**Episode 4 • Ask Alexandria: Is there such a thing as an ideal life? And how do you look good on Zoom meetings?**

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:00] Style is all about confidence. If you feel great in what you're wearing, people will respond to that confidence.

**Intro** [00:00:06]

 Hello and welcome to ALSO in PINK. The podcast all about lifestyle design. How we live, the clothes we choose and how we organise our space. I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, a certified KonMari consultant and personal stylist. I'm here to guide you on your journey to live a happy, fulfilled life.

Every Tuesday, you'll get new insight on what it means to live well, plus actionable tips.

Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life. And now for something completely different. Today, we're shifting gears a bit. This episode is all about you. Each month I do a special Ask Alexandria episode where I answer your questions about life, KonMari and style. So, let's get started.

**Question 1** [00:01:00] Hello and welcome to Ask Alexandria. This month's questions are wide ranging. There's a lot about style, from how to look good on a Zoom call to bridging the gap between creativity and eccentricity. We touch on the KonMari Method and things get philosophical as I address more fundamental questions about life. Is it possible to create your ideal life? What does that even mean? The first question today comes from Summer, a freelance translator from Baltimore, Maryland. She asks: what are your thoughts about personal presentation on the Zoom meetings? Clothes, makeup, background, lighting et cetera...

 Well Summer, this is certainly a question for the time we're living in now. Yes, the pandemic has changed how so many of us interact with our jobs, with our colleagues and clients. Everyone whose work can go online, has essentially gone online. Even if that's starting to change for some of us now, as certain sectors return to more in-person contact, we're still far from any sense of normality. In other words, figuring out how to present yourself on something like a Zoom meeting is still very relevant.

 So, I have a confession to make. I don't know about you, but I haven't worn proper trousers in months. A smart-ish top and leggings has been my personal go-to choice for online meetings. And if you want to feel comfortable and still look professional, I'd certainly recommend something similar. Or you may feel that getting dressed properly from head to toe enables you to present as your best self.

And for a quick and easy way to elevate your style accessories can really help. I had a call not long ago on which I wore very ordinary blue cotton top, with yes, sweatpants. But I was wearing a fabulous statement necklace. And the person at the other end of the call, commented on how dressed up I looked. So it really doesn't take much to make an impression. A statement necklace might be enough to do the trick.

In terms of what to wear? Here's my challenge to you. Try not to wear black clothing close to your face. For the vast majority of us black close to the face will look draining. And it doesn't matter what the color of your skin is or your ethnicity. I, for instance, am a fairly pale white person yet I have the same seasonal color palette as a Southeast Asian client of mine. Our skin may look very different on the surface, but we both have warm skin tones and we both look our best in bright pops of color. There are, of course, people who look stunning and positively luminous in black, head to toe, but that's a topic for another time.

And it doesn't matter how fab you look, if your lighting is rubbish. I certainly had some Zoom calls early on where my face was completely in shadow. If you want to avoid the whole witness protection vibe, where you're just a dark, blurry outline, I'd highly, highly recommend sorting out your lighting. And it doesn't have to be expensive. Um, start with what you already have in your home. If possible, get yourself near a natural source of light. For instance, face a window or have a window to the side of you. Either way, the light will directly shine on your face. Whatever you do, don't have your back to the window. With your back to the window, you'll be completely in shadow and have a halo of bright light around you. I'm guessing that's not the look you're going for.

Even if you do have lots of natural light, you will most likely need to supplement it with artificial light. That way you can be sure your lighting works no matter what season, what weather, or even what time of day. Ideally, you'll have two light sources to light you as the subject. Place these in front of you or slightly to the side. And if you want to look super professional, you can light your background as well. I recently got a couple led desk lights that I'd certainly recommend if you do want to invest in a more professional setup. They are made by Elgato and are called the Key Light Air. They are adjustable led light panels that you can easily reposition. It's a lovely diffused light and you can change the color temperature and brightness. And they even won the Red Dot design award this year. So if you'd like to invest in good quality, flexible lights, I'd highly recommend these. Otherwise, make use of what you already have in your home to enhance your lighting. Either way, be sure to raise your camera, make sure it's at eye level and directly in front of you. So if you're on a laptop that might mean raising your desk or using a few books or laptop stand to elevate your device. And for your background, I'd say, keep it simple. I'm a big fan of plants in the background, but maybe that's because I'm a millennial. Yes, an older millennial, but a millennial nonetheless. So, I guess it's no wonder that I'm plant obsessed. And this makes me think of a recent episode, episode two of this podcast, where I speak with fellow millennial and plant enthusiastic Charlotte. And we both have a few fun confessions on that episode. So, if you're not happy with your background in its natural state, you can always go virtual.

