

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Ready to add a big dose of positivity and empowered perspective to your day? You've come to the right place. Welcome to She Said/She Said Podcast. I'm Laura Cox Kaplan. Here we tackle everything from imposter syndrome and confidence building to the best advice on how to lead yourself through life pivots, including the ones that knock you flat. For the past three years I've talked to hundreds of experts about their stories. Here you'll find their actionable advice and lessons as well as my own tools that you can put to use in your own life. Stick around. I think you'll find this investment in you well worth it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Mother daughter duo Alison Bruhn and Delia Folk are the visionary founders behind a next generation women's media company and community called The Style That Binds Us. In this weeks She Said/She Said Podcast episode I talk to the Birmingham, Alabama natives about their unique partnership. What's it like to work with your mom if you're Delia or your daughter if you're Alison? We also talk about how the fashion industry is changing, the impact of COVID, and what consumers like us should know about sustainability as it relates to our own closets and purchasing choices. We get some great advice on how to think about evolving our own personal style over time. Something that frankly I struggle with a bit. And what key pieces you need to keep in your closet at all times. We also get great tips on how to coach our teen and tween daughters on making more appropriate style choices even though they are surrounded by countless images of things that frankly are inappropriate for them to wear. I really love that part of the conversation.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

We talk about risk taking and entrepreneurship and the importance of developing partnerships with those who have a different perspective. In this case, Alison and Delia are from two different generations. They have slightly different backgrounds even though they're related and they're a mother daughter duo. There's so much that we pack into this conversation. I'm really excited to share it with you today. It's coming up next. But before we get to it, remember you can follow more She Said/She Said podcast content on my Instagram, @lauracoxkaplan and shesaidshesaidpodcast. And be sure to checkout The Style That Binds Us also on Instagram.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Delia, Alison, welcome to She Said/She Said.

Delia Folk:

Thank you. We're so excited.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Well, I'm so happy to have you both.

Delia Folk:

Well, we are happy to be here.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

So let's start. I'd love for you each to tell me a little bit about yourselves.

Alison Bruhn:

Why don't you start Delia.

Delia Folk:

Okay. I'm Delia Folk. I am the daughter. I live in Manhattan. Grew up in Alabama which is where my mother and co-founder still lives. I went to the University of Alabama and then I ended up transferring to William and Mary. I majored in marketing and business and then I interned and Versace in men's wholesale in New York City which was very exciting for someone from the south. This was very new to me. And then I worked at Barneys on the buying team for four years in beauty, ready to wear and jewelry at separate times. And then we started The Style That Binds Us. So we before, my mom and I each had our own blogs and then we merged which we'll talk about a little bit later, to create the mother daughter duo that is The Style That Binds Us.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. Okay Alison, tell me a little bit about you and was fashion always in Delia's blood?

Alison Bruhn:

What was in Delia's blood was doing things her way. Wearing things that she felt were interesting rather than what everyone else around her was wearing and some of the things we were like, "Are you sure you want those tennis shoes?", and things like that. But she always kind of beat to her own drum. From the time that she was about two she started telling me she could do it by herself and she's been a spitfire ever since. But as far as fashion I think we always have been interested in it and mainly expressing who you are by what you're wearing. But it wasn't ever anything that I had worked in previous to starting my business as a wardrobe consultant. So when I became an empty nester Delia was deciding that she would like to do something in the fashion industry and she asked me to help her do some research and things like that and I thought it was very interesting. And I was trying to figure out what my next reincarnation was going to be like post motherhood. And I had been an early education teacher when Delia was a baby so in between I was a stay at home mom.

Alison Bruhn:

And I decided to go to FIT, the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, which is where Michael Kors and Vera Wang and people like that went to school. And they have some accreditation courses. So I was able to get an image consulting certificate there. You learn the science behind getting dressed. So therefore I could ... I had always been interested in fashion myself and then to be able to learn the science of dressing, then I was able to do it for other women as well.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. So Alison, at what stage was this for you? Delia had already left home or was she still in college?

Alison Bruhn:

Yes.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

She was still in college?

Alison Bruhn:

She had already left home. She was in college. She was probably junior year. And the reason why I got involved in the first place was because William and Mary is a hard school. It also is not a school that has fashion merchandising or any kind of fashion program. So they were kind of stumped about how to help Delia post graduation. They're just great about their career center and everything. So she had to be her own advocate basically. They let her almost form her own curriculum and they had some people in New York City who were alumni that advised her along the way. But she also reached out to me. And so I started doing a lot of research into companies and I remembered that I majored in advertising and then decided I wanted to go to graduate school in advertising. So I started that and my thesis was going to be about the history of fashion and advertising. But during the first year I realized I needed to pivot. Advertising was actually not something that I wanted to base an entire career around. So then I went back, got my early education degree and started teaching from there. So it's been this crazy path but her interest in it sort of rekindled my interest in it.

