

BUSINESS

I learned new hobbies to ditch fast fashion. You can, too.

Perspective by Kate Wheeler
Washington Post contributor
September 1, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. EDT



Listen 1 min Share Comment 77 Save

For my graphic novel, "[Team Trash: A Time Traveler's Guide to Sustainability](#)," I found a lot of compelling history about clothing. A recurring theme (particularly before the Industrial Revolution) was the reuse of materials. A pair of woolen trousers could be remade into a blouse, then a hat, the scraps from the hat broken down to be woven back into yarn (the shoddy method, also called "salvage") and so on. Compare this with today, where, [according to the Environmental Protection Agency](#), the average U.S. consumer throws away 81.5 pounds of clothing every year.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the statistics: How can we turn the tide when faced with such staggering numbers? The answer, experts say, may lie in both traditional practices and technological innovations. Here's where my journey started, and how you can start one, too.

Shopping for clothes has never been *easier*, or as cheap. Fast, or disposable, fashion has its claws in every corner of social media, hyping up new trends with astonishingly *cheap* price tags.





But at what cost?



It's estimated that a truckload of abandoned textiles is dumped in landfills or incinerated every second.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation

An estimated 80% of garment workers are women, in factories where gender violence is commonplace.

International Labor Organization

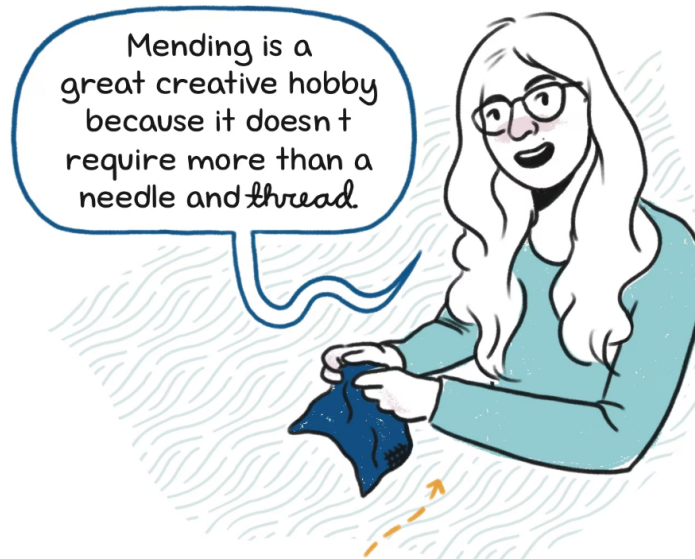


The fashion industry contributes to around 10% of global greenhouse emissions.

United Nations

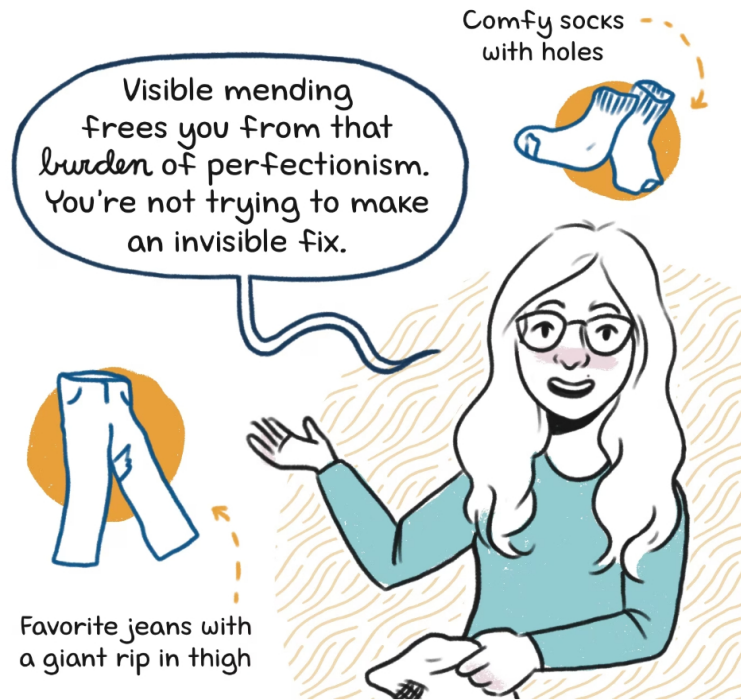
Thankfully, I found a small ray of hope amid the onslaught of social media ads:
A trend that's just as affordable and allows for creativity and self expression.

Mending is a great creative hobby because it doesn't require more than a needle and thread.

