting To Know The THRIVERS!

Please meet ...

Julie Gerraughty
Director of Development
HAWC

WHAT IS HAWC?

Healing Abuse Working for Change strives to help abused women, children, men, and nonbinary people live free from violence and fear.

As a leading domestic abuse agency in Massachusetts, HAWC provides a domestic abuse helpline, emergency shelter, legal services, advocacy and counseling services to more than 2,500 families in the North Shore area each year.

Tell us about your professional journey.

I have the strangest professional journey ever! From a finance degree at UMASS Amherst to a sales position at Wang Labs ... After surviving the layoffs from 36,000 employees down to 6,000, I decided I did not want a company to have the ability to decide my fate. I became my own boss as a real estate agent and became a top producer in Andovers. I learned about building spec homes and became a licensed builder, which I fell in love with....until the real estate crash of 2007/2008.

At that point, I wrote down the three things that I was enthusiastic about: 1. Sports 2. Fitness 3. Helping people. That led me to fundraising for the YMCA .

Since then, I have stayed in the non-profit world of development, now at HAWC as Director of Development. The opportunity to help women (and men), during what can be the darkest time in their lives just spoke to me! This incredible organization helps so many people as they navigate fear, safety, finances, children, and housing. It is a privilege to be part of this organization's work.

What was the most challenging professional obstacle that you overcame and how?

I have always been extremely competitive and felt like there was nothing that a man could do that a woman could not. Back in the late 90's, I was 1 of 2 women in a large room of two hundred men in Boston taking the Massachusetts Construction Supervisor's exam to get licensed to build homes. It was intimidating. The obstacle, however, was not being the supervisor of the all-male sub-contractors, although at times it proved challenging. The biggest obstacle was myself, thinking that I had to prove myself to all of them. My own thoughts were the obstacle. Over time, I became more confident and learned to care less about what others thought. It was a work in progress and so was I.

What are your guiding principles as a female leader?

Fair, firm, but also forgiving as we as women understand the tasks of juggling so many things at times - family, work, aging parents, and too many other responsibilities to name here. I have always found that constructive criticism is important but should always be followed with options for improving. The two together can make a big impact vs. just one.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

That time really does heal with whatever challenges, loss, and uncertainty surrounding you during difficult times.

What is in your physical and emotional self-care tool kit?

Staying active at the gym and walking my dog for physical exercise. For emotional support, there is nothing better than the love and support of true friendships.

Name three things that bring you GREAT joy outside of work?

1. My daughter who is graduating college this year from High Point University
2. My dog, Gracie Lou Freebush (Miss Congeniality reference)
3. My amazing, funny, and supportive girlfriends keep me laughing, sane, exploring, and relaxing.

If offered \$1,000,000 to use in any way but for yourself & family, what would you do with it?

I have thought of this scenario which is funny because I do not buy lottery tickets! Firstly, I would give a big chunk to HAWC of course because everyone deserves to be safe. In addition, I have met amazing women playing adult softball. They come from all over from Lawrence and Methuen all the way up to Newburyport and everywhere in between. They are the most amazing group of women from all backgrounds, ethnicities, and income levels. The sisterhood we have together has touched me deeply. I would help many of them who struggle to make ends meet. I am so grateful and honored to have met them and had them in my life.

What do you want your legacy to be?

For the way I care for people, listen to people, and how I make them feel heard and for helping to build confidence in girls through all my years of coaching girls sports.



Looking forward to 2026!

Looking for a great way to market your business?
Exhibit at the **THRIVE Summit Marketplace!**

The 4th annual Summit is set for Thursday, **JUNE 18** at the Peabody Marriott, with registration beginning at 7:30 a.m. The day includes breakfast and lunch keynote speakers, panel discussions, lots of networking, and of course, the popular Marketplace.

We're currently taking applications for Marketplace exhibitors and give preference to women-owned and women-led businesses. Space is limited to 12 booths. The \$350 cost includes 1 ticket to the Summit (\$150 value).

If interested, please email Karen Andreas:
karen.andreas@northshorechamber.org.
Provide details about your business, the theme of your booth, and your planned raffles/giveaways or items for sale. We look forward to hearing from you!



Have an idea for content for the THRIVE monthly newsletter?
Please email **Kathleen Walsh** at kwash@metronorthymca.org.

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and encourage others to sign up for THRIVE! It's free!