**Episode 16**

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:00:00] As you develop your own personal style, you learn to do more with less. Whether you figure this out on your own or work with a personal stylist, like me, invest in yourself. Put your time and money to good use.

**Intro** [00:00:16]

 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.

**About This Episode** [00:01:09] Hello, and welcome to Ask Alexandria. This month's questions bring up some important social issues of our times. Social media addiction is real. And it's time to take back control. I discuss fast fashion, luxury and designer brands. And yes, you can KonMari your plants. Ever heard of a plant throne? Well, keep listening and you'll find out all about it.

The first question today comes from Kelly, a florist from Los Angeles, California. She says. Help! I'm addicted to social media. I spend a lot of time scrolling through my feeds and it doesn't really bring me joy.

 Well, Kelly, **Question 1** [00:01:54] I hear you. Whether or not we like to admit it, pretty much all of us deal with addiction to technology. We're addicted to social media and email. Or maybe we just watch that one Netflix episode, which quickly becomes four and then turns into a full-on series binge.

Our digital lives are highly addictive. And it's not by accident. All of these platforms are specifically designed to keep us engaged, to keep us scrolling. They're designed to keep us on site for as long as possible. That's why the algorithms you hear about that determine how our posts are seen. That's why they reward high levels of engagement.

Facebook Twitter, Instagram, all of these platforms want to keep us in their world for as long as possible. That's why videos tend to do well. And you might get an algorithm boost if you actively use new platform features like Instagram Reels.

A growth hacker, which is a kind of marketer, once told me he almost never adds external links to Facebook posts because of course the algorithm doesn't like it. You're not supposed to leave Facebook. And this growth hacker made sure any posts with links got tons of early engagement within those first 10 minutes of posting to counteract the negative effects of that external link. In the end though, we're not going to beat the algorithm at its own game. How can you beat an adversary that's always changing?

So what's the solution. First of all, we need to be aware of the problem. To be aware that social media is designed to be addictive. So addictive that even if social media doesn't exactly bring you joy, there's a good chance you still actively use it. So, what can you do? For a start, turn off all of your notifications. That's right. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Whatever platforms you use, turn off your notifications. Instead of responding to every alert that comes through in real time, be intentional. Engage on your own terms. Decide how much time you want to spend on social media and hold yourself accountable. By being intentional, you can start to redefine your relationship with social media. There's a brilliant quote from the recent Netflix documentary, The Social Dilemma: there are only two industries that call their customers, users: illegal drugs and software. But we can take back control. We can still enjoy our social platforms. We just need to be more intentional in how we engage with technology. In how we use social media.

Also consider who you follow on your social platforms. Do the posts that arrive in your feed, add value to your life? Do they make you feel good about yourself? If they don't, there's a simple solution. Unfollow. I know, I know, but you don't need to feel guilty if you unfollow someone you know. They won't get an alert. And if you do unfollow someone you value as a friend, try engaging with them outside of social media instead. Yes, that's right. You can KonMari the people you follow on social media. Create a social feed that sparks joy. And if there is no joy, that's alright. You can discard with gratitude. In other words, delete the app.

But if deleting all your social media accounts seems like a step too far, consider at least taking a break. See what one week without social media feels like starting now.

And finally, be part of the solution. Take action. Watch The Social Dilemma documentary. It's a fascinating look at human psychology and the ultimate cautionary tale for our times. Like climate change, we can all be part of the solution. But we first need to acknowledge that there is a real problem. Start a conversation. Talk to your friends and family about social media addiction. I've included a link in the show notes with more actionable steps you can take. Be sure to check it out.

 **Monthly Review Spotlight** [00:06:20] 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 our friendly world who left a review on Apple Podcasts USA on November 28th. Our friendly world says: I want in! I love listening to this podcast. I love listening in, on this beautiful podcast and being a fly on the wall of everything design - my secret passion. Thank you, Alexandria. I feel part of the crew.

Thank you, our friendly world. What a lovely review. Yes, you are a part of the crew and creativity and design will always be an important part of the podcast. Thanks so much for listening.

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** [00:07:24]

Now for a bit of style. Jimmie an artist from Baltimore, Maryland asks. What is your opinion about designer name brand clothing versus a no name brand? Better fabric, tailoring, fit, et cetera? Or is it worth the price differential?

That's an excellent question. And the answer is not as straightforward as you might think. First let's consider what sort of clothing brands are out there. At the bottom of the barrel we have fast fashion. This is what you could call, throw away clothing. It's not well-made. It doesn't last. Fast fashion is produced at high speed and low cost. So the materials tend to be of poor quality. The factory working conditions are often unethical and don't pay a living wage. And then of course there's the environmental impact. Fast fashion has an extremely high carbon footprint with its excessive water consumption and air miles and greenhouse gas emissions. Fast fashion brands include Zara, H&M, Gap, Topshop, Anthropologie and numerous other well-known high street brands. Don't beat yourself up though. If you've purchased fast fashion items in the past. We can all only try to do better from today. To be more aware of what we buy and collectively change the shape of the clothing industry. Collectively have a positive impact on our world.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we have high-end luxury brands. Brands like Gucci, Prada, Versace, Armani. These high-end brands of course use better quality fabrics than their fast fashion counterparts. You can expect the clothing from high-end luxury brands to be well-made and fit better than those fast fashion brands. But you're also paying a premium for marketing and advertising. You're paying a premium for the prestige that comes with that luxury brand name.

