

S10 Ep7: Stephanie Yeboah & Her Mario Mischief

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Charlie Hedges

I'm Charlie Hedges and this is *My Wardrobe Malfunction*, the podcast where we unzip our lives one outfit at a time. Speaking of clothes, we love hearing all of your stories as well so please keep them coming in and tag us @mywardmal or you can send a message or voice note to help@mywardmal.com. Right, on to today's guest, she's a multi award-winning content creator, author and public speaker on style, mental health and body positivity. She's incredible, it's Stephanie Yeboah. So let's grab the handles, open *My Wardrobe* doors and find out what's inside...

So today I'm delighted to be joined by author, content creator, public speaker, brand consultant and all-round girls' girl, it's Stephanie Yeboah! Hey Steph!

Stephanie Yeboah

Hi, thank you for having me.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh, absolute pleasure. I have to say I am so interested in your story. I feel like there'll be so many people that don't know it that are going to be really inspired. So I want to say thank you for existing first of all because we need more people like you in the world.

Stephanie Yeboah

Oh, thank you so, so much. I'm really, really honoured to be on the show. And I can't, yeah, I just can't wait to get into the conversation. Thank you.

Charlie Hedges

So first things first, your first clothing memory. So this could be something that you wore initially and you're like 'Yeah, this is me.' Or maybe something you saw someone else wear when you were younger?

Stephanie Yeboah

Yeah. So my first clothing memory, I think I was four years old. As soon as you said that, the outfit in its whole glory just popped into my head. It was a red jumpsuit and I was wearing like a graphic tee under it. And my hair was exactly like this. It was all out. And I just remember seeing the photo of me just wearing this bright red jumpsuit with these like red pointy slippers.

Charlie Hedges

Come on!

Stephanie Yeboah

And that was my favourite outfit of all time. Like growing up, my parents loved to put me in a jumpsuit. Like I just had, I remember having all of these like all-in-one suits, play suits, jumpsuit. I had that really iconic retro Disney playsuit. I don't...

Charlie Hedges

Yes!

Stephanie Yeboah

Do you remember? Like I feel like every time I post a picture, someone's like, 'I used to have that when I was a child' and it was like a Minnie Mouse kind of playsuit, jumper type.

Charlie Hedges

I know exactly what you're talking about.

Stephanie Yeboah

And it's just iconic. And I just remember, yeah, growing up, my parents really loved to dress me up like a little doll and I loved it. So when I think back on my earliest fashion memories, it always involves some kind of jumpsuit or playsuit, you know, cross colours, very vibrant, very colourful.

Charlie Hedges

Now, I've got to say, you've been so honest about your life, you know, you've been so open, and I would love for everyone listening now to really get to grips with who you are, because from, well, I suppose from aged 8, is that fair to say, there was something that happened in your life, and you were like, you know what, that kind of set out the path for the future, negatively at first, right? But then a lot of positive stuff come from that. So just tell us about your background, and what was going on when you were younger?

Stephanie Yeboah

So when I was younger, I've always been, I always was very chubby as a child, just from my dad's side of the family. And for the most part, my childhood was OK up until I started secondary school. And as soon as I started secondary school is when the bullying started over my body. And it wasn't just me being bullied because I was big. It was also because of my skin tone as well. So being darker skinned, I was the subject of a lot of sort of colourist bullying. And growing up sort of being a child and being made to feel very aware of my body and how different it was to all of the other girls in school gave me a complex at a very, very young age. And it was at that point that I realized 'Oh wow, like my bigger body makes me feel as if I am less than.' And it made me feel as if my worth was decreased because of how I looked. And so I developed a really big complex. I was diagnosed with depression when I was 14. I became very insular, very quiet. All I wanted at that point being a teenager was to shrink myself and to be as small as possible. And I developed such a strong self-hatred for myself. And part of that self-hatred actually included bleaching my skin. So at a very young age, back in the day, we had like these black hair and beauty shops in my area and they were able to sell bleaching creams under the counter. You could just buy them. They would ship them in from other countries. A lot of these creams had a lot of things like hydroquinone and mercury and

really, really dangerous chemicals. And as like a 13, 14-year-old, I could just rock up to the stores and buy them in bulk.

Charlie Hedges

That's nuts.