I would say that lighting and wearing your best colors makes more of an impact than makeup for your Zoom call, but a few touches of well-applied makeup could further enhance your look. And bonus points for supporting a brand with good quality ingredients and ethical credentials. All you need are a few quality products. Kjaer Weis is my favorite makeup brand. And it's founded by a Danish woman who is based in New York. Kirsten Kjaer Weis has some great tutorials on her YouTube channel about how to apply natural-looking makeup. And these tutorials are on models of a variety of ages and ethnicities, which is great. It's just how it should be.

And of course a smile and positive outlook add that extra something to help you come across well on your online meetings. So go on then, make someone else's day today by being really present and engaging on your call. If you're feeling nervous or insecure, try to focus on making the person at the other end of the call feel comfortable. In the end, it's not about you. It's about how you interact with them. And I promise if you engage well with them, you'll feel better yourself.

 **Monthly Review Spotlight** [00:08:07] And now for our monthly review spotlight.

This listener will get a free 20 minute session with me to pick my brain about life, KonMari or style. So.

Congratulations to Eowyn Levene who left a review on Apple Podcasts, USA, on September the 9th. She says: just a slice of heaven. Honestly, she had me at the word pootle, but for a bit more detail, this podcast is full of thoughtful questions, interesting guests, and it's an open door to more beautiful, creative, fulfilled world. Looking forward to listening to more. Thank you, Eowyn. What a lovely review. To redeem your virtual session just email me alexandria@alsoinpink.com. Let me know you left the review and I'll follow it up with a link to schedule a time for us.

 **Question 2** [00:09:04]Simon, a user experience designer from London, asks: do people often wear colors that don't suit them? I mostly have blacks, grays and blues and have a pale complexion. Simon, I would say, yes, just from my casual observations on public transport prior to the pandemic. Yes, most people wear colors that don't suit them. And that's true right across the genders - men, women, everyone. And if, like many people, your wardrobe pretty much just consists of blacks, grays, and blues, there's a very high likelihood that you're wearing colors that don't suit you. It's possible to get away with this more when we're younger, but a huge mistake a lot of people make is to wear more and more dark, somber colors as they age. And if you have a warm skin tone, as many of us do in the Western world, black and white, aren't going to do you any favors. Because black can't find a natural home in your warm skin tone, it brings out things like dark circles and fine lines, and white will wash out a warm skin tone and make you look blotchy and a bit lifeless. Whereas if you're a true winter, the only color season that can wear a black close to the face without detrimental effects. Being a winter, you can wear black close to your face and still look radiant. And you may wonder is navy kinder if you're someone who can't wear black? The short answer is, no, navy also has black in it and can have the same detrimental effect to a warm skin tone. So why do so many of us wear black and navy? For one thing, it's easy to find clothes in these colors. The high street is full of them. And they're easy colors to hide in as well. If you don't feel 100% secure about what your personal style is. You can't go wrong in black, right?

So, how do you discover what your best colors are? I would absolutely recommend going to a professional seasonal color consultant like me. You'll be amazed at what a difference this makes to your relationship with color. Training in this field has certainly changed my perspective and every client I've seen has been rather amazed at the effect of wearing colors that truly suit them. A word of warning though. Be very wary of anyone who only offers online color analysis. You can tell certain things online and make some educated guesses, but the only way to get a 100% reliable, accurate color analysis is to book an in person session with a color expert. And if you have a good color expert, they will explain exactly what they're looking for and educate you in the process. You only need to have your colors done once if they're done properly. Your color palette is yours for life. It doesn't matter if you color your hair or if your hair goes gray. Your seasonal color palette is based on your genetics. And your skin tone is the main factor in determining what works for you. And your skin, even if it slightly lightens with age, is your skin for life.

 Emma, a teacher from the Greater London area says: I know I have too much stuff, especially clothes. Can you help me? I hear you, Emma. I think a lot of us can probably relate to this question. It's easy to amass a lot of things, to collect all sorts of stuff over the years that doesn't necessarily represent who you are now or who you want to be. Unless you're a highly disciplined curator of your belongings, it's likely you too will have experienced an overload of stuff you don't particularly want. The beauty of something like the KonMari method of tidying is that it gives you a real opportunity to take a closer look at your belongings, and address more fundamental questions too. My favorite Marie Kondo quote is: the question of what you want to own is actually the question of how you want to live your life. And I believe this concept is what makes her approach to tidying so powerful, and so different to a more conventional approach to organization. And there is no limit to the number of items you can keep in any category. As long as you feel a connection to them, they bring you joy, feel free to keep them with confidence. My favorite part of the KonMari method is the concept of creating a vision for what your ideal life looks like. Marie Kondo touches on this and recommends finding a single image to represent your vision. And that's certainly helpful. But I've taken this a step further. The creation of your ideal lifestyle vision lies at the heart of what ALSO in PINK is all about. And this leads very nicely on to the next question, where I'll go into this concept in greater detail.