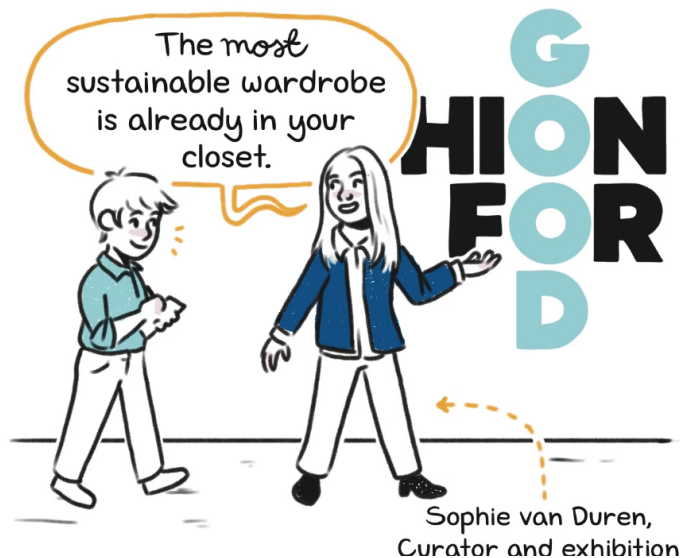


Sue Pennant Visible repair

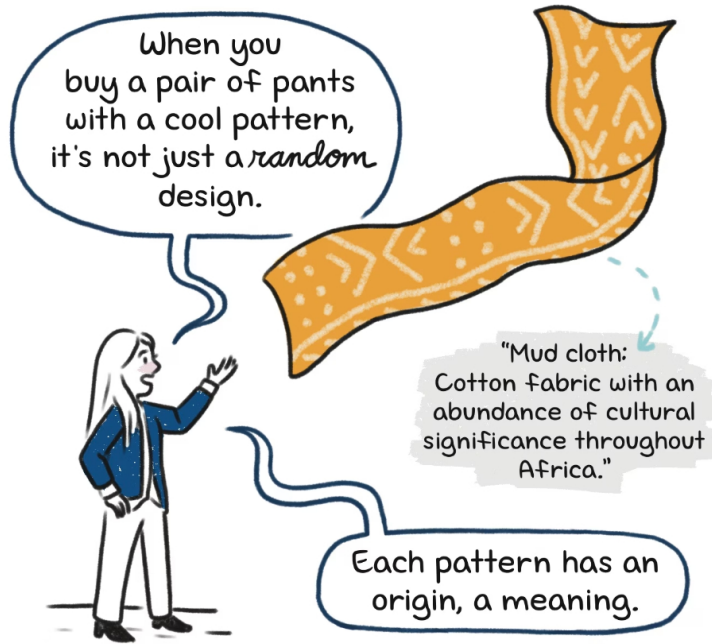
I had my own small pile of clothes that I'd been hesitant to throw away but never felt confident enough to fix them myself. What if I messed it up?



There are entire museums dedicated to the future of sustainable and circular fashion. Based in Amsterdam, the Fashion for Good museum explores innovations in materials and, perhaps more importantly, the ~~stories~~ stories of the clothing we wear.



The exhibits at the museum highlight the *connection* between culture and craftsmanship and how that connection is *lost* in the cycle of disposable fashion.



So what can I do as someone who loves to *express* themselves through their fashion and doesn't want to contribute to the landfills?



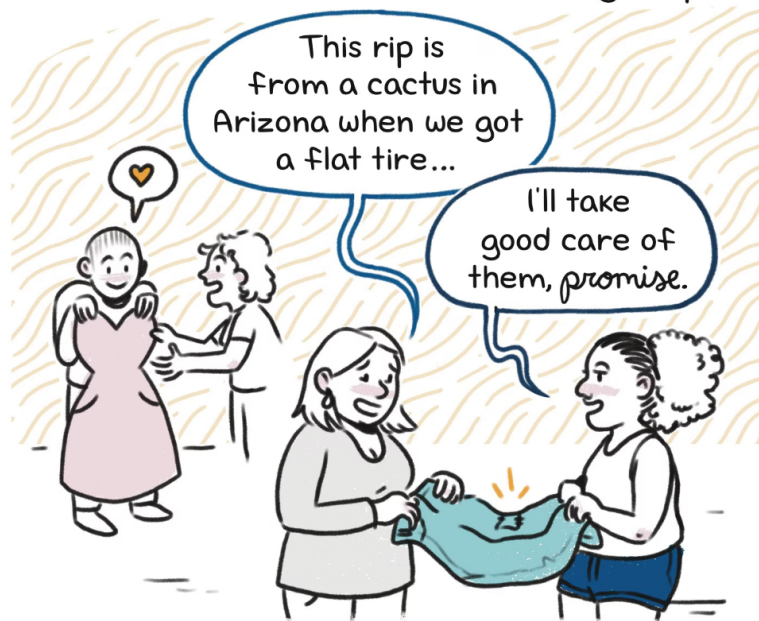
There are workshops, YouTube tutorials and even short TikToks that walk viewers through simple mending. I found darning a holey sock to be an *easy* win the first time I tried it.



It felt meditative and oddly satisfying.

[Buffer](#)

Besides mending the clothes I already own, what about new clothing? I love a good thrift store hunt, but an even better alternative is a clothing swap.