Alison Bruhn:

And the idea that getting dressed is not something shallow, that it's something that is important and it builds confidence and all these other things that go into getting dressed.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. That's amazing. So you get your certificate, Delia finishes college, you both ultimately establish independent businesses. At what point did you decide to join forces and create The Style That Binds Us? And I should also, while you're thinking about who's going to take the question first, was there any trepidation about, Delia for you, working with your mom and Alison for you, working with your daughter? Because even if you love each other which you obviously do and you get along swimmingly, starting a business together is a whole nother can of worms if you will.

Alison Bruhn:

That's right. We had been working together in the way that she was at Barneys. She would call me and say, "We met with this great brand today or these great designers, I don't know if Barneys is going to pick them up ultimately but I thought that they would really resonate with your clients." So I would go to New York, meet with the designers. We would have conversations and decide is this was going to be a great thing for my clients throughout the country and many times it was. And then my clients were happy because they were learning about brands that no one else knew about necessarily yet because Barneys was all about emerging designers and everything. So it was this great symbiosis or whatever. But I had trepidation about working together. Everywhere we went in New York, any conference, anywhere, people always said y'all need to do something together. And I was hesitant because I ... What we both did, they're serious careers. And so the mommy and me, oh how cutesy, that's our little shtick, I did not want that at all.

Alison Bruhn:

So there's nothing wrong with that and I love that for moms and daughters that really enjoy that but for us, I thought there's got to be a purpose for us to come together and the purpose for fashion is it's a visual medium so we could actually bring a bigger reach together. We could reach more women with our message. We could show we have a slightly different style aesthetics. Delia's obviously at a different age. So I was getting all these question like, can I wear a so and so at my age and things like that. So I was constantly saying, "Yes but the way you would do that is so and so," and I thought, we could just

show it. We can just make these videos and show this is how Alison would style it in four different ways and this is how Delia would style it in four different ways. So people could not only decide by age group, they could also say, "Well, I'm more of a print girl so I'm 50 but I love the way Delia styled that with the floral skirt. I think I'll try that." So I could see how it wasn't just that we were mother and daughter we should come together if that makes sense.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

It makes perfect sense. So Delia, what about from your perspective? Were you a little concerned about you guys forging this partnership and to your mom's point in being sort of cutesy or cliché as opposed to actually reinforcing the substance of it? Talk about maybe your mindset and how you thought about this going into it.

Delia Folk:

Sure. I think I definitely had a different mindset because I was all about it and being a millennial and constantly listening to podcasts and having lots of friends that are entrepreneurs and things like that, you're thinking about white space. When people kept saying, "Y'all have such a great relationship and rapport and you're working in the same industry and there's not a mother daughter company in this space." Of course there are mother daughter design teams and things like that but The Style That Binds Us really is this new concept that we created within this fashion ecosystem. So I was definitely open to it because I thought this is different. We can use our strengths and weaknesses together. So that is kind of what I was thinking about. I was definitely more open to it than she was. I was excited about it. With my personality I just kind of decide something and do it without thinking about all the different things that can go wrong or right which could be a flaw or maybe not. So I was just like, "Okay, I want to start a YouTube channel and a podcast." You have to pay attention to the signs. If multiple people keep telling you something then you kind of need to listen. So that was my perspective. I was all about it.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's great advice. I do think that over time I think we all must ... And Alison, I'll direct this question to you. Sometimes we learn to second guess ourselves as opposed to doing it right when we are launching our careers. Because over time you know more about what the risks are. And I do think we have a tendency as we get older to maybe second guess ourselves a little more. Maybe that's just me. What's your experience Alison?

Alison Bruhn:

No, I think you're correct and I think that Delia was all in. She had to sort of convince me but now I think she's probably like, "I probably should have thought this through more," because of the second guessing. Every time we do something that's out of my comfort zone I'm like, "No one's going to come. This isn't going to work. They're probably going to say no." And she's always having to pull me back in and go, "Why do you think this is not going to work?" Or she'll just say, "Don't say that anymore." And then every single time we have an event or we do whatever, so far, it's always been a success. And she's like, "You just didn't even need to worry about that. We did our work, we had it planned out, it was a wonderful experience for everybody." And so it's been interesting having the tables turned. I feel like I'm learning a lot from her rather than me being the mom and having to teach her a lot these days.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. That's a beautiful message collaboration and how your differences provide such strengths as it relates to this partnership. It's a really beautiful thing. Okay, so I want to get into some of the meat of what you do and specifically this idea that you talk about. You do personify different generations and I'd love to talk a little bit about age appropriate fashion, whatever that means. Two different dimensions I'd love to talk about. One is, style and fashion as we evolve. But also I'd love for you to address how those of us who are moms of tween and teenage girls, how we can steer them away from the garbage ... Honest to god. The garbage that they want to wear. So I'll let you guys decide kind of which pieces of those questions you want to take but the age appropriate piece, how we evolve our style as we age is one dimension and then sort of coaching our girls is the other.