Stephanie Yeboah

It's mad. And I started bleaching my skin. And after about a year, I did notice that while I was becoming lighter, the lightness developed a bit of a weird grey, unhealthy tinge. Like I looked like a nightwalker out of *Game of Thrones*. It was just ridiculous. I looked grey and terrible. And I developed all of these sores on my arms where the mercury was essentially poisoning me. And then that's when I decided to stop bleaching my skin because I realised that I have to learn how to love my body in the state that it's in. So while I was making peace with my skin colour, there was still the issue of the weight. And so, yeah, growing up, I still had this association with weight equals desirability. And so because of that, for most of my teenhood, I did not really go out. I was not sociable. I just didn't think that I was worth being friends with. I didn't think that people wanted to get to know me.

Charlie Hedges

That's so sad.

Stephanie Yeboah

Honestly, it's really horrible in terms of how society's beauty standards labelled us as kids and growing up in the noughties, it was just the worst because I would open up magazines and I was a really big fan of like Vogue and Elle and Marie Claire. And so I would take my pocket money to go and buy the magazines because I loved fashion even at that young age. And I would just be met with slim models, slim. Everybody was just so thin. And for me, instead of questioning, why is it that the westernised standard of beauty focuses so much on slimness, to me, it just felt like, well, existing in my body must be wrong because why isn't the media focusing on different body types and different abilities and different races? And unfortunately, as I ventured into university, those feelings of self-hatred and self-doubt got even worse. I developed eating disorders, although at the time they weren't classes eating disorders because I was plus size. So when I quickly started losing weight, people were just like 'Oh, that's great. Like keep doing what you're doing.' Like they didn't know that I was starving myself and doing all of these terrible, terrible things to lose weight.

Charlie Hedges

Didn't you, cos I read that you went on holiday, I think you went to Barcelona and you, is this right, you'd lost like something crazy, like four stone in such a short amount of time cos you was like 'Well, how do I get beach, like beach body ready?' And you did lose all that weight?

Stephanie Yeboah

Yes. So in my early 20s, so after uni, I decided that I wanted to go to Barcelona for like my birthday, like a first solo trip kind of thing. And for me it was like 'Well, if I'm going to Barcelona, there's the beach and I've never been on a beach before in like a bikini or a swimsuit.' So I said to myself 'I'm going to lose like four or five stone within like three

months.' Like I was so passionate about it. I was like 'I'm going to do it.' And at this time, one of my relatives used to buy diet pills, like illegally online from like random websites. And she would give them to me and be like 'Hey Steph, you need to lose weight. Use these diet pills.' Now I didn't know what were in these diet pills. For all I know, it could have been speed. It could have been anything.

Charlie Hedges

Oh God, don't...

Stephanie Yeboah

But I was taking them and I lost a lot of weight in a very short amount of time. I want to say within four months I lost about four, four and a half stone.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh.

Stephanie Yeboah

It was terrible. And I ended up going to Barcelona and I remember being in Barcelona spending the whole time there so sick, so depressed. I remember wearing a bikini, going to the beach. Nobody batted an eyelid at me. Nobody cared. And I was just like, that was when I was like 'OK, I've flown all the way here. I've done all that because I want people to see this new and improved body.' Not only did nobody even look at me or care, but I had put my body through so much trauma and so much stress because during that time, because of the effects of the pills and me not eating, I was incredibly sick. I couldn't keep anything down. I had fevers all the time. I had ulcers. And I remember sitting in the hotel room just like 'I have done all of this for the approval of others and essentially tortured my body.' And it was at that point on the trip that I said 'When I come back to the UK, I have to learn how to love myself because I have essentially been abusing myself, not only for the last three months taking this pill, but from childhood, I have been inflicting so much harm on my body because I wanted to fit in and be seen as desirable and be seen as dateable. And just to be seen as a valid human being. 'Because one thing about being fat in this community is that there is so much dehumanisation that goes on when you do, when you exist in a body that is not seen as socially attractive. And so I remember coming back and one of the first things that I did was I wrote a letter to myself as if my body was another entity. And I said to her, I said all of these things, but ultimately what it came down to was I needed to apologise to my body instead of apologising on behalf of it to other people. And I essentially said, you know 'All you've done as my body is work hard every day to keep me alive. And this is how I'm repaying you by starving you, by hurting you, by doing all of the other acts of self-harm, when its only job is to keep me alive.' And throughout all of the abuse that I had put on myself, it was my heart was still beating, my lungs were still functioning. And that was when I had to really be like 'Wow, I have done so much damage to not only my spiritual self, my emotions, but my body.' I was literally essentially slowly killing it while all it wanted to do was keep me alive. And from that point, I decided that I needed to treat myself and to treat my body with care. And it kind of just, yeah, it kind of just took off from there. And it is an ongoing journey. I think with self-love, it's not linear and it's always going to be ongoing. But I think, yeah, that was the point where everything just kind of changed for me.

