

THE PLAIN DEALER

Modified tank dress friendly to figure challenge

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L5

English

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Q.I am a 53-year old professional who has severe scoliosis. Nothing fits (I'm a 10 petite). I have lost about an inch in height (I am now barely 5 feet 2 inches) right at waist level, and my ribcage sits almost on top of my hips. I look like a snowman, even though my waist is small. It makes my hips look huge, and my legs appear to be shooting out of my waist. The overall look is fat and dowdy.

Princess lines are too long in the waist, separates look bunched, hemlines hang strangely, suit jackets won't close, and evening wear forms a pool between my ribcage and hips where my waist used to be.

Any advice? Right now, I wear a lot of cropped jackets over monochromatic separates and bulky clothes. It's not a pretty sight.

Pat from Lakewood

A. Dear Pat: It is written: "The measure of who we are is what we do with what we have." Your question tells me a few things about you. You are not just a woman with severe scoliosis. You're an intelligent, beautiful woman who isn't ready to retire the fashion gloves regardless of the challenges your ever-changing form poses for you. I love that! Everyone deserves to look and feel fabulous. We're going to get you back in touch with your beautiful self and the fashion ring. You will start that reconnection by removing any negative reference to your overall appearance! Got it? I'm going to help you dress those curves like nobody's business.

Let's start off by getting in better shape as painlessly as possible. My personal favorite, the Nancy Ganz Body Slimmer, helps smooth out curves and allows fabrics to hang



PRESS COVERAGE

nicely from your changing form. It can reduce the hip area up to 2 inches. You can find this brand, along with 36 others, online at www.freshpair.com and locally at Nordstrom and Kaufmann's.

A modified tank dress would suit you well. It is as comfortable in the daytime business setting as it is at the evening affair. This silhouette is most considerate of the petite curve and is most forgiving in the fabric combinations of viscose, cotton, rayon or polyester with a lycra or spandex component in the 2 percent to 10 percent range. You can find all of the above in the Boston Proper catalog. Order the catalog online at www.bostonproper.com. J. Jill, both the store and the catalog, has similar offerings.

Embellished and asymmetrical hemlines add visual interest and create the illusion of balance. Look for fringes or beaded hemlines. Even a straight hemline can work if it is fringed or beaded: Once on your form, it will create an asymmetrical hemline looking oh-so deliberate and fashionable.

Introduce texture not bulk into your wardrobe by adding an updated cardigan instead of your boxy jackets. Nordstrom carries a petite line called Classiques Entier. It is classic yet forward, with fabulous prints and weaves. Several of the cardigan silhouettes clasp just under the bust line, which allows the rest of the material to flow out away from the waist to create a longer look. Put one of these over your modified tank dress, and you are definitely back in the fashion ring.

Laurie Chesbrough is a Mentor makeover specialist regularly featured on WJW Channel 8 Beauty Blitz. Have a figure challenge you'd like help with? E-mail Laurie at PDQ@plaind.com or write to her in care of PDQ, The Plain Dealer, 1801 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114.

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