Alison Bruhn:

One thing about age appropriate does ... I don't ever use the term but it's there. I mean, you know what I'm saying. There's no rules about that. And usually what happens like you said, it evolves over time. It evolves. Like a young mom will hire me and come in and say, "I'm still in things from college. I feel horrible about myself. I can't get myself dressed. I've got these little kids. I'm trying to create a home here and half the time they start crying and everything else." But a lot of people realize when it's not working anymore. What was working for them before is not or they have all these questions. Can I wear cutoffs still? And really, it's kind of like if you have questions about it to yourself it's probably time to not. The other thing is yeah, as you get older, first of all if you move into a career or motherhood and things like that, it's just what your lifestyle is kind of dictates what you're going to wear and as you do get older there are parts of your body that maybe you're not as happy about as you used to be.

Alison Bruhn:

So a lot of times with me it's like, do my arms look ... They're asking me these things. I'm like, "Well if you're asking about that then think about if you're going to feel uncomfortable when you wear the piece." So that's another big key. So age appropriate is more about really thinking through am I going to feel relaxed and elegant when I wear this? Or the whole time am I going to be pulling down the skirt? If you have to ask yourself, is this a little too short? It's too short. Go with your gut. That's what I would like to say. We all know 75 year old women who are rocking the coolest look in town. That's their persona, that's their personality. And then we know 20 year olds who dress very conservatively. So it's less about age appropriate, more about lifestyle and I'm more and more interested in how you feel when you get dressed. So if you feel distracted, like I said, pull down your dress or kind of sitting like this, are they looking at my arms, then you're not thinking about what you want to say or what the person talking to you is going to say. So that's what I think about that.

Alison Bruhn:

And then the thing about women with children, I went through that with Delia like I said. She had strong opinions from a very young age and she wanted to do it by herself and when she was little she wouldn't let me help her get dressed. Her shoes would be on the wrong feet. She would say, "I can do it by myself." And I would say, "Fine. They're on the wrong feet but just go ahead. It's going to hurt." Whatever. And she would stomp off. But then it came to the point where she wanted to wear really high heel shoes to school and I was like, "Well, first of all it's going to ruin your feet for later when you do want to wear them and second of all, it's crazy to be tromping down the mall in high heel shoes even though everyone else is doing it." So what I suggest for mothers and daughters, especially in that sort of preteen teen time that can be difficult anyway it is a good idea to possibly bring in a stylist. So like when

I come in and work with the daughter without the mom we sit down and we ... It's actually college age kids too. And it's interesting, this dynamic.

Alison Bruhn:

But when I work with these people I go through the same thing I go through older women. I go through which neckline is best for them? What are their figure issues that they're not so comfortable with and how we can camouflage those and how we can accentuate the things that are great about them. And then we talk about the fact that learning to look at a piece of clothing and then visualize it on your body rather than looking at a piece of clothing and just saying, well I got it because it was cute. So and so was wearing it. All these big oversized baby doll dresses ... If you're a preteen and you're tall, you're not a little petite girl, that's not going to be a look that's going to do you any favors. But if mom says it, it's just hurtful. So that's when I come in and I can say, yes, whatever the celebrity is that they're loving right now, they're wearing crop tops for sure. And they're wearing micro minis and everything. But that just doesn't work for everybody. And you want to be able to put your best foot forward. You just can't wear every trend because you love the trend. You have to pick and choose.

Alison Bruhn:

And it's really more about how you present yourself to the world and feel fabulous about yourself rather than dressing like everybody else. And there's a happy medium. It's almost like a therapy session between mother and daughter. Kind of like we can make some decisions. Give some concessions on both ends kind of thing.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. I love the idea of having a third party arbiter. It works in so many different dimensions of motherhood or parenthood if you will. I'd love to, since Alison talked a little bit about the client work, Delia, maybe talk about how the business model works as it relates to your clients. Do you have separate clients? Do you have clients together? How does the business model work a little bit?

Delia Folk:

Yes. So The Style That Binds Us is both B2B and B2C. And this is something that we are creating. We're kind of climbing the mountain each and every day. When someone creates something new, it is much more challenging. It is more challenging to help people understand what it is, especially since fashion is changing so quickly. We had all this experience and all these ideas and observations, some of which laid dormant for a couple of years. But we came together and really wanted to fix some of those. So the only thing that we have separate is mom does her style consulting which I am not involved with and then I do brand consulting. So right when I left Barneys and we didn't talk about that but I really wanted to go to fashion month. That was my dream. To get to go to London, Milan, and Paris fashion week and of course New York and that wasn't happening for me on the buying team and I thought, well how many more years is it going to take for me to get there?