Charlie Hedges

And the maddest thing is like, you know, you went on that journey to try and make yourself happy and to be happier. But I'm guessing that was probably the saddest point in your entire life up until that point. So I just think honestly, there'll be so many people listening right now, whether it's a weight thing or a race thing, whatever, we all don't like something about ourselves, we're all trying to conform and trying to fit into something aren't we? And I think the fact that you've got to that point where you're like 'Do you know what? No, this is me. Take it or leave it. This is who I am.' I just... you're so inspiring. Honestly, I find your story just amazing. In terms of like you mentioned, like the weight loss pills as well, because obviously that's in the news now. And that's, that's kind of all you're hearing people talking about like Ozempic and the weight loss injections. Like what, what's your view on stuff like that now having come from that as well?

Stephanie Yeboah

For me, it just feels really sad. Because on one hand, I'm very much for body autonomy. So you know, if this is what you feel you need to do in order to be happy, go for it. I don't tap into toxic positivity. I'm not one of those people, you know, despite being within the body positivity movement and encouraging people to love themselves, I don't want to be one of those people that's like 'Oh, how dare you go on to Ozempic, you have to love yourself at this body.' Because if we think about it, when it comes to being fat, because that's the word that I prefer to use, because I don't see any negativity in the word, a lot of the reason why people don't like being fat, it's not actually because of how we exist in our bodies. It's not because we dislike how we look in the mirror. It's because of how society makes us feel. It's because of how society dehumanises fat people. And how we navigate in the world is so different to everybody else. And so ultimately, that is the reason why a lot of people feel uncomfortable in their weight, not because they think they look bad, but it's because they can see other people treat them differently based on how we look. So if somebody makes the decision to use a weight loss drug, ultimately, it's their decision because I understand how it feels to live in a fat body and navigate fat phobia every single day. My issue with the Ozempics of the world is that there are ways in which people are trying to cheat the system. So with Ozempic, you know, I think you have to be over a certain BMI in order to take it. However, we are seeing that a lot of people who seem to be taking it and being very open about it are people that are actually underweight or people that do not adhere to the BMI limit. So, you know, you have women that are size 12, 14, taking Ozempic when they shouldn't be. And one thing that I found when I was doing some research into writing an article about, you know, how popular it's become is that people are going onto message boards. So things like your Reddits and things like that. And they are asking plus size people to send them images of them on the scale, because I think with the private GPs and things like that, in order for them to prescribe it, they need to see an image or a picture of your weight. So you standing on the scale so that it proves to them that you are the way you are. And what people are doing is they're going onto places like Reddit and they're asking 'Hey, if there's anybody on here that's like a size 22 or a size 24, can you send me a picture of your feet on a scale showing, you know, that you're 18 stone, so that I can take this and send it to the online GP and then I can get Ozempic.' And people are doing it.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my God, it's so dangerous.

