

Trinny and Susannah, you have a lot to answer for

Fashion advice used to be something you asked of a mate. Now there's a makeover specialist on every high street. **Hermione Eyre** tries out Personality Profiling

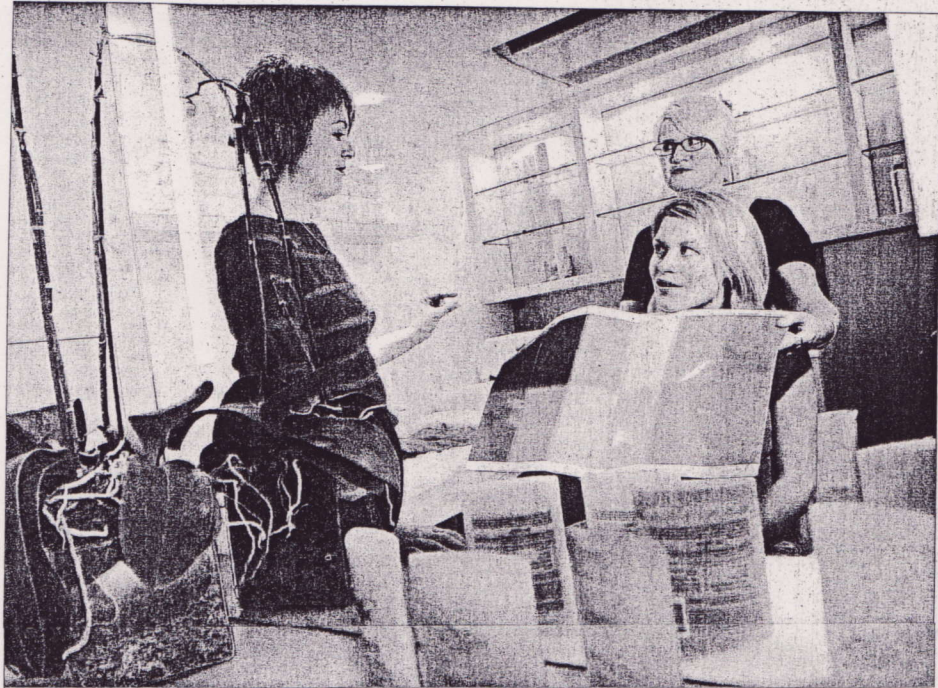
Your special place is a secret garden," says Sarah, her eyes half closed. "I can see you sitting there under a tree, holding a leaf. Your colours are moss green, antique gold and dusky pink." A change comes over her - she appears to see me in a new light. "Your special animal is a doe, a gentle deer..." she gasps.

I am having my image styled, an experience that falls somewhere between bra fitting and fortune telling. Style advice used to be your best friend wrinkling up her nose at your new jumper. Now it is a commodity. Trinny and Susannah's legacy is that more and more of us are prepared to pay for tips from impartial, authoritative professionals, and operations like this are popping up on many of our high streets. But is a consultation with a *soi-disant* style guru really a worthwhile investment?

Here I am in Percy Street, London, for a "Bespoke Personal LifeStyle Profiling Session". Carolyn and Sarah, a jolly duo, are going to overhaul me from my roots to my toecaps. Carolyn has been colour director at Charles Worthington for 14 years and is going to help me find my ideal hair colour and cut. Sarah, who describes herself as an image profiler, will work out which type of clothes best suit my personality and body shape.

I sit in front of a mirror while Carolyn

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lifts my hair and Sarah chats to me gently. It doesn't seem like an inquisition, but after only four minutes the pair already have me weighed up. Carolyn lifts a handful of my hair - "Did your mother do these highlights?" I gasp. How could she know? "She didn't do a bad job, actually. But I can tell you're not a regular salon girl. Never will be." "Never," avers Sarah. She's noticed my odd socks.

I'm beginning to feel vaguely ashamed that I'm not more *soignée*. But Carolyn and Sarah are not in the business of shame or ridicule. "That's fine!" they exclaim. "You're not high maintenance - it's just not your style. We can work out how you only need to do the minimum to look good." Carolyn recommends some ultra-natural highlights that only need touching up twice a year. They cost, but hey - a makeover always leads to some kind of outlay.

Carolyn does my hair "colours". This, she says, is essential procedure for finding out your complexion tone. It consists of her holding a multicoloured fan under my chin and humming a lot. Apparently, this illustrates the two different poles of colour - Warm (honey, strawberry, caramel, copper, auburn, chestnut) and Cool (beige, ash, platinum, aubergine, plum, black). Once you know which one to choose from, you will look healthier instantly. I'm definitely Warm, and don't I wish I'd known it before my brief sortie into aubergine, aged 14.