Delia Folk:

So I said, "You know what, no. I'm tired of this." With my personality at some point I just have a cutoff and I get super frustrated and I say no, we're fixing this. So mom and I went to fashion month. So then when I came back I said, "Okay, I understand the life, mind and brain of a buyer and there are all these emerging brands that get very excited if Saks or someone calls them and says, 'Hey, I'd love to pick you up and carry you in my store.' They get so excited and they don't understand what that means. And also

I'm an entrepreneur. So I could help them really make sure to figure out what their direct to consumer and wholesale strategy." So those are our separate expertise that is B2B. And then with B2C we have this whole content platform. We have a YouTube channel and a podcast. And then we host events. We have all the social media. So that is both helping women figure out how to get dressed, what to wear where. We never want to hear again, "I just didn't go because I couldn't figure out what to wear."

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Who's ever said that? Every day.

Delia Folk:

And then also one of the observations was at Barneys I walked the floor. I feel like retailers don't necessarily spend time telling the story. So you're asking someone to spend money but they've never heard of this brand. So why are they going to become loyal to that brand and things like that? So we really wanted to tell the brand story. So that's helping brands with brand awareness and sales and it's connecting the women to the designers. So that is why it is this fashion ecosystem that can and is a little bit complicated to explain, especially to people in other industries and/or our industry. Because it's kind of combining technology like the magazine world and the buying world and the styling world. I mean it's literally everything under one roof with just two people. So it is a lot.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. That's amazing. I mean that's a really interesting innovative approach. Why don't you talk ... You mentioned identifying emerging brands. Talk about what you're looking for with these emerging brands and maybe give us a few examples of some of your more recent favorites or what you're seeing coming out for the spring that you think's particularly interesting.

Delia Folk:

Okay. So basically ... And mom came up with this idea. So I applaud her for this. We created something called the Style Standard. So we feel very strongly about having our women's backs. Mom can talk about how she feels like that with her styling clients. That we're setting them up for success. We felt like the fashion and art worlds can be very exclusive, you can't sit with us mentality. And we have the information and access so we want to give you all the information and tools necessary to live your most stylish and fearless life. So we feel very strongly about our reputation and the brands that we are putting forth and telling our audience and community to purchase. So the questions that we ask ourselves before moving forward with a partnership is are these products true to their claim? So I started in beauty at Barneys and mom kept saying when we were bringing on brands, "Well, what's the science behind this? How are you really making the decisions of bringing in these brands and what are you telling your customers? Is it true and all of those things?" And that's something that we consider. And then do they practice or have a goal to practice sustainably and responsibly? So I think that's something everyone is focused more on these days.

Delia Folk:

And then do we believe in this brand enough for our community to spend their hard earned money on these products? Does the culture of the company match ours? Is this company focused on diversity and inclusion initiatives which is very important? And then last but not least, does the brand share our values and message of uplifting and elevating people's lives and helping our tribe to live a more stylish and fearless life?

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Love that. I really, really love that. Maybe let's talk about bit about sustainability. What it really means. We toss this term out a lot but give us maybe the textbook definition of sustainability and then how consumers and your clients should be thinking about this concept. What are the most important elements of sustainability for the individual?

Delia Folk:

So sustainability, it basically it has a lot of different things actually that people didn't think about before. So of course the obvious thing is materials, recycling, up cycling, going into the consignment world and things like that. So there's that portion of it. But then there's also sustainability in that humans, thinking about okay, we never even really understood. We were just blown away and excited about the fast fashion crisis but at what cost does that come? So there are humans creating these clothes. And if the T-shirt is \$5, I mean you can only imagine how much the human that made it is going to get paid. So the other portion of sustainability is treating your people well, fair and equitable pay and the working conditions and all of that. And then the last portion is long lasting. So is this something that you are going to have forever and for many years? Is it a vintage piece? So the portion of how well that it's made. Is it made to last or like an iPhone, is it going to die after two years? And that's wasteful. So there's all these different things to think about with sustainability.

Alison Bruhn:

We always practice ... I preach it to everybody. Usually when I come into somebody's closet they have accumulated many ... Over several years. So there's a bunch of stuff. And my European designer friends like to say American women have too much stuff. But by the time we weed out all of the stuff we want a beautiful working wardrobe. It doesn't have to be ultra expensive but it has to be thoughtfully purchased. The best quality that you can afford so it will last. Pieces that are versatile, pieces that aren't too trendy. And the thing about being trendy, right now everything's a trend. The fashion world has gotten so confused. Whenever there is a trend ... If you pick a trend ... Let's say leopard print. Well we love leopard print anyway. So we would go after that trend because it's not in fact a trend. We know in 10 years people will still be ... That'll be coming and going. That'll be en vogue. And taking better care of your clothes and things like that. We just don't need that many clothes. Accessories are a fun way to change up a look. There are so many things.

