

Strut in style with the Queen of the catwalk

By Abby Chia

International style icon, J. Alexander, also known as Miss J, strutted his way into Melbourne last Wednesday. The Queen of the catwalk was at Chadstone Shopping Centre on the 31st of August to show the public how to strut with style while promoting the new dessert Früche.

Renowned for giving his unvarnished opinions, he regularly coaches models on walking, talking and industry secrets on *America's Next Top Model* - and off-camera.

Although he may appear demanding, J. Alexander confessed the unsurprising truth: "I'm my own worst enemy - I try to recreate what's not perfect, to make it look good."

How to create a unique style? Well, ask Miss J! This passionate believer of personal style enthuses, "it's not about having more expensive clothing; it's just being creative with it!"

Referring to his hand crafted ribbon bowtie, this style icon proudly explains, "This is 16 years old! I made it from

scraps!" Taking pride in creating his own style and recycling the old, it's no surprise that in fact J. Alexander is dressed in "all old clothes." Furthermore he adds, "The only thing that's new, that's a year old is the sweater. Everything else is five to six years old!"

J. Alexander's creative, bold and quirky style is reflected in his famous hand-made outfits on *America's Next Top Model*, often dressing in drag to showcase his fabulous style.

Looking at the Melbourne fashion scene, Miss J comments: "It's very fashionable, yet conservative at the same time... there's always that pocket of people that push trends and a lot of very talented individuals like Alex Perry, who I'm crazy about."

The hottest fashion tip from Miss J: "If you want to be different, you don't want to copy - you want to be inspired!"

His fashion forward style, quick-witted responses, and kind demeanor are all part of the charm. Already an author



Miss J demonstrating proper poise for Abby Chia

Photo: Courtesy Style Council

(of *Follow the Model: Miss J's Guide to Unleashing Presence, Poise and Power*), what's next? Miss J's very own TV show? "Shhhh! Maybe... People

are coming to me for that. So it may happen," says Miss J secretively, "Let's hope it's soon. Audiences out there, keep a look out!"

Face of Caulfield country girl at heart

Bree Laughlin was last Wednesday night announced the *Face of Caulfield* for this year's BMW Caulfield Cup Carnival.

Born and bred in Kerang, country Victoria, the 26-year old Laughlin was brought up helping her grandparents with their trotters.

Laughlin has always been surrounded by horses and regularly attends country and city race meets. After winning *Fashions on the Field* at the Swan Hill races two years ago,

she was asked to host the fashion stage.

Laughlin professes herself thrilled: "I didn't believe it at first. I'm so excited!"

Laughlin was one of three finalists, along with Katie Murphy and Maggie Whish. Working closely with the Carnival's Fashion and Social Ambassador Gaian Rooney, Laughlin will present on camera, co-host at the fashion and entertainment stage, and keep her peers up to date through social media and a blog.



Photo: Courtesy Style Council

Face of Caulfield Bree Laughlin is a true horse lover.



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Kate Tapping is aiming for a simpler, calmer, happier life - aren't we all? This month she channels her inner sparrow and starts getting up at 5am.

This was my main initial motivation for making the change. Once I started getting up early however, I found it gave me two unexpected bonuses...

2. A fantastic head start. By the time the kids get up at seven, I've worked for an hour, gone for a run, had a shower and started on the school lunches and getting breakfast. So I get to feel I'm ahead of the game - very possibly the only time I will be ahead for the day.

3. Shhhhh. The house is so quiet in the morning when everyone's asleep. I love it. Much as I love my kids, it is delightful to have an hour or two to myself without the constant demands of 'Mum, can you...?', 'Mum, I can't find...', 'Muuuummm....'

Obviously everyone's different - getting up early may not work for you. Or it may work for you, but for different reasons to why it works for me. If you want to start getting up early, check out the 'how-to' box. The tips I found most helpful were:

1. Make sure you still get enough sleep. Research shows people who have less than seven hours sleep each night are three times more likely to get a cold. I am now slightly obsessive about getting to sleep by 10pm.
2. Once the alarm goes off, get up. Don't press snooze. Don't. Ever. Press. Snooze. Got it?
3. Create a nice ritual once you're up. First thing I do is make a coffee. By the time I've done that and sat down at my desk, I am happy to start working. An hour later I am happy to go out for a run. Whereas I wouldn't have been happy to get up and go straight out running.

The benefits of getting up early? Greet the day! The Dalai Lama says, "Everyday, think as you wake up, "Today I am fortunate to have woken up, I am alive, I have a precious human life, I am not going to waste it. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings."

My distinctly un-Dalai-Lama-like thought pattern as my alarm goes off at five is more along the lines of: "Already?! You've got to be kidding me. I just went to bed. I'm so tired. I can't get up. I don't want to get up. Leave me alone."

A part of me desperately wants to roll over and go back to sleep. But some other part already has a little hold - and here I am twenty-four minutes later, coffee close to my side, writing this. It is day 12 of my self-imposed 30 day wake up early challenge and I am still getting up at five.

So, why do I think getting up at five will make my life simpler and happier? Here are my top three reasons.

1. No guilt. Rather than spending copious amounts of time obsessing about when I am going to fit in exercise, it is done first thing in the morning.

Are you looking for a simpler, calmer, happier life? Join the journey at simplicityandthecity.com

How to get up early:

Start small. Consider getting up fifteen minutes earlier each day until you reach your goal get-up time.

Get out of the bedroom as soon as you turn off the alarm. Don't allow yourself to rationalise going back to bed. Just force yourself to go out of the room. Don't make getting back in bed an option.

Have a good reason. Set something to do early in the morning that's important. This reason will motivate you to get up.

Take advantage of all that extra time. Get a jump start on your day - by the time 6.30am rolls around, you may have done more than many people do the entire day.