

## Sustainability & personal style

### The role fashion plays in the life of an Upper Valley teenager

#### ESSAY



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Fashion, to me, is a form of personal expression and self-identification. Bright colors, wacky patterns and eccentric jewelry allow me to stand out and provide me with a feeling of individuality. This can be achieved either overtly or covertly, depending on the style of the individual wearing the piece. That's the fun thing about fashion: Accessories and pieces of clothing are up to the interpretation of the wearer, offering endless amounts of opportunity to incorporate a personal touch into one's style.

I developed an interest in clothing and fashion after becoming interested in sustainability and the environmental impact of the fashion industry, specifically fast-fashion practices. I started to pay closer attention to where my clothing was coming from, as well as the materials being used in the clothing I was buying. As I developed my own personal style, environmentally friendly consumption was something I heavily took into account. Sustainability still guides a lot of the decisions I make when clothing shopping.

I feel as though fashion and clothing give me an opportunity to express myself through my physical presentation. I used to view fashion and clothing as a way to fit in: Now I think of it as an opportunity to stand out. I like to compare getting dressed to "customizing my character," like one would in a video game. I get to put together outfits that I feel represent me and how I want to be perceived by the world, and that's a fun and exciting experience. Personal style is always changing and evolving, and finding clothing I'm comfortable in and feel represents me is such an affirming experience. Additionally, it's been fun for me to look back at my own style and how it's changed over the years as I've become more comfortable with myself.

I especially enjoy dressing in ways that allow my personality to shine through. One way I like to add

style and giving my outfits an intentional focus point.

Aside from personal style, I additionally like to take into account where I'm buying clothing from. Sustainable or ethical manufacturing is something I look for, as well as the quality and longevity of the clothing I'm buying. I think it's important to shop intentionally. Ask yourself: Will I wear this consistently? How long will this article of clothing last? I believe quality trumps quantity, and this is true for fashion and clothing, too. I try to be aware of my impact as a consumer. While I do not have direct or overwhelming control over the fashion or clothing industry, I can choose to buy from businesses that engage in practices I support. I also choose to shop second-hand or from small businesses when I have the opportunity to do so, as it does not directly contribute to fast-fashion practices.

Through experimenting with my own personal style and the clothing I wear, I've found a style I like and that makes me feel comfortable in my skin. Fashion is a great opportunity to present myself to the world in a way that makes me happy, as well as lets my personality shine through in the clothing I wear. Fashion and clothing serve as an outlet for myself and others to express ourselves through our style, which is an endlessly fun and enjoyable experience.

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personality to my style is through fun, unique or colorful jewelry and accessories. These give an outfit individuality and allow the wearer to personalize an otherwise simple outfit, as well as give additional life and personality to a “busier” or more eccentric look. When dressing down or wearing a monochrome outfit, I like to add bright and unique jewelry as a focal point. When dressing more boldly, I enjoy incorporating similar jewelry as a way to give an already busy or colorful outfit more detail. Heavy accessorization is currently a popular fashion trend among teenagers and young adults, as it provides a sense of individuality in a more subtle way.

Another way I like to add personal touches to my style is through statement pieces in my wardrobe. A statement piece could be anything: a fun patterned sweater, an eye-catching pair of shoes, or a unique bag can all serve as statement pieces in your wardrobe. I enjoy incorporating statement pieces into otherwise simpler outfits as a way to express myself while still keeping a somewhat concise wardrobe. One way I do this is by pairing bright, eccentric sweaters or cardigans with a simple T-shirt and pair of jeans or a monochrome outfit. This allows me to keep the building blocks of my outfits simple while still incorporating personal



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