



## Episode 29: SUSTAINABLE FASHION

This is the *Become an Unstoppable Woman* podcast with Lindsay Preston Episode 29, Sustainable Fashion.

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Welcome to the *Become an Unstoppable Woman* podcast, the show for goal-getting, fear-facing women for kicking ass by creating change. I'm your host, Lindsay Preston. I'm a wife, mom of two, and a multi-certified life coach to women all over the world. I've lived through enough in life to know that easier doesn't always equate to better. We can't fear the fire, we must learn to become it. On this show, I'll teach you how to do just that. Join me as I challenge you to become even more of the strong, resilient, and powerful woman you were meant to be. Let's do this.

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Hi there, Ms. Unstoppable, welcome back to the show. Hopefully, you listen to other episodes than just this one, but this episode, I will tell you is a very important one. I'm glad you're listening today. Today, we're not talking about mindset, but instead, we're going to talk about fashion, specifically sustainable fashion. This is a topic we all need to be learning more about. You may already be a pro, but maybe today's episode will teach us something a little more. If you don't even know what sustainable fashion is, or you haven't heard terms like fast fashion? Today's episode is definitely for you. Even if you've heard those terms, I know I have, you may not be a pro yet on understanding what that means. I'm a pretty newbie too, today's episode is especially for you because you're going to learn so much about sustainable fashion and the consequences of fast fashion and why we need to be buying our clothes in a way where we're thinking about where they came from. Not just from a humanity perspective of how they're made, with the people that are making them and how they're treated but in regards to our environment as well.

Today, I have two very special guests on the podcast. They are the two sole employees of an amazing company called Accel Lifestyle. I recently discovered them by happening to stumble upon an article in which one of them wrote about sustainable fashion. I was hooked, and I knew I wanted to have them on the show. Our first guest today is Megan Eddings. She is the founder and CEO of Accel Lifestyle. She is actually a chemist. She has a



chemistry background. She's going to talk about how she's used that chemistry background to develop these clothes at Accel Lifestyle and won't give it away as to what she's discovered with her clothes. That she is a powerhouse that has so much great information on this interview as she talks about how our clothing isn't as clean as we think it is. At least from my perspective, I had no idea how dirty our clothing is. I also have today Amanda Cotler. Hopefully, I'm saying that right, Amanda? But she is the Director of Operations at Accel Lifestyle. She's actually the one that wrote the article that I found. She has so much great information and great tips in this interview to help you start to understand how your clothing now may not be as clean as you would want it to be.

Between the two of them on this interview, you're going to learn so much that I don't really need anything else to say here. I hope you enjoy the interview, and I hope you start to think about your fashion in a whole new way because of this discussion. Without further ado, here is my interview with Amanda and Megan. Hi, Megan and Amanda. I am so thrilled to have both of you on the show today. I just did an introduction to all the listeners out there about you all, but I would love to hear from your mouth about this company, Accel Lifestyle. Why did you start it? Why did you want to make it with clothing that was sustainable and wasn't produced in a sweatshop-free environment?

Megan Eddings: Lindsay, thank you so much for having Amanda and I on today. We're super honored and excited and I absolutely love and feel very passionate about the topic. Accel Lifestyle was actually an idea about three and a half years ago. My husband, Kyle and I are super into fitness and his clothes smelled horribly, specifically his dry-fit polyester shirts. Chemistry is my background, so I started dabbling into, "If I were to create a fabric that didn't stink, what would it look like?" Back then, I didn't think that I'll become an entrepreneur. I didn't know anything about sustainable fashion. I'd heard about sweatshops, but it's not in a part of mainstream media, or at least it wasn't three and a half years ago, so it wasn't on my mind. However, when I started Googling other fitness apparel brands, I couldn't help but notice these articles that would come up about a lot of our clothes being made in sweatshops, the microplastics.

A lot of fitness apparel that's made out of polyester and nylon that we all basically wear, the microplastics break off. When I saw the effects on the environment and sweatshops, the effect on humanity, I vowed to have every aspect of Accel Lifestyle do the right, big thing for both humanity and the environment.

Lindsay: Wow. When I was prepping yet again, for this interview, I didn't even think about the environment aspect of fast fashion. You all have opened my eyes to a whole new world



with that and two, reading about bacteria that stays on our clothing. Give us a little bit more about that.