**Question 4** [00:14:09]Cherie from Los Angeles who is retired, asks: I'm wondering whether there's such a thing as an ideal life. Is seeking it a continuing and neverending process or journey we go on throughout our lives? Is it a goal that changes? What if you're not sure what your ideal life looks like? How do you find it?

Well, that's an excellent question. This concept of creating your ideal life is my challenge to you, to all of you listening, and to myself. It's a bold challenge, perhaps even an uncomfortable challenge. It's easy to take a back seat, to let time pass and simply go with the flow. And there's nothing necessarily wrong with that approach. But I'm challenging you to fundamentally take control of your life. I don't believe in fate, or necessarily even chance. I believe in being accountable and taking responsibility for your path through life. I believe in making things happen.

As the poet, Mary Oliver asks: tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

My ideal lifestyle vision questionnaire is an attempt to answer that question. It helps you to take a closer look at how you're living now, to consider what's working for you and what isn't. And then, dare to dream. Imagine free from restraints and constraints. If you didn't put limitations on yourself, what might be possible? With limitless time or money, what could you achieve? No excuses.

So why not give it a try? Give yourself say an hour and complete the ALSO in PINK Ideal Lifestyle Vision Questionnaire. It might even be fun. All you need to do is be honest with yourself and see where your vision takes you. Remember your vision is yours alone. It isn't a one size fits all sort of thing. Be very wary of anyone who tries to convince you otherwise. No one has the right to dictate how you should live your life. You are unique. You are in control. You have the power to make your own choices. Sure, your vision for your ideal life may well change over time. But that's the beauty of it. You grow and evolve and so do your hopes and dreams. But if we never really take the time to dream or to think big, then where are we? We rule out so many possibilities.

 **Promo** [00:16:59] Imagine... if you lived the life you really want. You know, your dream life.

Have you ever taken time to picture what it would look like? I mean, what it would really look like?

We're not talking about the life you feel you should have, but, deep down, the life you secretly want. Your ideal life. Maybe you already have a vision.

 Picture an iconic VW Camper Van... pootling down the coastal path. Maybe you're in Cornwall, the Amalfi Coast or alongside a fjord in Norway. Yes, the scenery is stunning and you're getting ready to stop for a picnic. There's a perfectly ripe, oozy cheese waiting for you, a selection of your favorite treats, and there may, or may not, be vintage vinyl and a portable gramophone to complete the picture. But. That's never going to happen, right? Wouldn't it be nice to take a step back, sweep aside all your worries... and imagine...

That's where I come in.

 I'm your host, Alexandria Lawrence, and I've developed an exclusive questionnaire for the ALSO in PINK community to help you create a vision of your ideal life.

Simply join the ALSO in PINK email list and you'll get instant access to our Ideal Lifestyle Vision Questionnaire. Go on then, make a cup of your favorite tea, or whatever floats your boat... Go to alsoinpink.com and click Start Now. Redefine what's possible & Create your ideal life.

 **Question 5** [00:18:36] Carrie, an image consultant from New Jersey has a confession. She wants people to admire her as an aspect of her business. And she wonders how to make that part of her overall vision.

 First of all, Carrie, how confident do you feel about your own personal style? Who is the person you aspire to be? Does how you show up in the world now represent the person you want to be? What image are you projecting of yourself? I recently heard a talk by Carla Mathis, a well known American image consultant who wrote The Triumph of Individual Style. Carla is a highly experienced image consultant and stylist, but she confessed to losing touch with our own sense of style over the years. Although she continued to help others, she felt her look no longer really represented the person she wanted to be. She didn't feel modern or relevant. She was in a style rut. So she brought home to me, the concept that yes, every stylist can and perhaps should have their own personal stylist. Or at least be open to suggestions from an image consultant colleague they trust. Like with anything creative or otherwise, it's good to have outside feedback. Of course that doesn't necessarily mean you have to agree with or even follow that advice, but it may open you up to new and exciting possibilities. Also, Carrie, who is your target audience for your business? What kind of look would they respond to? Do you know what currently draws your clients to you?

 So essentially I have two questions for you. Does your personal style work for you now? And does it align with what your target audience responds to? If you feel good about yourself and your target audience, your clients admire and respect you, then I would say that's all that really matters.

**Question 6** [00:20:48]

 And finally... Rhonda, a legal secretary from New York city asks: when it comes to styling, what is the difference between being creative and being weird?

I love this question. I guess I would say weird is only relevant when it comes to how the wearer of the style feels. Style is all about confidence. If you feel great in what you're wearing, people will respond to that confidence. You can look far more weird in a simple, neutral blazer, blouse and trousers than if you were, say, wearing animal print with hot pink accessories. It's all about how you project yourself.