Stephanie Yeboah

And it's so dangerous because I think there are studies that have shown that if you are under a certain weight and you take these weight loss drugs, it can affect you a lot more in terms of the terrible and the dangerous side effects, then it will affect somebody that does qualify to be on it. And so I feel like that's my, that's one of my issues is that it does abuse the system. There are people that are abusing it. And then I think from a social point of view, I mean, being in the body positive community, one of the unfortunate things that has happened now is that there is a standard of beauty within the body positive community. So that community was created predominantly by black plus size women. And it was a community that was meant to be a safe space for larger plus size women. So I'm talking size 22, size 24 and above, and disabled women. Now since lockdown, we've seen a huge change in what the body positivity community looks like. So we're seeing a lot more midsize women. We're seeing people being given opportunities that fit more to the westernised standard of beauty. So hourglass shape, big bums, flat stomachs, high cheekbones, essentially like a 'good fat'. And so what we're seeing now is because the women who kind of fit the curvy standards of beauties are being heralded in this community that was meant for women who have less privilege. The women in the communities who are bigger are now on weight loss drugs so that they can look midsize so that they can also reap the benefits of being in the community, whether as an activist, as a model, as an influencer. And so I think ultimately that's what makes me feel really sad is that even in our communities that is supposed to celebrate and really talk about learning how to love our bigger bodies, there is a standard of beauty in order to be fat or considered attractive fat. And so people are utilising the drug in order to become smaller so that they can get the campaigns with the brands for plus size clothing and all of that kind of stuff. So that's, for me, I feel like that's, it's not something that I like particularly to be honest.

Charlie Hedges

At the point where you were like, do you know what, like you said, you wrote yourself a letter and you said 'This is me now, this is me going forward, I'm going to be happy with who I am and what I stand for.' How did that change what you wore? Because what did you go from to then to? Were you more extravagant? Did you experiment? Did it literally change everything?

Stephanie Yeboah

Oh, babes. It was...

Charlie Hedges

Did you get that butt out? That is what I want to know!

Stephanie Yeboah

Yes, it was like night and day...

Charlie Hedges

Come on!

Stephanie Yeboah

So before I was in black leggings, everything was black, black, black, black, flattering, cardigans, when it was like... summer time was my enemy. I would be wearing cardigans all the time. I have lipodema on my arms, which is just basically excess fat

around my arms. I have stretch marks and so I hated showing my arms and I would be covered head to toe. However, when I made the decision to be like 'Hey, this is my body and I'm going to love myself and I'm going to pour into myself and I'm going to, as somebody that has loved fashion my whole life, I'm going to start dressing in a way that makes me feel confident.' Because one thing I realised is that when you're fat, you're always going to be fat regardless of what you try and wear to cover yourself up. So if I'm wearing all black and I walk outside, I'm not going to look smaller. I feel like that is a myth, dressing to look smaller when you're plus size. I'm not going to look smaller. The first thing you're going to see is a plus size woman wearing all black. So then I was like 'Well, if I'm going to step out and people are just going to see a fat woman walking down the street, that fat woman is going to be dressed in the most extravagant fabrics...'

Charlie Hedges

Oh my God, I love you!

Stephanie Yeboah

If you guys are going to look at me, you guys are going to *look* at me. Listen, I was wearing mini skirts, crop tops were my favourite. And one thing that I love is a good silhouette. So me being plus size and wanting to love every aspect of my skin and my body and my curves, I intentionally went for pieces that exaggerated my body. So big shoulder pads, I would wear things that would have an exaggerated waist. Like I love a good silhouette. So I would wear things that would make me look bigger and would introduce a lot of shaping and silhouettes to my body and contouring. So yeah, I was very much into the dopamine trend. I was wearing all the colours...

Charlie Hedges

Love that.

Stephanie Yeboah

The heels. Everybody was going to see my legs by force. I did not care. I was like 'If you guys are going to see me, I'm going to be comfortable in what I'm wearing, you know?' So yeah, it was just such a joy to be able to dress in a way that really expressed how I felt about fashion, how I felt about myself. And yeah, it's been wonderful.

Charlie Hedges

It's almost like listening to you talk, it's almost like you're saying 'We should all dress how society doesn't want us to.' How they say that we're supposed to look, it's like going against that, go against that grain and just dress in whatever the heck you like. It's so true what you just said about if you're coming out whatever size you are and you're not feeling good about yourself. People are going to look at you anyway so you might as well come out and go 'Yeah look at this.'

Stephanie Yeboah

You might as well. And I just think, I'm not the biggest fan of fashion rules like I remember back in the day when there was this whole thing like green and blue was it 'blue and green could never be seen' And for the longest time I I went by that rule but now I don't I don't give a damn because who am I trying to impress at the end of the day who am I actually trying to impress? Nobody's going to beat me up if I could if I go out there and I wear blue and green do you know what I mean? So it's one of those things where it's like I ignore all of the fashion rules because as long as I'm happy and what I'm

wearing that confidence is going to be portrayed regardless if somebody likes what I'm wearing or not. Even if you don't like my outfit you're going to respect the fact that I was confident enough to wear it and that's good enough for me.