Megan: Basically, chemistry is my background, and I used to work in some science labs. I knew a little bit about bacteria but definitely not as much as I know now. When developing the fabric, the first thing, anything that you do that's new, you have to figure out the why? I did a bunch of research and called a bunch of yarn and fabric scientists, actually over in North Carolina, to understand where the smell comes from. The reason our clothes actually smell like stinky workout clothes, stinky socks, is because the bacteria that we have actually gets trapped in the fabric. When you're washing your clothes, specifically your workout clothes, you think you're getting it clean because you're adding the lavender soap and everything, but you're really not. You're actually just adding a lavender scent but the bacteria is still staying in your fabric. For example, you'll shower, you'll roll a deodorant, you'll put on an old shirt, you're like, "Oh my gosh, why did my underarm smell, I showered?" Is because the bacteria is still trapped in the fabric.

The fabric that we invented, basically inhibits all bacteria from getting in the fabric in the first place.

Lindsay: Wow. In essence, we're just masking the bacteria?

Megan: Exactly.

Lindsay: That's disgusting.

Megan: It's gross. If people ever looked in a microscope of what your clothes look like, you probably just want to walk around naked or wearing Accel Lifestyle. [laughs]

Lindsay: How did you develop this, Megan?

Megan: A lot of trial and error. I didn't know. I knew I wanted it to be soft because we all like luxurious things against our skin. My husband and I had and still have enough fitness clothes, probably to start our own store. It was just a lot of cold calling. I was super, super nervous in the beginning because I would find these fabric and yarn scientists' information on LinkedIn, on Google. I would literally cold call them. I'd pick up the phone and say, "Hi, my name is Megan Eddings. I'm looking at developing an anti-stink, anti-bacteria fabric."

I would ask for their advice and guidance. I felt like a total idiot if I'm being super honest because they would say all these fabric words and back the words I didn't know. We know the old expression fake it until you make it. I would write down every word they would say,



"I'd get off the phone, I'd research what the words meant," and then for my next cold call, I definitely talk the talk more.

I did that for about three years, had the fabric tested in the same lab Microstar that the government uses for anti-bacteria fabric. It took a while to get it to my anti-bacteria results that I was desiring. Eventually, we did. We filed for our patent in May of 2018.

Lindsay: Wow. I am in all of that. That is just like showing up, getting it done, making it happen.

Megan: There were a lot of tears and sleepless nights and swear words and extra workouts during that whole process. I'm making it sound glamorous and easy in three minutes, but it was a heck of a lot of work. I kept listening to podcasts like yours and reading blogs and books just to keep that motivation inspiration going. I'm always like, "If they can do it, why can't I?"

Lindsay: When did Amanda come on board? Amanda, what do you do for the company?

Amanda Cotler: Great question. I officially joined the team almost two years ago. I studied business at the College of Charleston, South Carolina. When I came back, I knew I wanted to end up in Houston. Of course, Houston is the hub for oil and gas. It was always my dream to get into Investor Relations. At the time, I was working for an oil and gas company doing Investor Relations. I thought that this is what I saw myself doing, work my way up the corporate ladder, and that was my future. Somewhere along the way, I met Megan and I knew she was working on this really cool, sustainable fabric. I was totally in awe of what she was doing and creating in Houston and the community that was backed behind it. About two years ago, Megan approached me and she's like, "Hey, do you want to do this full time?" I had so much fun. We were already hustling together. I knew that corporate life wasn't for me and it was time to switch it up. I took the side hustle to full-time and officially joined the team almost two years ago. It's been absolutely amazing. As of right now, my title is Director of Operations, but since it's a team of two, we literally do everything and operated as a team of 20. We're insanely efficient, have fun, and get it all done.

Lindsay: Wow. That's awesome.

Amanda: Thank you,

Lindsay: Man, a team of two, how fun.



Amanda: It's so funny too, because this year for the holiday party, most companies are used to having a big party. Ours was, get our nails done, Chipolte late facemask, and Netflix.

Lindsay: Perfect. Best holiday party ever.

Amanda: That's what we've been told. We loved it.

Lindsay: That's awesome. Let's talk a little bit more about sustainable fashion. What does that really mean to the both of you?

Amanda: As you know, today, professional women they're savvy and they pay attention to what they're buying. They look at the garments, but what we don't really put into consideration is the environmental impacts of it. All of the wildfires we're seeing in the news or global warming, it is a huge deal and we are doing our best to mitigate this.

Megan: It's sustainable fashion like Amanda was touching on. It's more than just the clothes we put on our back. It's also, it's sustainable, meaning it's best for humanity and the environment. With fashion being the number two worst polluter for the environment, I'm not a global scientist, but I would venture to say, Amanda and I totally agree on this. The fast fashion industry in some way is absolutely contributing to these epidemics that are happening around the world. It makes common sense.

