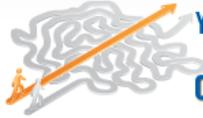


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GORGEOUS MOM - Finola Fights The Frump

WEB EXCLUSIVE

The mother of three offers tips, tricks, and advice on how even the busiest moms can look their best.



By: Jennifer L. Nelson, Photo courtesy of: Varilux@Crizal@

As Anna Devane in "General Hospital" and host of Style Network's "How Do I Look," Finola Hughes always looks fantastic. But she confesses that it is her most important role of mother to Dylan, 7 1/2, Cash, 4, and Sadie, 8 months, that makes her life "crazy...with a capital K!" She understands that while being fashionable with a brood is the last thing on most moms' minds, it is important to making you feel good about yourself.

Fortunately, she recently set aside some time to chat with us about how you can be both a mom and a fashionista. Yes, it probably means eliminating your husband's XXL sweatshirts (still garnished with your baby's spit-up stains) from your side of the closet, but there are some other simple steps you can take to put your best fashion foot forward without breaking the bank—and, best of all, you'll still get to work on time!

Trade time!

Trade Frumpy For Form-Fitting

It's easier than you think to stay out of the "mom jeans" rut. As far as Finola is concerned, "If you don't have it in your closet, you can't put it on!" Take a good, hard look at your wardrobe and toss anything that looks frumpy or does not flatter your body. She admits that she, too, has a pair of "horrible" pajamas reserved for those early morning chores, but when it's time to actually step out of that front door, she advises moms to immediately ask themselves what they are trying to cover up. "Many women want to throw on a big, old sweatshirt that they think covers everything, but it just accentuates all the things you're trying to camouflage," she explains.

Instead, she says, stick to form-fitting clothes, even if they're made from a casual, comfy material like cotton. Select colors, shapes, and styles that work with your particular body type: Dark bootcut jeans can do wonders for fuller thighs, and if you're trying to hide a tummy, there's no better way to do so than with a well-fitting jacket or empire-waist top.

Hit The Fashion Bulls-Eye With Target

Finola may be a celeb, but don't think for a second that she doesn't appreciate a good bargain. "It's one of my missions in life to go out and buy things that are reasonable," she says. "I hate paying retail for anything, even kids clothes, because I know how much it takes to manufacture them and it's a rip off."

One of Finola's faves is Target (she couldn't stop raving about it!) because they offer pieces from innovative designers like Isaac Mizrahi, and their clothes are a double whammy: They're great quality and inexpensive. The retail giant also exposes moms to the latest fashions from across the world with its "GO International" collection.

"Target is my friend," Finola says. We think they should be yours, too!

Take A Vested Interest In Fashion

When time is tight, Finola's go-to outfit is stretchy skinny jeans, a tank, and a vest. "You put a vest on, and it immediately looks like you've added some style [to your outfit]," she says. If skinny jeans don't quite work with your figure ("I can't believe they're still in style!" she quips), go with a wide leg or boot cut jean. Finola gets her denim fix from Desert Blue. If tanks don't fall into your comfort zone, try an always flattering wraparound or crossover top. Don't forget to play with proportions: If you're donning a long top, go for a short vest, and vice versa.

Don't Skimp On Shoes

Sure, we all have a pair or two (or twelve) of flip flops, but Finola urges women to concentrate on finding other heelless options that are just as quick and twice as cute. If you add a couple pairs of great slides, ballerina slippers, or gladiator sandals to your wardrobe, as soon as you go and put them on, you're already making a statement, she says. However, "if you're putting on frumpy flip flops you've been wearing for six seasons, then you're dead in the water—women always notice

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shoes!”

Finola is currently loving the new Pierre Hardy (you may be familiar with his fierce shoe collections for Dior and Balenciaga) line of sandals for The Gap.

Make Your Accessories Accessible

Busy moms don't have time to untangle a clump of necklaces when there's exactly nine minutes left to get the kids dressed, fed, and out the door. “Finola suggests selecting certain pieces that you love and leaving them on, so there's never a need to worry about your accessories. Try a pair of small gold hoop earrings, leather bracelets, or two or three medallion necklaces that are thin and unobtrusive (she got hers from QVC). She swears by bangle bracelets, and raves about Dr. Bloom's Chewable Jewels because not only are they stylish, but her daughter, Sadie, loves to chew on them!

“Oh, and if your hair is dirty,” Finola adds, “get a great panama hat!”

Fashion Is A Cinch With Belts

When it's time to make the transition between the lazy (yeah, right) days of summer and those brisk fall afternoons, put your warm-weather wardrobe to good use by investing in a few fall-friendly items, like a pair of dark jeans or a charcoal vest. Fall often brings out the blacks and grays, but Finola points out that we can also look forward to some really rich, beautiful colors: teal, plum, mustard, or chocolate, for example.

For this fall, Finola's best advice is, and I quote, “belts, belts, belts, belts, belts...everything is belted for fall!” Start looking at thin wraparound suede belts and thicker obi belts, which you can secure over a safari dress for the summer and a knit dress or high-waisted pants for the fall.

Take The Chore Out Of Makeup

If you can't find the time to accessorize, then your idea of a beauty regimen might be swiping on some chapstick and applying a coat of mascara in the rearview on your way to the office. But Finola says all you really need is a cream blush. “It's quick and easy. Throw it on with one finger and you instantly look alive before you're running out that door,” she says.

Her other beauty secret is targeted specifically for the vision-challenged. If you have to wear glasses, invest in a trendy pair of frames to look chic and elegant, even if all that's on your agenda is a trip to the grocery store.



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