Charlie Hedges

That's enough! Oh my God, I love you, I love you! What item in your wardrobe currently gets the most wear? I know you said you love your silhouettes. Is there like a piece that you go to where you're like 'Yeah, that is getting absolutely rinsed and I'm here for it.'

Stephanie Yeboah

Yeah, so I've got this multi-coloured shirt dress from Kai Collective, and it's like Joseph and his Technicolour raincoat. It has got so many different colours. It's a huge organza over the top shirt dress that is see through, but it's also got, it's predominantly purple and yellow stripes. Every single time I wear it combined with the Afro, oh, people just go crazy. People go crazy. And I'm just like 'Yeah, this is the attention that I deserve.' Like, it's so colourful and it's so bright and it just looks really good because it's translucent as well. You can kind of see like, you know, my body underneath, and I quite like...

Charlie Hedges

Go on, girl!

Stephanie Yeboah

Like, yeah, you guys see these curves, see these rolls. You better get into the cellulite. Do you know what I mean? Come on! And I love it.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh! I can't imagine an outfit where you're like slobbing around. Have you got any slobbing around where or are you always like full on?

Stephanie Yeboah

Oh I've got a lot of slobbing around wear to be fair. It's a lot of like big black T-shirts. So I love a good motif T-shirt or a slogan T-shirt so I get a lot of T-shirts that are either have like my favourite artist or band on there. I've got like T-shirts where I've gone, because I love a good theme park and every time I go to a theme park I have to get the T-shirt so that people know that I've been to this theme park. The new Super Nintendo world opened in Orlando, Universal Studios.

Charlie Hedges

Oh I saw that! Have you been?

Stephanie Yeboah

I've been and I was one of the first people to go like last month and I was I came back so smart because I was like 'I'm gonna get a T-shirt and I'm gonna wear it because I want people to know that I've been before you.' And what I started doing was I started wearing the like Super Nintendo T-shirt because every morning I go for a walk and I go for a walk around three schools so I purposely time my walk so that I get to bump into students and their parents taking them to school. And I get to watch the kids look at my T-shirt not know that there is a Super Nintendo world and then they start tugging their parents on to be like 'Look at her T-shirt. We need to go we need to go to Super Nintendo world!' It's all like free advertising for them. I'm just like 'Yes, I've met Mario and you haven't!' But

I'm a bit of a big kid so I love like I love T-shirts that have like video game characters or cartoon characters. It's just a way to kind of like tap into my big kidness. So yeah I do love it an oversized T-shirt is the way in which I tend to kind of like slob around.

Charlie Hedges

Let's talk comfort blanket. Is there an item with clothing or an accessory or just something that you own that makes you feel comforted?

Stephanie Yeboah

You say comfort but my nylon Prada backpack...

Charlie Hedges

Oh!

Stephanie Yeboah

It's very fancy but I bought that three years ago when I finished writing my first book and I had wanted it for such a long time and it's one of those things that is so important to me because I do not, as much as I love handbags, I don't like carrying things when I'm out. Even having like cross body bags across my shoulders, it always just feels like my shoulders and my hands are working. So I love a good backpack and that Prada backpack has been so useful and I have gotten so much wear out of it. I wear it every single day. For as much as it costs I was like 'No, this stuff is getting worn every single day.'

Charlie Hedges

Getting your money's worth!

Stephanie Yeboah

'I'm going to get my money's worth from this bloody backpack.' And it's become a bit of a comfort blanket for me. I take it travelling, events that I go to day or night like because it's black so it fits in anywhere and it's just one of my favourite items. I love it so much.

Charlie Hedges

What about malfunctions? Have you ever had a wardrobe malfunction whilst experimenting?

Stephanie Yeboah

I have, and this was my own fault, this was me getting too excited because I got invited to the British Fashion Awards in 2023. And first of all, I am somebody that has big feet. I say big feet, I'm a size eight, but I'm also wide foot and I have flat feet. So that means that I can't really wear heels or I can't wear them for long amounts of time because of the flat footedness. So I get invited to the British Fashion Awards and I'm like gassing myself up. I'm just like 'Oh my gosh, me?' And I was like 'I am going to wear the highest heels I can find. Because the taxi's just going to drop me outside of the venue. I'll go in, have my moment, enjoy the show, get an Uber back.' I was not aware that with this show, the traffic was insane. I decided to wear like a really cute sort of oversized, it was the organza shirt that I was just talking about, so I wore that. And then I bought this pair of black PVC ankle boots that were eight inches.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh! That's a straight no.