So what is the right price for an article of clothing? With my marketing hat on, I'd say it's what people are willing to pay for it. If high-end luxury clothing is your thing, I'm guessing you're not going to mind paying extra for that prestige that comes with a big brand name. In terms of pure value, however, you could argue that neither fast fashion or high end luxury brands serve you well. Fast fashion doesn't offer quality or ethical business practices. Luxury fashion inflates prices due to brand name prestige and high marketing costs.

If you want the best quality clothing at the lowest possible price point, I'd go from mid-range designer brands and specialty brands. This is the sweet spot when it comes to good quality, well-designed, well-made clothing. Brands like Ted Baker, Ganni, G-Star RAW and Boden or lesser known sustainable brands like Lanius and Armedangels.

And as we enter the world of ethical fashion, things get more complicated. Where was your garment produced? And how? What are the conditions of labor? These are all important considerations. In the end, you get what you pay for. Except perhaps for high-end luxury brands, but then you are paying extra for that prestige of the brand name. So I would say going forward, avoid fast fashion at all costs. Invest in high quality pieces. Better quality pieces look better on you and stand the test of time. Better quality pieces are, by their nature, better for the environment. But let's start supporting brands that are responsible. Brands that are actively reducing their environmental footprint. Good on you is a helpful website that rates fashion brands, according to how ethical they are. See the show notes for details.

Always go for quality instead of quantity. Make better choices and buy less. And one of the best ways to avoid fast fashion is to figure out your style. As you develop your own personal style, you learn to do more with less. Whether you figure this out on your own or work with a personal stylist, like me, invest in yourself. Put your time and money to good use. Consider how you want to show up in the world. It's good for you and good for the planet.

**Promo** [00:12:12] 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.

 You wake up after a good night's sleep on the most comfortable mattress ever. With pillows that support your head just the way you like. You go to your organized closet and choose colorful, unique clothes that fit you and make you feel good. Then pad through a clean, warm, uncluttered home to the kitchen. Your refrigerator offers up the most delicious, healthy options for breakfast. And you have a day of unstructured time stretching ahead of you to do with as you like. 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.

 **Interview Resumes** [00:13:56]

**Question 3** [00:14:03]

And finally, Peter from London, who's in marketing, asks: can i KonMari my indoor plants? Ahh, yes. I love that idea. As a plant enthusiast myself, I'm all for plants bringing as much joy as they possibly can into your home. As with everything KonMari, it begins with your vision. How do you imagine your ideal indoor plant world? Have you been looking at all those lush indoor plant pics on Instagram? Do you have hashtag urban jungle goals? How would you describe your plant aesthetic? Are you a squeeze in as many plants as possible kind of person? Or do you prefer something a bit more minimalist? A single plant in a nicely designed pot with a geometric print.

Close your eyes and imagine your space. How many plants are we talking? Five? 10? 20? 50? More? Well, the sky's the limit, or I guess your ceiling is the limit.

 So whether you want to create a tropical indoor paradise, full of exotic plants. Or you just fancy some fresh green touches to your home. Here are a few things to consider. How do you want your space to function? And then how do plants fit into that equation? There are practical considerations too. Okay, so let's be honest. What kind of plant parent are you. And of course, what kind of plant parent do you want to be? Do you want plants that are easy to care for? Plants that are practically unkillable? Or do you actually enjoy fussing a little bit over your plants? Are you happy to welcome plants into your home that let's say are a bit more demanding of your attention? In other words, how much time are you happy to invest in your plants? This is an important factor in determining what varieties are right for you.

Also, do you have pets or small children in your home? If you do, you'll probably want to consider how toxic your plants are. After all, those dangly leaves can be very tempting for a small people and animals alike. But you can keep the nibblers at bay by placing your more exotic plants out of reach. So be sure to do your research and aim for pet friendly plants, close to the ground, if that's what you need.

But I understand you might have your heart set on a few of those exotic and more toxic plants that could potentially make small people or animals a bit sick if they do some munching. There's still hope though. First, see if you can place your toxic beauty somewhere out of easy reach. Then try to think like a cat or a baby. Consider how tempting that plant might be to play with. Something toxic like a snake plant might still be alright, as the leaves are very upright and sturdy. So potentially less tempting to mess about with than say lilies or dumb cane or an elephant ear plant. But a lot of course depends on how plant obsessed your pets or small children are.

And light is another important thing to consider. So in your home, what levels of sunlight are you dealing with? I'm sure you want your plant babies to thrive. So it's always good to do your research and see what plans are best suited to the kind of light your home offers.

So, now that we've done the prep work. Let's look at your current plant collection. Yes, go on then. Take each plant one by one and do a joy check. How do you feel when you look at that plant? Does your plant make you happy? And if it's on its last legs, don't feel guilty. Pop it in your green recycling and you'll do better to keep your next plant healthy and alive.