Meanwhile, Sarah has been assessing my Style Type. She has a mental flip book of 35 Style Types, ranging from the Romany (Tracy Emin) to the Princess (Paris Hilton) via the Girl Next Door (Dido). Once you know which Type you are, she says, dressing becomes a doddle. You only need to visit shops that carry your Style Type, you no longer follow fashions that don't suit your Style Type, and your wardrobe will become more coherent. You can't be Cowgirl one morning and Power Dresser the next.

"Carolyn here," she says, grinning, "is a Vamp!" Carolyn raises an eyebrow. "The Vamp suits strong colours, sharp tailoring, high gloss fabrics, dramatic collars. She's basically Cruella De Vil, dressed by Versace."

It seems to work for Carolyn. Now she

Who are you?

Prairie girl

Fresh faced, tousled hair - usually fair with light eyes. Smoky colours. Easy going and friendly.
Designers - Plein Sud, Jigsaw, Gap, Reiss.
Must have item: a pair of cords with Uggs.
Celebs: Cameron Diaz, Jodie Kidd.

Baby Doll

Petite, long hair, youthful soft features. Soft lighter colours. Appearances are deceptive - can be quite determined.
Designers - Marc Jacobs, Retro, West Village.
Must have item: Tight sexy Paul and Joe front patch pocket jeans.
Celebs - Kylie, Emma Bunton.

Aristocrat

Regal, well groomed and bred, sophisticated, dressed up. Formal colours - black, white, navy.
Designers: Cerrutti, Diane von Furstenberg, Calvin Klein.
Must have item: Armani leather jacket, knee high leather boots.
Celebs: Liz Hurley.

Boho

Marrakesh market girl - very natural, free spirited, slightly mysterious. Lots of combinations of rich colours, woods and beads and natural textures.
Designers: Joseph, Missoni, Kenzo.
Must have item: Poncho and Carolina Herrera Paisley trousers.
Celeb: Yasmin Le Bon, Poppy de Villeneuve.

knows she's a Vamp, she says, she doesn't bother with trying to fit into fashionable baby-doll dresses that never suited her anyway. "And it's set me free to experiment. I recently got this diamanté razor blade." She shows it proudly. "I wouldn't have bought it if I hadn't been a Vamp."

Sarah mentions other types - the Prairie girl, an athletic Cameron Diaz type with fur trims and toggles; the Aristocrat, elegant like Liz Hurley... "And then", she says, looking at me, "there's your type."



Laura Ashley girl: Sarah, left, and Carolyn deduce Hermione's 'colour' and personality type
TIMOTHY ALLEN

What booty-shakin', toggle-snappin' sister will I turn out to be? I'm all ears. "You're simple," she says. "An English Rose. Paisley prints and soft, feminine shapes. Lots of florals, lots of soft green colours. Your look is very classic, so try a smart "finished" hairdo. And you'll find loads of clothes in Jigsaw or Laura Ashley."

What! No fashionable edge? No bed-head tousling? I'm frankly disappointed with my straight-laced Gwyneth-style Personality Profile. I smile politely, but

Free makeovers

Habitat is offering free style profiling and makeovers, courtesy of Make-Up Forever and the London School of Passion. Today only, between 12 and 4 pm, Tottenham Court Road, London, 020-7631 3880.

Bobbi Brown includes a complimentary make-over voucher with each product they sell.

John Lewis provides a free one-to-one Fashion Advice Service, with no obligation to buy. A two-hour consultation will give tips on budgeting, dressing for your body shape, and even department. The Service runs in all stores (0845 6049 049) but for chief expert Susan Bull call the Oxford Circus, London branch (020-7629 7711)

inwardly decide I'll take no notice. Paisley smocking? Yuk!

But when I look over my wardrobe, I have to admit that most of it is pretty English Rose. When I go and see the duo a few days later for our photoshoot I try wearing my most un-rosy outfit, a shocking red matador-style top. But they just nod and say, "Good. Those soft lines are very Rural Rose." Later, when I'm passing a coat I've had my eye on for a while, I realise it's a perfect prim English Rose coat. I decide to stop trying to fight my destiny and buy the coat - it's now my favourite item. A revelation in soft tweed.

So there I am - a grudging Personality Profiling convert. For all my initial scepticism, I'd recommend it, especially to anyone having trouble adjusting their look to a new style of life or about to spend a lot of money on clothes - a recent graduate starting work, for example. But be prepared for a life-changing shocker. You might find out "your" colour is not actually royal blue but petrol navy.

One hour with Carolyn Newman and Sarah Whittaker costs £45. To book, call the Charles Worthington Salon at 7 Percy Street, London W1 on 020-7631 1370. Sarah Whittaker does full image consultations starting at £295. www.insideoutnet.co.uk; 020-7226 9898.