Stephanie Yeboah

I said 'You know what? They're uncomfortable, but again, I'm just gonna be dropped outside of the venue, walk in, walk out, fine.' The taxi on the way there because of the traffic decided to kick me out of the cab, half a mile away from the venue, meaning that I had to walk all the way there. I hobbled there. And I was in so much pain. Went to the event, it was great. I took my shoes off, because we were in a box, so I was like 'Nobody can see me.' So I took my shoes off for the duration of the show. And then it came to going home. So me and my friend, we kind of like hobbled out of the venue and it was pissing down with rain. Again, I was wearing an almost see-through shirt.

Charlie Hedges

You've had a mare!

Stephanie Yeboah

The heavens had just opened and because everybody was coming out at the same time and there were loads of celebrities and stuff waiting and their cars were everywhere, we couldn't get an Uber. So we had to walk from, where was it? We had to walk from Earl's Court. Where did we go? It must've been like Ladbroke Grove. It was like a good three miles that I had to walk in those shoes, hobble along. And then the last stretch of land, I just took the shoes off. I didn't have any socks on, so I was walking in the rain, in the see-through top and my feet were bleeding and people was just like 'Who is this crazy person?' Because that was the closest we could order an Uber from. And I was just like, I actually threw the shoes away the next day. I was like 'I'm not doing that again. This is the worst moment of my life.' Now I can look back and laugh on it, but at the time I was like 'What the hell have I put myself into?' And I was like 'I'm never doing that again.' Eight inches? No.

Charlie Hedges

Have you ever invested in the foldable ones? You know, the foldable shoes that you can get? The flats.

Stephanie Yeboah

Yes, I did have a pair, but then I lost them. I lost them and I didn't have them. But I do need to buy another pair because I was like 'Man, this was such a huge mistake.'

Charlie Hedges

Let's talk about fashion trends that you've changed your mind about. Is there any trends along the way where you're like 'Actually, I weren't all for that' but now, you know, you've embraced it. Or is there any like no-gos for you?

Stephanie Yeboah

But you know what, I could never really wrap my head around now that I think about it. I can't believe I used to wear skinny jeans. I actually can't. I hate them so much.

Charlie Hedges

Hang on a sec though, have you kept because I'm the same I used to wear skinny jeans all the time and then I discovered baggy jeans I'm like 'What was I even thinking?'

However are you like me and has kept that one pair of skinny jeans just in case? I don't wear them but they're locked somewhere just in case they make a massive comeback or I'd start wearing skinny jeans. Or have you just said 'No', period?

Stephanie Yeboah

I've got one pair of Mango skinny jeans that I've kept because I'm like 'Just in case...'

Charlie Hedges

Same!

Stephanie Yeboah

'Something happens and I might want to wear them with a pair of like boots or something.' So it's locked away. But I think about how uncomfortable I used to be wearing them. And then when I discovered boyfriend jeans and dad jeans...

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh, please!

Stephanie Yeboah

And I used to stay away from them when I was younger because I thought 'Oh, they're going to make me look bigger than I am.' But back when I used to think and adhered to all of the fashion rules. But now I love a good baggy jean. The 90s-style jeans. I also love horseshoe jeans, like horseshoe jeans...

Charlie Hedges

What are they?

Stephanie Yeboah

So horseshoe jeans are like the jeans that kind of, they have like a really huge structured silhouette. So they're kind of like dad jeans, but they're very structured. And then when they get to your calf area, they kind of flare out. So they're kind of shaped like a horseshoe. And they're just like very, very baggy jeans. But the bag on them is not, it's quite structured. So it's like, it doesn't really move when you're walking around. It's just, oh, it's just my favourite kind of jeans. It's almost like flares.

Charlie Hedges

Oh, have some of these girl – look at these bad boys I've got on!

Stephanie Yeboah

Yeah, I love! Honestly, I love it. I love. And also like peplums as well. I see that peplums are coming back. So like the peplum dresses.