Lindsay: I mean the mass production of clothing, it seems like I mentioned to you all earlier, before we got on this recording of I go on my Instagram stories and I follow a couple of, "influencers" and it's just ongoing, "Buy this it's only \$20. Buy this it's only \$30 but it's so cute." I see them then selling out these products and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I can only imagine how many people are buying into this and the cost on our environment and on humanity for this." Do you all agree?

Amanda: 110% and the fast-fashion term, it's where clothes are made cheaply to meet the demands for the hot new styles coming in, but the risk is they're putting the planet.

Lindsay: I read in your article, Amanda, that it takes 200 years for some of those to decompose, right?

Amanda: Absolutely.

Lindsay: Again, I don't even think about those things. The only thing that's been on my mind is the sweatshop environment. Can you all tell me a little bit more because all I know is that there are people overseas that are making these clothes most times in this



environment where they're treated like crap and they're not getting paid well, but that's all I know? Inform us all, what is this environment really like?

Megan: It's absolutely horrible. Basically, what you said about the influencers too. We used to do the same thing, back before we knew any of this. It's all about education. I would see a \$5 shirt at one of these stores I'm like, "Oh my gosh, it's so cute." Then when I started researching the people that are being affected, there's child labor. A huge problem, which is totally not in mainstream media, but is that the amount of chemicals that are used? Of course, we have all these regulations here in the United States, but this third world-- in terms of water and testing the water and making sure that it's safe to drink and to be in our system et cetera. In these third world countries, they're using the cheapest possible chemical and dying process and softening process to make the fabric and make the clothes. Where do those chemicals go? They're not disposing off them in an environmentally friendly way.

They're actually getting into the soil, into the water system. A lot of these people all the people that live in these, unfortunately really poverty-stricken areas are then drinking the water, cooking their food in the water, mothers, children. There is an extremely high rate of, let's say children that are actually being born with serious diseases because of the polluted water because of the fast fashion industry. That's just naming one part of it, the chemical implications of us buying cheap clothes and feeling cute, wearing them.

Lindsay: It makes me sick and we don't know these things, right? We're just starting to wake up to this. Why is it that it's been such this deep, dark secret?

Megan: I would say, we talk about it, man. Probably it's a big deep, dark secret because it's all about business and making a quick buck. We all-- we live in a world today where you want instant gratification and if something makes you feel good for that time being, you'll buy it if it's cheap. It's almost like clean beauty, Amanda and I talk about clean beauty. It reminds us of clean beauty because before we would use all this makeup, full of chemicals, no one talks about it. We just put it on her face, made us look good. Then all of a sudden, a few years ago, there was this insurgence of these companies creating these products that are now super, super, super mainstream and they're chemical-free. That's the clean beauty initiative. We believe that now we're in the beginning of the clean fashion initiative where people are being more mindful about where their clothes come from, how they're made et cetera.

Lindsay: Thank you all for spreading the message on that. My goodness.



Megan: It takes a village, girl. It takes a village.

Lindsay: For sure. This is what I'm gathering so far. This is why we buy sustainable fashion because we don't want a sweatshop environment because it's just bad in general for humanity, but also the chemical implication of that for humanity as well. I'm I following that?

Megan: Why? Yes.

Lindsay: Yes? Then in regards to the decomposing, it takes a long time for that stuff to decompose. It also holds onto bacteria that we didn't even realize that we're just masking the smell with our detergents and such. What am I missing there? What are the other pieces of this fast fashion and how it's impacting us?

Megan: The only other really big part is the landfill epidemic. You touched on it in terms of bacteria. It all comes together. If people's clothes are bacteria-free and they're going to be more inclined to hold onto them and not throw them away. We live in a culture now where my gym clothes start to smell or my gym socks start to smell and you throw them away. There are about 150 billion items of clothing delivered out of factories, annually. Americans throw away about 14 million tons of garments each year. If your clothes don't stink, you hold onto them. You're not going to contribute to this landfill epidemic. What a lot of people don't know. I didn't know, until I started researching is a large ton pun intended of the clothes that we donate. We think we're doing the right thing by donating clothes, a large percentage of those clothes don't even show up on the racks of, let's say a Goodwill. They're actually shipped to a landfill in third world countries.

You think you're doing the right thing and the government supports you by giving you a tax refund but that clothing is actually being sold to other people. It's a big racket. [laughs]

Lindsay: Wow. Why are they sending them to other countries?

Megan: We don't have enough room for them here

Amanda: Because they're just so much.

Lindsay: Wow. That's incredible. On that note, if somebody is talking to me and they're saying, "I understand that the half of these detriments of buying fast fashion and why I need to buy sustainable fashion but the cost difference is just so big and I'm on a tight budget." What would you say to that person?