Alison Bruhn:

The probably with sustainability now is that there's like a sustainability police. So a lot of young brands that want very much to become sustainable, it's very expensive for them. So they're leaning in. They're studying it. We're just learning about a lot of it too as we go along. We're learning about clean detergent that actually works versus ... There's just so much to learn. So when you pair it back it's mainly about being more thoughtful about what you purchase and supporting brands that are really trying hard. It's very easy for big brands. They have tons of money behind them already. But unless you start out being a sustainable brand, it's more difficult. The fabrics are more expensive. This is all brand new stuff. Every day it's changing. Every single day. And so I do think even after ... I don't think it's just a buzzword. I think at this point we can't go back. So it's not like ... If you can do little tiny things. Just little things like taking better care of your clothes, shopping consignment or vintage or figuring out new ways to wear the clothes you already have. Just buying less in general.

Alison Bruhn:

And when you buy, try to support brands that are trying. That have a mission of doing this.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Let me ask you a question related to that because I think it can be very confusing for the consumer to know. And you can go online and you can see the brand's story about the brand and so many of them especially the new and emerging ones, a big part of their story is around telling a good sustainability story. But how does the consumer know? Those are just words. Is there an easy way for the individual, for the individual consumer to verify whether those things are true?

Alison Bruhn:

Well that was called green washing. And that was when it became a buzzword and everybody just started throwing it around. But what happened was that was happening so much that the powers that be slammed on the brakes and they started coming after all those brands in a big way. Which is a great thing. What happened to some brands though, the smaller brands now, everyone's scared to say we're sustainable. We're sustainability focused. They all say, we're working responsibly. They're scared that ... Because they really are trying. It's like the wild, wild west. Everybody is really just beginning. But the main thing is I think if you know the brands ... Like this cardigan is by Eileen Fisher. She's been doing sustainability way before it was cool for sure. And she still does it. And a lot of brands ... Like the cool thing that people are doing now is you can go into an Eileen Fisher shop and turn in your old pieces which they will resell and do whatever they do with them and then you can get a credit to purchase something new. So they're encouraging the pieces that you buy that you literally throw away, that's the bad part. Recycle them. Things like that.

Alison Bruhn:

But as far as knowing, you have to do your homework and maybe if it's a new brand you have to go deeper. Like this laundry detergent that we're partnering with right now that we love, it's called Dirty Labs. And they have a whole blog about it. They have a scientist on board. There are all these questions that people ask. They have a question and answer session. They have pictures of what it looks like when you water a plant with the gray water from Dirty Labs versus a typical detergent. Things like that. If you really, really, really are going to take it to that next step and invest in pieces that come from brands that are sustainable, you just have to do a little more work. But more and more brands are going to be coming out with that as what they are and they can't really ... You're not going to get very far claiming that you're sustainable if you're not these days.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's great advice and that's a great explanation. I think it's super, super helpful. Let's pivot a bit and talk about COVID. We are recording this podcast via Zoom just as you all record your own podcast. Normally we would be sitting down at a mutually agreed upon location in New York City or maybe Birmingham, Alabama to have this conversation but we're not able to do that. The whole world has been turned upside down because of COVID. Let's talk about the impact on the fashion industry and particularly as it relates both to what we're putting on our bodies every day. So many of us are able to thankfully work from home. But let's talk about some of the changes that have taken place as a result of COVID, will they be sustainable? What do you think the future's going to look like for fashion as a result of COVID?

Alison Bruhn:

Everybody's getting really tired of their clothes because they've been wearing them now for months and months and months, and they haven't brought anything new in because they weren't doing anything. But it's a good time right now to go through your closet and decide what is my lifestyle going to be like going forward? Not that we're all going to know for sure but these Zoom calls and things like that might be a part of your future too even when you're post COVID if your company has decided at least part time you're going to be working from home and things like that. There are so many brands right now. There are so many fashion brands. And the bad part about what's happened during COVID is a lot of them aren't going to make it. But the good part about that is there are too many brands doing the same thing. So going forward brands are going to have to have a reason. They're really going to have to hone in on their why's. Why are they different from everybody else? Why are they existing? That kind of thing.

Alison Bruhn:

And so they're going to need to have also ... But more than just a story. Like, "Oh, I grew up in Poland and I moved to America." It's going to be more a story about what are they doing that's making a difference? Because everybody has figured out during COVID, "Gosh, we actually don't really need that much stuff." And so if you are going to bring in something new, I feel like going forward this quality versus quantity, less is more, pieces that are versatile, all these things that I've been preaching for years, I think it's going to make more sense to people now that they've been through this experience. So I think that they're really going to have to sell what they're making and they're going to have to do a great job of what they make. Beautifully made, ethically sourced. It's also more expensive to the consumer to buy something that has all of this. And so that's the key too. Can the brands survive doing it ethically? Are we going to be those people who are more thoughtful in our lives going forward or are we going to go right back to just immediate gratification? Oh, I need something to wear for tonight. You run to the fast fashion place in your town and you buy a bunch of \$15 shirts. You buy eight \$15 shirts for less than \$100 and you're so excited about that.