In London, I've seen some pretty creative, even outlandish streetwear. And no one bats an eye. I don't know what you'd have to do to shock people nowadays, perhaps not wear anything at all. There's um, there's an older chap in the villagey part of South West London where I live. Um, he was roaming the streets at the height of lockdown, completely starkers, without a stitch of clothing on. Yes, it definitely gave things that end of the world vibe. So perhaps it is still possible to create a stir. But I would say more often than not, no one really is that bothered. No one cares.

In certain professions you may, of course, feel more pressure to blend in with the crowd. Even then I would say if you're so inclined, see if you can rock the boat a little bit. Be brave. Experiment with your style and find something that feels really right for you. It's great to get inspiration from other people or from celebrities. But just because you like a certain outfit or a style on them that doesn't necessarily mean it will work or feel right for you. It takes time to develop your personal style. So start with something you're comfortable with and gradually zhuzh it up a bit. Experiment with pattern, experiment with color, experiment with different cuts and styles. Or, of course, enlist the help of a personal stylist to reach your goals a bit faster. And if you feel you're crossing the line between creative and weird, own it. Go out there with so much confidence that you inspire others to also be brave. In the end, dress for yourself.

 To **Finale: Quick-Fire Questions** [00:23:24] end the show, there's a quick fire round of questions for me. This month's questions are inspired by Vogue's famous 73 questions, but don't worry, we don't have nearly that many. And they are asked by my friendly assistant Gus, who may or may not be real. So take it away, Gus.

**Gus:** [00:23:44] What is your dream country to visit?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:46] Ooh, I'd have to say Iceland. The stunning landscape, the drama, the land of fire and ice. I have family in Norway and it's always going to be one of my favorite places. Definitely want to explore more Nordic countries and see the Northern lights.

**Gus:** [00:24:05] What’s one ingredient you put in everything?

 **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:24:08] Without a doubt, garlic oil. It's great on eggs, on salad, on fish, on pasta, on everything.

 **Gus:** [00:24:17] What's your favorite piece of clothing in your current wardrobe?

 **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:24:21] Sounds perhaps a bit weird, but. I love my fuzzy as I call it. It's a Mongolian sheepskin, scarf, cowl like thing. And I love it. I rarely wear it outside, but it comes out in October or November and keeps me warm and snug until February or whenever winter decides to call it quits. And spring comes.

 **Gus:** [00:24:46] What superpower would you want?

 **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:24:49] Perhaps it's a cliche, but I'd love to be able to fly. My favorite dreams involve flying or jumping off of tall buildings and floating gently down. Sometimes there's someone with me and I hold their hand and I'm like, trust me, it'll be fine. I can fly.

**Gus:** [00:25:08] Sweet or savory?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:25:11] Definitely savory. I'm all about the smelly cheese.

**Gus:** [00:25:16] What's a song you can listen to on repeat?

 **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:25:19] Many songs, but the first that comes to mind is Louis Armstrong's It's A Wonderful World. **Key Takeaways** [00:25:31]Well, hope you enjoyed this first Ask Alexandria episode. Is there something you'd like to ask me? Simply go to alsoinpink.com/askalexandria for a chance to have your question featured on the podcast. You have the option to submit a written question or record your message. And if you'd like to come up with your own quick-fire questions to ask me, please submit five or six questions for next month's Q&A. I look forward to hearing from you. So here are some key takeaways from the show today.

 To look your best for online meetings, sort out your lighting. Get near a natural source of light, but whatever you do, don't have your back to the window. To look really professional, boost your natural glow with artificial light. Use what you already have around your home or get something like Elgato's Key Light Air, which really is a game changer. And position yourself well. Make sure your camera is at eye level and directly in front of you. And try not to wear black close to your face. Warm skin tones don't like high-necked black tops. So if you have to wear black, be sure to show some skin or wear a top in one of your best colors with a black blazer.

Worried you have too much stuff? You're not alone. Most of us have homes filled with items we no longer really want in our lives. Hire a KonMari consultant like me to help you make sense of your space. Style is all about confidence. If you feel great in what you're wearing, people will respond to that confidence. Push yourself out of your comfort zone and in the end, dress for yourself. And dare to dream. With limitless time or money, what could you achieve? It's helpful to imagine unencumbered, and open yourself up to possibilities you might not otherwise consider. The ALSO in PINK Ideal Lifestyle Vision Questionnaire is a great place to **Outro** [00:27:50] start. That's our show then. Thank you so much for listening. I'm Alexandria, and this is ALSO in PINK. The podcast, all about lifestyle design. If you enjoyed the show, please subscribe to ALSO in PINK, wherever you get your podcasts. And the absolute best way to show your support is to write a review on Apple Podcasts or iTunes. This really helps more than anything to promote the show. And, of course, tell all your friends. Thank you so much for your support. Until next time, have a wonderful week. Redefine what's possible and create your ideal life.