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Helping to re-create self-image

How to be Cindy Newstead, personal stylist



Cindy Newstead was inspired to a new career on a self-development course.

I WANTED to be a hairdresser when I grew up because my mother had a salon in Brighton but it never turned out that way. The part-time work I did for her when I was at school was fun but my hobby was buying fashion magazines and creating new looks.

When I was in year 10 at Methodist Ladies College I did work experience for a dentist and loved caring for his patients. So for five years I worked as a dental nurse; also getting married and, at 21, having the first of my four children.

After my marriage broke up in 2000 my main focus was on holding together the family and giving my children the support they needed. I hadn't thought much about myself, except for a burning desire to do something in fashion.

With a new partner, I attended a number of self-development meetings; one of which was about dressing to impress. The course surrounded me with highly motivated people and ultimately taught me to steer my own boat.

Some of these people I met through these courses are still my clients today and it's because of those early relationships that I have such an excellent business. Not only did they become clients but they advised me and guided me into my own business, Style With Cindy, which I launched in 2002.

Now I am almost completely booked out and I am looking for assistants in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. I travel to Sydney seven times a year, I'm in Brisbane every five to eight weeks and I have a large client base in Melbourne.

When my website was launched it blew my business into a whole new proportion. Now I have online clients who I advise remotely — using Skype, email and photos — on their body shape, colours and creating new styles.

I have studied many colour and body

shape profiling systems over the years, and travelled to Europe, the US and Africa.

While I find colour and body shape analysis a great help in establishing a general set of rules for complexion and body shape, there are many variables that can add and change these rules.

It's important to keep in mind that personal styling is not just about clothes, it's about self-esteem and self-confidence.

I have added a new dimension by studying and using neurolinguistic programming, an interpersonal communication model that is an alternative approach to psychotherapy based on the subjective study of language, communication and personal change.

This really helps in communication with my clients and building rapport. It's about asking them questions intelligently so the person actually thinks afresh about why they feel the way they do.

Quite a few of my first encounters with clients start in tears. Many have had children so have lost their sense of personal style along with their body shape. Others find their husbands put pressure on them to regain their figures after childbirth.

Some are re-entering the work force and have no direction; some have been seriously ill or had surgery such as mastectomies or burns. I empathise with them, because I have been through some similar situations.

It's not just about taking someone shopping and spending their money because anyone can do that. It's about reviewing their wardrobe as a whole, being honest and sometimes brutal, about what they need to get rid of and what doesn't flatter them, no matter how wedded they are to a style or shape.

The clients range in age from young girls to 65-year-old women. About 5% of

CV

Born: November 1964, Melbourne
Education: five primary schools in Melbourne; Methodist Ladies College, Kew.
Career: 1980 full-time dental nurse, 1986 began motherhood with children born in 1987, 1989, 1990 and 1994; 2001 remarried and began business course. 2002 to present: launched Style with Cindy.
Career highlights: helping a woman with terminal cancer look at life differently and helping her to have the best day. My first speaking engagement in front of 75 business people and being so incredibly nervous, yet at the end being congratulated and inundated with inquiries and new clients. The first time that my website made it to number one in Google.
Career low: my website going off-line for a few days after a television program featuring personal stylists was aired, I would always get a dramatic increase of traffic on the site after any focus on personal stylists in the media, and as this was in the early days of business, it hurt.
Unwinding: snow skiing, body boarding with my children, shopping for myself, reading, dining out, movies and travel.

my customers are men and I also have corporate clients. It's become so busy that my husband now works full-time in the business and manages all the administration and bookings.

One of the most exciting aspects of what I do is that the business can really grow. I'm also writing a book at the moment on styling and redressing body shape issues.

I do speaking engagements on personal style to corporations and other interest groups. I would like to expand on that with workshops for mothers and even schools. Naturally this takes me away from spending time with my clients, which is why I'm looking for assistants.

Ultimately, I prefer time with my clients. Helping their self-esteem and confidence grow, this is what is so enormously rewarding to me and always gets me excited at the start of my day.

PAUL EDWARDS