Amanda: I would say invest in clothes that last longer. A lot of companies, the process essentially to make the garment is, it's dying, there are cotton weavers. There are so many different factors involved that it's important to invest into a factory that is making your clothes correctly and paying their employees fairly. Of course, it's important to not only invest in the garment but the story behind the company. I would say important-- just as important for the consumer to know how their clothes and where their clothes are made.

Lindsay: How can we know that story then, Amanda?

Amanda: Next time you're shopping, do your research. Pay close attention to how the brands are using the term transparency? They may say they're sustainable or put the term sustainable on their hangtag but do a little digging. What does that really mean? There's an app called Good on You. It is one of the most valuable apps that consumers can use. It really digs into all these brands and to really get the nitty-gritty details as far as how sustainable they truly are. Are they taking initiatives that are fabric focused? Are they using fibers that are better for the environment? How are they disposing of garments? Things of that nature. I'd always recommend do a little bit of research and digging and know that the impact of your purchase is powerful and there are small steps that you can take to have a more sustainable wardrobe that you can use every day. Especially with professional women who are on the go. In and out of meetings. We're running to SoulCycle. We're doing everything and you want to know that you feel good, you're rocking gear that's made to last and it'll carry on through years to come.

Lindsay: Yes. Basically, what I hear you say is invest now so you don't have to pay for it later. Right?

Amanda: Absolutely. You got it.

Lindsay: Yes. Can you all walk us through what your processes like at Accel lifestyle with the history of a garment?

Megan: Oh, my gosh. When you say the history of a garment, you mean actually how it's made? The process?

Lindsay: Yes?

Megan: Let's see, the fabric is made on the East Coast and the trade secret science that's woven into the fabric that inhibits the bacteria is made on the East Coast. We order that then we ship that and we order our Supima cotton and we order our polyester and we ship



it to our knitter and the knitter is the factory that actually makes the fabric on the East Coast. After that's made, it's then sent to a dye house and the really interesting thing is people have said to us, we just launched in August 2019. People are like, "We love you guys launched with black and white because they're two of the most popular colors but we wish you had some-- when are you guys going to put more color into your apparel line?" The interesting thing is because our fabric is so special, it actually takes special chemistry to dye it. If a dyer literally took a turquoise regular dye that they normally use and dyed our fabric, it would have a striped effect because all the different fibers would pick up that turquoise differently.

We even have to perfect the chemistry of the color. Everything takes time and as Amanda said in the beginning, we're a team of two. We're figuring it out. After the fabric is made, it has been shipped to California, that's the factory we chose called the Cut and Sew that actually makes our clothes and we're super fortunate and blessed. They sew for a lot of big companies. Both our knitter on the East Coast and our Cut and Sew on the West Coast are huge, established well-known factories that we just strong-armed our way into [laughs] and told them that we're bringing this Accel lifestyle worldwide and we're very fortunate that they wanted to help us out. The clothes are made in California, the tags are added and then everything is shipped here to our warehouse. Where we basically put it on the shelves and we ship out from Houston, which is our warehouses the next day. That's the short of it and then even our packaging, every detail of the company, there's either doing the right thing or not the right thing.

We always try to do what's the right thing. As you know, as an Accel lifestyle awesome community member, when you order Accel lifestyle, there's zero plastic in the shipping. A lot of times now or most times when you order clothes online from other companies, they'll put their garment in a plastic bag and then wrap it up and ship it to you. We have zero plastic shipping.

Lindsay: Wow. I didn't even think about that when I got my shirt the other week but because I'm so used to it but I hate it when I-- I ordered this underwear recently and I got it in and every single pair was wrapped in plastic.

Megan: The worst.

Lindsay: It was like, "Oh my gosh, all this waste," but yes, I didn't even think about that one. That's so true. I love hearing the process of how you guys are doing it because we don't get to ask these questions too. Brands at Target or Old Navy and all those places, which we would probably guess that their process isn't as clean by any means as you all.



On that note, what are some of those brands out there that are doing fashion in a fast way where some of their morals would be compromised?

Megan: Let's put it this way. We don't like to blast out companies that are operating in a fast fashion way. We all know who they are but we can say the big ones that are in the media right now, you can see on the documentary, *True Costs*. I know they list some of them but some of the big ones that we see in the media and I'm stating facts are like H&M, for example, and Forever 21. I will say one thing that's great that they're doing and they've had to do it because we're now the community and we're all more educated to get all the information at the tip of your fingers. They're feeling the pressure, they have lost substantial revenue because people aren't buying their clothes because they're learning about the conditions they're made. The funny thing is, those companies are putting these initiatives out, like, "Oh, by 2025, we're going to use zero plastic," or, "Oh, by 2026, we're going to use more earth environmentally friendly material."