I absolutely love indoor plants so I could go on and on. But I'll just leave you with a plant design tip or two. Ever heard of a plant throne? If you're in the more plants the better camp, you might really like this. Essentially the goal is to create a plant oasis in a corner of your home. Somewhere to sit and be surrounded by plants. Somewhere to relax. And if you like feel a bit regal. It can be as simple as a statement palm next to a bean bag, or as complex as tiered levels of plants surrounding a lush velvety seat. Let your imagination run wild.

Or if you're after some simple, practical plant joy, how about a couple plants in your work area? If you have a home office or a corner of your flat dedicated to working from home, consider adding a plant or two. Plants can absolutely boost your daily joy. And, you know, they look great in the background of zoom calls too. Whatever you decide to do, create a space that feels right for you. Surround yourself with a few or a few dozen plants you love.

**Finale: Quick-Fire Questions** [00:19:34]

To 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:** [00:19:54] What’s your favorite color?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:19:56] You know, as a child, my favorite color was always green. For as long as I can remember. My birthstone is an emerald, and I think I've always liked that rich, vibrant green. As an adult, I've also been drawn to turquoise, aqua, mint. You know, I've never thought of this before, but these are the vibrant colors of the natural world. Tropical water and moss green and new growth of plants. Hey, maybe I've always been plant obsessed and have only just realized it. Also, strangely enough, bright green is one of the most flattering colors for my skin tone. So if we're talking seasonal color analysis vibrant green is one of my best colors.

**Gus:** [00:20:48] Coffee or tea?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:20:50] Ooh, that's a tough one. I'm fundamentally a tea person. I'm into all kinds of herbal teas from smokey grassy green teas to cardamom, nettle, fennel, peppermint, rooibos. I can't stand fruit teas though. And coffee is more like a special treat for me. Delicious on occasion. So, okay, more often than not, I'd have to say tea.

**Gus:** [00:21:20] What's the best gift you’ve ever given?

 **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:21:24] Well, I got tickets to see Hamilton for my mom's 70th birthday last December. So a year ago, almost exactly a year ago. She happened to be in London to celebrate the occasion. So I wanted to do something extra special. Let's just say she was thrilled to say the least. And it was so exciting to nonchalantly walk past the theater saying, Oh, what are all these people doing? What's this queue for? And then present her with second row tickets. Yes, if you're celebrating, you may as well do it properly. And there is real magic in giving someone a gift they genuinely love.

 **Gus:** [00:22:08] If you could master one instrument, what would it be?

**Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:22:11] Well, you might think this is kind of a funny question for professional musician to answer. I worked for many years in the early music world as a viola player. And I'm sure there's a viola joke waiting to happen somewhere here. But if I could master one instrument, it would be the tenor dulcian. If you've never heard of a dulcian, it's essentially a Renaissance bassoon. Worth looking up. It's such a lovely instrument.

And not many people know this, but I actually have a tenor dulcian. Yes, I got a little bit over excited when I did a show at Shakespeare's Globe awhile back. And at the time. I even placed a bid on eBay for a vibraphone, but that's another story. So anyway. When I find some leisure time someday, I'm going to learn to properly play my dulcian.

**Gus:** [00:23:07] Dolphins or koalas?

 **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:09] Ooh, as much as I have a weakness for cute fuzzy things, I'd have to go for dolphins. I love water. Although after watching My Octopus Teacher, I think the octopus is officially my favorite sea creature. So amazing.

**Gus:** [00:23:26] What's the best thing to happen to you today?

 **Alexandria Lawrence:** [00:23:30] You know what was fun? My husband Ben popped his head around the corner earlier today. I was busy writing, brainstorming this episode in my home studio or podcasting lair, as you could call it. And Ben said, let's take a break and play some ping pong. So we did. We have a mini tabletop net and a couple of very basic paddles, but it was such a fun surprise. It just goes to show. It's nice to have a break. So step away from your work, try something spontaneous and fun.

 **Key Takeaways** [00:24:06]

Well, hope you enjoyed this 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.

The world is addicted to social media and it's not by accident. Over time, social media changes how we think and behave. It affects our perception of truth and how we interact with the world. We need to be aware that there's a problem, so that we can do something about it. And learn to engage with social media on our terms. I encourage you to watch The Social Dilemma and start a conversation with your friends.

And honestly do your social media feeds bring you joy? Take a break from social media for at least a week and see how you feel. Or even dare to delete your accounts. And as long as we're being socially responsible, let's change the fashion industry together. No longer buy from those fast fashion brands. Instead choose quality clothes that are made to last. It's really a win-win. In the end, you get the best value buying from mid range designer brands. And keep those brands accountable. Demand that they embrace a sustainable business model. Always go for quality instead of quantity. Make better choices and buy less. And of course, fill your home with plants, if that's part of your vision for living well. Decide what kind of plant parent you want to be and take care of your plant babies. Make sure they get the right kind of light. Make sure your more toxic plants are in a nibble free zone. Oh, yes. And send me a picture of your plant throne, if you have one. I'd love to see it. That's our show **Outro** [00:26:40] 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.