It's a great way to connect with your community and find pre-loved items that have a story.

[Buffer](#)

As much as I'd like to blame social media or fast fashion companies on clothing waste, it's never so simple. As a consumer, I have to hold myself accountable for, well, all that consuming.



Maybe the best thing is sitting in a pile next to my bed, waiting to be transformed.

Jaclyn Peiser contributed reporting. Editing by Hannah Good, Karly Domb-Sadof and Robbie Olivas DiMesio. Design editing by Christine Ashack. Copy editing by Dorine Bethea and Ryan Weber.

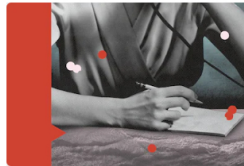
[Share](#)

[77 Comments](#)

MORE FOR YOU

Ask Amy: I'm worried my granddaughter's parents are too lax

Today at 12:00 a.m. EDT



Miss Manners: Is my use of proper etiquette 'performative'?

Today at 12:00 a.m. EDT

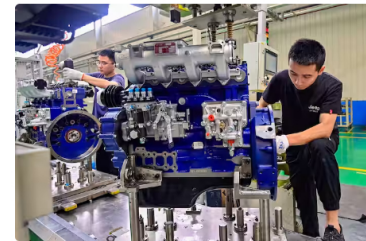


Carolyn Hax: Sis got her life back, now wants her dog back — three years later

Today at 12:00 a.m. EDT



MOST READ BUSINESS >



1 China's economic woes may leave U.S. and others all but unscathed

2 Home insurers cut natural disasters from policies as climate risks grow



3 U.S. deficit explodes even as economy grows

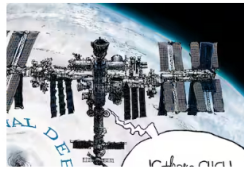


4 Bosses mean it this time:



Opinion | The impending storm

Today at 7:00 a.m. EDT



Opinion | American conservatives are not more Catholic than the pope

Today at 6:30 a.m. EDT



Comments

This conversation is moderated according to The Post's community rules. Please [read the rules](#) before joining the discussion. If you're experiencing any technical problems, please [contact our customer care team](#).

Comments are now closed.

All Comments 77

Newest

^ **NWDoctor** 19 hours ago (Edited)

Great article. I have a busy career and am limited on time. I found that good dry cleaners will do mending and repair of your beloved items- even holes in cashmere sweaters- for very low cost. And when I want something for an event, I borrow from a good friend who is a similar size and we do clothing exchanges. Also, I have bought just a few used items over the last few years from REI/ Patagonia or Poshmark. And, of course, be nice to your clothes and launder them with love :)

<

^ **Skybluesday** 21 hours ago

As they said on the Andy Griffith show, tear up your old clothes for rags. They've been doing that for decades! My grandmother used to make rag rugs. They were beautiful.

<

^ **JLLB** 22 hours ago

The problem is ... crappy fabric that doesn't last long. It's darned difficult to find 100% natural fabric, be it cotton, silk, wool, linen, that are made to last a good long while. Even with such suggestions to make your store bought clothes last as long as possible, you still have to deal with partly/mostly synthetic fabric that were never designed to last long. And, sorry, but I kinda don't really like patches in visible places. I do mend my hand knit socks, but only with yarn that are as

1 Return to the office or get a new job!



5 Pickleball craze is a big score for business



close to the original yarn color as possible.



[^](#) **Wash-Post-User** 21 hours ago

It's easy to find natural-fiber fabrics to sew with. I suggested some stores below.



[^](#) **Terms** [T](#) [Of](#) [Comments](#)

[View more](#)

Company

[About The Post](#)
[Newsroom Policies & Standards](#)
[Diversity and Inclusion](#)
[Careers](#)
[Media & Community Relations](#)
[WP Creative Group](#)
[Accessibility Statement](#)

Get The Post

[Manage Your Subscription](#)
[Gift Subscriptions](#)
[Mobile & Apps](#)
[Newsletters & Alerts](#)
[Washington Post Live](#)
[Reprints & Permissions](#)
[Post Store](#)
[Books & E-Books](#)
[Newspaper in Education](#)
[Print Archives \(Subscribers Only\)](#)
[Today's Paper](#)
[Public Notices](#)
[Coupons](#)

Contact Us

[Contact the Newsroom](#)
[Contact Customer Care](#)
[Contact the Opinions team](#)
[Advertise](#)
[Licensing & Syndication](#)
[Request a Correction](#)
[Send a News Tip](#)
[Report a Vulnerability](#)

Terms of Use

[Digital Products Terms of Sale](#)
[Print Products Terms of Sale](#)
[Terms of Service](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Cookie Settings](#)
[Submissions & Discussion Policy](#)
[RSS Terms of Service](#)
[Ad Choices](#)
[EU Advertising Consent](#)