Alison Bruhn:

But they all fall apart or they melt when they're ironed or you know in your head when it's a special occasion you don't really want to wear necessarily the H&M cocktail dress sort of thing. Maybe no one else knows, but you know. So much better to have one thing that's precious to you than 15 things that are almost. So I hope that going forward that's a lesson that consumers learn and brands learn that they ... They already knew the fashion calendar was too much. They already knew that designers were being forced to create six collections which meant before the next one came out they were already having to be working on the other one. And their creativity was sapped and they were physically exhausted and some of them actually committed suicide. It just went crazy. It was just too much. It was too, too, too much. We just don't need that. There's not enough people to buy all the stuff.

Alison Bruhn:

And then they were having to be marked down. It's just all this waste. And everybody was starting to really talk about it and places like Barneys were closing. All this stuff was happening. And that all happened before COVID had started. But when COVID started after we got through the shock of it, we started saying, "We kind of have time now to face the music and realize this is really not working. And if we are going to survive as an industry which is a huge multi billion dollar industry internationally we're going to have to figure out how we can make some changes." The only problem is, if the big, big, big boys don't play the game then the smaller ones aren't going to be able to. Meaning if Chanel specifically

keeps having the six shows and going to these exotic locales to put on their haute couture collection, Métiers, d'Art and all that stuff, then the little brands that are only showing twice a year or maybe more like they're showing spring and spring and fall in fall where it makes more sense, then it won't work for the little brands. So the big brands are going to have to figure ... We need them to be a part of the game.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Are they incentivized to do that though? The bigger brands. Do they view it as being in their interest to play the game?

Alison Bruhn:

I think they're waiting to see. I read about ... Chanel specifically said we don't want to not ... We have people buying this. We are making money by doing this. This is what our clients expect from us. Because the biggest clients get flown to all those events. To get to go to the shows. They keep the business going. But there's also a men's collection too and a women's collection. So you've got ... That can be 12. It's insane. So they are combining men and women's more now. I don't know what the future of New York fashion week is going to look like. I think Paris will always be a thing because it basically all started there. But I think as long as people are buying all of the stuff there's no reason for them to stop. So I don't know about Louis Vuitton, Givenchy, Chanel, Balenciaga, Fendi, Prada, just the biggest names out there. I just don't know what it's going to be like. There have been so many discussions about this during COVID through the CFDA which is the counsel of fashion designers of America and there's so many ... Vogue has held conferences, international conferences. Everybody's trying to figure it out within the industry.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Maybe let's shift a bit and talk or sort of take a slightly different tact off of that question and give me your advice on ... Like remember, our audience for this podcast is broad and diverse across the country, a lot like your own I imagine. But there are some women who probably have never owned Chanel versus many women who listen who have lots of pieces of Chanel. Maybe let's talk about the three to five pieces that everybody must have in their wardrobe and maybe what that might look like now because of COVID versus what it might have looked like 12 months ago.

Alison Bruhn:

Right. And so why, first of all would even something like haute couture which is going on right now in Paris, why is that even important to all of us that aren't dressed head to toe in Chanel every day? The reason for that is one, it can be considered an art which the haute couture is just because of the artisans and everything. But it's just dreamy to look at. The other things is, some of the things from there will trickle down to the mainstream and eventually those will be the pieces that we will see of ready to wear brands idea of having been influenced by what they saw at haute couture for that kind of thing. But that being said, and knowing that like we said going forward with Zoom and everything, we might still be doing a lot from the waist up, I still think the basic pieces ... We will be getting out and about and I do still believe that every woman needs ...

Alison Bruhn:

These are the most basic pieces. An all weather coat. In general, it would be the trench coat. The classic trench coat in black. But, a lot of women with certain figure types don't look good with anything tied at the waist. It can make them go out like this from the waist. So I'm not going to say a trench coat, I'm just

going to say a simple, simple coat that can take you from day to night, that you need to think about where live and where you've travel before you purchase something super heavy or not heavy enough because you love the way it looks. The best quality. Because these pieces, these investment pieces, hopefully you'll have for ... You can have them for eight to 10 years or even generationally, truly.

Alison Bruhn:

So the next thing is a white tee. This is like a white tank. I don't know if you can tell but if you have ... No one has these bottom layer pieces. Like a white tee that you treat almost like a silk shirt that hangs in your closet. A white cami, a white silk cami. A white shirt. And then all you have to do is put a blazer or a cardigan over it. Or in the summer you don't have to do it. You can wear it by itself. And then you have scarves and earrings, lipstick a little mascara, whatever. And you're good to go on these calls. But then when you're not on the calls you can take of the blazer or the jacket if you're just going to be at your hours and be comfortable. But it's not a T-shirt that is folded up, thrown in your drawer. It is literally ironed. It is a nice part of your wardrobe.

Alison Bruhn:

And then I think a great jean that fits you well. For Zoom specifically I think if you can have a few silk tops in your closet or maybe they're crepe or maybe they're something that is a polyester type blend or something. But just something that has some color. V-neck is really good on pretty much everybody. So a couple of different tops in colors. Like the colors that you have on right now are great colors for you.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Thank you.