Charlie Hedges

Love them.

Stephanie Yeboah

And yeah, like, so when I was younger, I was just like 'Why are people wearing that? It just looks, it looks so corporate.' And like, why people, like, I just didn't understand it. I thought it was like really lame. But now that they're coming back, I'm like 'No, actually, it's given exaggerated hip,' like, and I like that. Any opportunity to exaggerate certain

parts of my body, I'm all for it. So now I do love a peplum. And I actually never thought I would ever say this, but I love smock dresses now. I used to hate them.

Charlie Hedges

Yeah, I'm with you. I'm with you, you know.

Stephanie Yeboah

Because back then with plus size fashion, all they used to give us were smock dresses. Like we never used to have any variation in our style. It was always like 'Here, have a smock dress because it will cover you up and it will flatter you'. And I was just not about that. But now I just find them so comfortable. They're so comfortable. And yeah, I think those are like the three things that I've kind of like changed my mind on.

Charlie Hedges

What advice would you give your younger self about your style now? I know obviously at the start of this chat, you said that you wrote a letter to yourself, and that's really the turning point for you. But if you had to write a letter to your younger self about your style now, and to anyone listening that has maybe been on a similar journey as you, or maybe they are at the start of their journey where you were, you know, when you were a lot younger, what advice would you give to yourself and everybody else listening now?

Stephanie Yeboah

Unless it's part of your religion or culture, I don't see the need in having to cover up because of fears of what people may think about you. One thing about me is that, yeah, growing up, I was dressing to cover myself because I was so uncomfortable in the body that I was in. But actually, it's one of those things where it didn't give me the opportunity to be able to express myself creatively. And so I think for me, it was very much a case of 'If this item of clothing makes you comfortable, wear it.' It doesn't matter if somebody finds it unappealing. It doesn't matter if you get stared at. Wear whatever makes you feel comfortable. And also don't wear bandanas as a child because it will ruin your hairline. Like, I went through a period... I went through a period of wearing bandanas to cover up my hair because my mum decided to give me a jerry curl, which is like a, she decided to perm my hair at home instead of taking me to a hairdresser. And it basically just messed up my hair. So I started wearing bandanas to cover the front of my hair. And what that did is it just eroded my hairline away.

Charlie Hedges

Oh my gosh.

Stephanie Yeboah

And I did that for like five years where I'd just wear a bandana every day. I looked like I was part of a gang. And actually thinking back, I was like 'That was such a weird fashion choice to make.' It just didn't go with anything I was wearing. But yeah, I think for me, dress in things that make you feel good about your body instead of dressing to cover up. Because at the end of the day, regardless of your body shape or your body type, if you go out into the world and you are plus size, people are still gonna see that you're plus size, regardless of what you're trying to wear to make yourself look smaller. So it's one of those things where I would say 'Take chances as well, wear things that you probably thought that you would never be able to wear.' And then also in this scope as well, we're still in a space where plus size fashion could do with a lot of help. And so I think a lot of

us are so restricted to only wearing things that come in our size. But actually, if you sometimes venture outside of that, you may be surprised to find things that you didn't think could fit, could fit. So for instance, if you were to go into like an H&M and they didn't have this in a size 22, but actually if you try that blazer on that looks oversize, that's a size 14, that might actually fit. So I'm very big in, especially plus size women, going into stores, as traumatic as it is to go into a store these days, to just try things on and just see how they would fit because you just never know what you'll be able to find.

Charlie Hedges

So do you have an outfit, we call it a birthday suit, so an outfit you put on and you're like, 'Yes, I feel a million dollars'?

Stephanie Yeboah

Yes, I do. I have this white dress, which it kind of has like a bustier kind of corset princess cut at the top, and then it flows into a ballgown skirt. And it's from the brand LA Space, which is owned by my friend Lorna Lux. And she, yeah, she's created this outfit. It just, I feel like a princess every time I put this on because it is something that I never thought I would be able to have access to, being bigger. And Lorna, bless her, has created and extended her clothing line to include plus sizes as well.

Charlie Hedges

I love Lorna, she's great.

Stephanie Yeboah

She's just, oh, I love her so much. She's wonderful. And so when she sent me the dress, I was like 'I feel like an actual princess for the first time in my life.' Like it's a proper like princess cut, like, and I was just like, every time I wear it, I feel so beautiful in it. And so yeah, I would go for, I would go for that dress. She does some beautiful dresses.

Charlie Hedges

I always ask people what they'd hand down to someone else. I don't want to speak for you, but I feel like that's an item of clothing that you'd probably hand down to someone. Or is there something more unique or special to you that's maybe been given to you that you would hand down to someone else?

Stephanie Yeboah

Yeah, absolutely. So for me, I would probably say I would hand down... So last year I created some jewellery in collaboration with a brand called Ottoman Hands. And it was my first time designing jewellery and all of the jewellery is size inclusive and they are all reflective of my heritage of being Ghanaian. So they're all, they all have like symbols on them. And because it was the first time I've ever created jewellery that like it means so much to me and my culture. It's definitely something that I would love to pass down, you know, if I ever have kids, I would want them to be like 'Hey, your mum actually created this line of jewellery, reflective of our culture and all of the lessons and the parables that have been passed down from our ancestors to us.' And the jewellery reflects that. So I think for me, I know it's a bit vain, but yeah, I would pass down my own collection of things I've designed!

Charlie Hedges

Girl, this is not vain! We said at the start of this call, you big yourself up, we all should, so that is not vain. Hand down your own stuff, that's what we call a ledge! Stephanie, you are a queen. I'm not even joking. I just think you're incredible. I don't want to keep blowing smoke up your backside, but you're so inspirational. Honestly, thank you so much for chatting to us today. I cannot wait to hear everyone's feedback listening to this because I feel like you're going to be very popular on this podcast, so thank you so much. But before you go, we do need to do a quick Style Sprint with you, so it's like a 60-second quick fire round. Is that OK?

Stephanie Yeboah

Yeah, no problem.

Charlie Hedges

Let's go. Quick fire round. Silk or velvet?

Stephanie Yeboah

Silk.

Charlie Hedges

Jeans or jumpsuit?

Stephanie Yeboah

Jumpsuit.

Charlie Hedges

Silver or gold?

Stephanie Yeboah

Gold, always gold.

Charlie Hedges

Platform boots or trainers?

Stephanie Yeboah

Ooh, trainers.

Charlie Hedges

I know the answer to this, I think. Handbag or rucksack?

Stephanie Yeboah

Rucksack, always!

Charlie Hedges

Yay! Denim or leather?

Stephanie Yeboah

Ooh. Denim, denim, I have to say denim.

Charlie Hedges

You break up with someone who's bought you an amazing handbag. Do you keep it or do you chuck it away?

Stephanie Yeboah

I keep it and then I sell it and take the money.

Charlie Hedges

Yes!

Stephanie Yeboah

Gotta get my money's worth!

Charlie Hedges

Come on! Mini dress or maxi dress?

Stephanie Yeboah

Mini dress.

Charlie Hedges

Lipstick or gloss?

Stephanie Yeboah

Lipstick.

Charlie Hedges

Crop top or oversized T-shirt? Yeah, I knew, I wanted to end on this one because this is a struggle for you. Because I know you like to slob in your T-shirts but you also like to enjoy a little crop top.

Stephanie Yeboah

Argh... I'm gonna go oversized T-shirt because I can dress that up or down depending on how I'm feeling. Yeah.

Charlie Hedges

And you have completed your Style Sprint. Thank you so much. We love you! And before we let you go, is there anything that you've got coming up?

Stephanie Yeboah

Well, I have my first ever rom-com book that I've written called *Chaotic Energy* that came out this year, which I think personally is a great holiday summer read. So if you're looking to get into reading a nice little rom-com based in South London, yeah, that's my book that I wrote.

Charlie Hedges

Definitely, thank you so much. You're a dream.

Stephanie Yeboah

Thank you so much for having me. This was so much fun. Thank you.

Charlie Hedges

Thank you Stephanie you can find her at stephanieyeboah.com and @stephanieyeboah on her socials as well and please do pick up a book *Chaotic Energy* in all good bookshops. And you can find us in the usual places @mywardmal on our socials and at mywardmal.com. And of course please do subscribe, rate and review us on your chosen podcast platform.

That is it, thank you again to Stephanie and to all of you for listening today.

We'll catch up very soon. Until then *My Wardrobe* is officially closed.