Alison Bruhn:

So if you have a couple of those that you can just interchange. And then a selection of earrings. Especially like if this ... Necklaces work like this. But earrings, necklaces, a couple of things that you could wear. Like we've done videos about what is the best jewelry for Zoom? Because if you're wearing a big fun statement earring and you're having a meeting with your lawyer that's really not ... It's not appropriate. It just doesn't send the right message. It's distracting. So that would be a wardrobe that I would picture. The blue jean. And it doesn't have to be oh everybody's wearing the boyfriend jeans. Well a lot of people look horrible in boyfriend jeans. Women. And a lot of women look horrible in skinny jeans. Because it takes you into this V and there's your little feet sticking out of the bottom. So a good straight leg jean or even a boot cut. If you wear heels, a jean with a slight flair. Those basic pieces. And then a few bottom layer pieces, a black blazer, a gray all weather coat, a couple of scarves. I've also done a video about putting together a core wardrobe. And I think that is what every woman needs during COVID and not during COVID.

Alison Bruhn:

And we were talking with a French jewelry designer the other day and she was so cute. She was talking about the different in Parisian woman and American women. And she said no Parisian woman would be caught dead shopping in her sport leggings ... Is what she calls Lululemon type things. She said they wear those at the gym only. Their hair might be dirty, that's okay, whatever. But they would not be out shopping, especially like for clothes or anything, in workout wear. They just think it's abhorrent. Which of course I love because I'm always trying to get people out of their Lululemon. But the only other thing I'll say about that is if you stay in your sweats too long and you don't take a shower for a couple of days,

it kind of makes you feel depressed. It really does. And it sends the message if you have kids, to them that something's wrong with mommy so something's wrong with the world. She hasn't gotten out of those clothes in days. But when mommy's standing in the kitchen in the morning with her normal clothes on, her hair's washed, she's fixing breakfast, they're like, "Okay, we're safe. All's good here."

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. And I totally agree with you. I usually, even if I ... And I'm always working right from here, but I'm wearing shoes and I'm generally dressed to some degree. I may have yoga pants on on the bottom for sure.

Alison Bruhn:

Sure, sure, sure.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

But I'm wearing shoes. And oftentimes I pull out my really nice shoes just because I love them and when I look down at my feet it makes me happy.

Alison Bruhn:

Right. And it sends a-

Laura Cox Kaplan:

That's normalizing, yes, for my children.

Alison Bruhn:

Well, it sends a signal to your brain too, it truly does, that okay I'm in work mode. I am alert. I'm ready to go.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Absolutely. Delia, let's talk about ... I ask most people who come on this podcast because an element of what we talk about on She Said/She Said is about ultimately the impact that you want to have with what you're working on and what you care about. Maybe talk a bit about the impact that you hope you will have with The Style That Binds Us.

Delia Folk:

The mission is so that our community will live a stylish and fearless life and the vision is to create a more courageous and daring world. So I am type A. My personality is all the Virgo, all the things. So I have learned, especially from French brands, to be more easy going, go with the flow, less uptight. I think would help me in general, especially if I ever become a mother. Just to know that life, it doesn't have to be so serious. We can have fun with fashion and tell a story with the clothes that they wear and things like that. So basically we're humans, mom and myself, and we were willing to be vulnerable. One of the reasons mom was starting her blog was because as she was aging she had a lot of questions. Her body was changing and she was very sad. It was not a fun thing to talk about. And being in the [inaudible 00:48:39] a husband, aging parents, and me dealing with all of that.

Delia Folk:

So I kept saying, "Mom, you've got to talk about this aging process. You're going through this. Whatever you human are going through, other people are too. So once you get the answers to these questions, why is my skin so dry, all the things, then you're going to be answering that on your blog." And that took a couple of years and we're still working on it but it's doing that. And then for me, I was vulnerable talking about breakups and navigating office politics and life as an assistant. And if I can open up, even though that is hard to do and ... I mean, no one knew who Delia Folk was so I don't have some reputation to destroy necessarily, but we try to really look inside and figure out how are we feeling? How are we navigating life? And then let's share that with others because, like my personality, if I'm sad, I'm trying to make everyone else around me ... Give them the biggest smile and make them as happy as possible. Because if I can't be happy, well hopefully they can. So basically with The Style That Binds Us we really want to give women the tools to empower them and live their lives.

Delia Folk:

We understand what it's like coming from the south and all of those southern females ideals and should you be working or should you not. So we're just coming from such a different place for example from women in the northeast and all of that. So we're trying to learn as much as we possibly can and then share that and be vulnerable in our life process to hopefully help others.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. Alison?

Alison Bruhn:

Well, first of all I wanted to say too, as far as what we hope The Style That Binds Us achieves, and that is that women never feel invisible, women never feel alone, and that they come to us to feel empowered. And that word is so overused, but I tell this story all the time but it is true. It's when I'm working with a woman and she's in a bad mood first of all and it's very vulnerable to let someone into your closet and see you get dressed and to say to someone, "Look at my thighs. I hate my thighs." Or whatever it is. So they're already there. So they're putting on their clothes. "Well, I hate this." It's just very difficult. And then we put something on ... Or we can be in a dressing room or with a designer in town. When they put on that one thing and they're looking ... I'm usually standing behind them or right beside them and they're looking in the mirror and we're talking about it together. Like, "This is what I see. What do you see?" And all of a sudden you can see their face, they kind of get this little smile on their face and they're like, "Oh, I could do this."

Alison Bruhn:

And you can tell they're like, "Hey, I remember you. It's been so long since I've seen you." And so when I watch that process, it's so exciting and it's so rewarding. And that to me, that's what we want to do on a larger scale.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. I love that. How about from each of you, maybe the most valuable lesson that you've learned about entrepreneurship? Because you're both new entrepreneurs essentially. You're starting something essentially from ... Or started something essentially from scratch. Having worked in corporate environments and in other more structured environments. One really valuable lesson from each of you about entrepreneurship.

Alison Bruhn:

Besides the fact that we just became entrepreneurs recently, we created a company that really had never been done before. When we work with other people, they're like, "Are you PR? Are you media? Are you buyers?" It's an interesting ... It's more difficult than if, let's say as entrepreneurs we had bought a franchise for a doughnut shop or something like that that had some plans. Some guidelines. But I think what I have learned, and I actually learned from Delia, is, I still struggle with it but I push myself all the time now. Her question to me was always, "But why not?" Because I would put up roadblocks about everything. Well, you can imagine if you're an entrepreneur and ... I mean, everybody can come up with why something won't work. Millions of reasons why it won't work. But a lot of those aren't ever going to happen. So when I would say, "Well, we can't reach out to her. She's too big to be on the podcast or whatever." And Delia was like, "What? Why not?" "Well, I don't know but I'm not brave enough to reach out to her basically." And she'd say, "Well, we're doing it."

Alison Bruhn:

And we did it and of course they would be like, "Sure we'd love to. Be honored to." So as an entrepreneur I would say, first of all obviously 24/7 there's no time that it's not ... It's like having a child. You can't say I'm just going to be a mom from nine to five and then I'm going to take off the whole weekend every weekend. It's going to take more time. It's going to take a lot longer to make money. And you have to be able to take risks. But the risks are what makes it rewarding. You reach these goals and it just keeps you going. It's just so much fun. It's really fabulous.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. Delia, how about you? One piece of advice on entrepreneurship?

Delia Folk:

Sure. The thing about entrepreneurship, and this has been a journey of figuring this out, but what I think is really interesting is that number one as an entrepreneur you're creating something that didn't exist before so that means that you have a platform to maybe create some change and make the world better and all of those things. So I think that that's not something that a lot of people think of. A lot of people, me of course, everyone, we're selfish. So we're like, "I want to blank." I want to have a jewelry company so that's why I'm starting the brand. With my consulting I'll say, "Okay. So what's the mission behind your company? There are millions of jewelry brands. Why with yours exist?" And they're like, "I just wanted to start a jewelry company." And that's not good enough. So that is the thing about being an entrepreneur is that hopefully this is your purpose in life and you have the opportunity to create the world that you want to live in. And that's very hoo hoo and whatever.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I love that. I don't think it's hoo hoo at all. I think it's fabulous. I absolutely love that answer. I think you're exactly right. And it's really, really hard. Whether you're creating a company like yours, whether you're starting a jewelry company, whether you're starting a podcast, the same lesson applies. So I am so grateful to you both for spending time with us today. You're fabulous. Just as fabulous as I knew you would be. Thank you.

Delia Folk:

[crosstalk 00:56:02].

This transcript was exported on Jan 27, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Yeah. Oh, and for folks listening, so they can follow you on Instagram, @thestylethatbindsus.

Delia Folk:

Exactly. Everything is The Style That Binds Us. YouTube channel, podcast, website, which is where you can learn all about mom's styling, where our blog is, where you can sign up for our newsletter. So you can find anywhere and everywhere The Style That Binds Us.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

Love it. Thank you both so much.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

To learn more about the amazing mother daughter duo Alison Bruhn and Delia Folk and their visionary next generation women's media company The Style That Binds Us, checkout the show notes for this episode, episode 137. And if you're enjoying She Said/She Said podcast, I hope you'll let me know. Send me an email, direct message me, contact me on the website. You can reach me through all of those different venues. I love your feedback and I love hearing from you. I also love it when folks leave us a review on iTunes. So if you're so inclined, hit the review button, give us five stars if you don't mind and a few nice words. It's really, really helpful. It helps others find this podcast who are looking for this kind of constructive, thoughtful, positive, and hopefully uplifting content that we provide every week.

Laura Cox Kaplan:

I am so grateful that you have chosen to spend your time with us today. I hope you found this investment in you well worth it.