The funny thing is Amanda and I always laugh. We're like, "We're a company of two and we use 100% of environmentally friendly material and packaging, if we can do it, you large fast fashion companies, you guys don't have to wait till 2025." [laughs]

Lindsay: Yes. It's so interesting. *True costs*, the documentary I haven't heard about that. I can't wait to watch and this Good on You app sounds like a great resource too to see a little bit behind the scenes of what's going on with these companies, right?

Amanda: Absolutely. You got it.

Lindsay: Yes. Okay.

Megan: Its on Netflix and then I think Emily Watson, the actress, she's a huge sustainable fashion advocate and she is part of the Good on You app as well.

Lindsay: Oh, how cool. How awesome.

Amanda: One other resource, have you seen Hasan and I could very well be pronouncing this incorrectly, Hasan Minhaj Netflix show?

Lindsay: No.

Amanda: It's absolutely amazing. He has an entire episode dedicated to fast fashion.



Lindsay: Oh, I can't wait to watch. That's awesome. So many great resources. Thanks, you all.

Amanda: Thank you.

Lindsay: As I was telling you all before we got on this interview, I purchased a shirt just a few weeks ago, and I got to wear it yesterday to go to yoga and I swear I'm not just saying this because you all are here on the interview with me but I am obsessed. Not only did the fit wasn't perfect, which is so hard for me to find good shirts, but I love the cut of it and knowing that it's not going to be filled with bacteria that's so much peace of mind that I cannot wait to order more shirts but I just want to tell you all that that you guys are doing something really cool because I am someone too who is going to like the Lulu women place right? I can tell you the quality of you all shirts is even better and knowing that it's made in a really great way just put so much peace of mind. Thank you for everything you're doing in the world. Please share with us how everyone else can go find your amazing products.

Megan: Girl, before we even dive into that. Thank you. Oh my gosh, thank you for your support. We love it. Amanda and I are sitting over here smiling. We're giving you a huge virtual hug. Amanda, she'll share with where you can find Accel lifestyle.

Amanda: Our website is [www.accel.com](http://www.accel.com) that's A-C-C-E-L, lifestyle, L-I-F-E-S-T-Y-L-E.com. We have gear for men and women. If you want to get something for your boo thing or any other guy in your life and actually the T-shirts, we wear them ourselves time and not, they're unisex. Please check us out and let us know what you all think. We'd love to know.

Megan: We'd love to have you follow us on Instagram. It's literally Accel Lifestyle and then also we have an events page on our website. Amanda and I are based out of Houston and we're the pop-up queens. We do at least five pop-ups a week. We're always hosting fitness events and charity events here in Houston. Fun, fashionable activities. Follow us on our website. Come up, say hello and we'd love to meet everybody.

Lindsay: Awesome. I knew that you all were in Houston but you just reiterated that and I'm in Dallas. I can't wait to meet you in person soon and go down to Houston maybe and meet up. I'd love to give you a big hug in person.

Megan: We actually were talking yesterday about we're expanding our pop up locations. We're working on one in Rhode Island where I'm from and one in Chicago and we were



just talking about Dallas yesterday because Amanda and I have a bunch of friends so we'll be hitting you up after this podcast [crosstalk].

Lindsay: Yay, I would love it. Love it love it. The last thing I want to touch on and pick your brain at is if somebody is saying after listening to this or maybe they've already been inspired to start to make the changes to living in more sustainable fashion industry or buying more sustainable fashion. What are three ways they can start making those steps to doing that? Obviously, buying your shirts and investing there for their workout wear but what else can they do?

Megan: I would say the first thing which is so easy is look at the tag. Legal requirements. You have to put where the garment was made on a tag. If you read the tag and it gives you a queasy feeling in your stomach, maybe it's a third world country, ask yourself, "Do I really need this product? Do I really need this cute T-shirt that the origin of it where it was made, makes me feel funny?" The second step is I would go on the good on you app. I ran across it a couple of years ago and they actually outlined things. If you're looking for a t-shirt, if you're looking for jeans, if you're looking for activewear, they have all these companies that are ranked in five different categories and they're all incredible companies. They tell the story and they literally basically spell out what that company is doing for both humanity and the environment. I would say the third, let me see. What would you say a third thing would be, Amanda?

Amanda: The third one would be, go through your closet see, "When was the last time I wore this? Does it really need to be in my closet right now?" There are so many creative ways of what you can do with that garment in the afterlife. You could repurpose it. For instance, Jean jackets, maybe you're not wearing it now go on and hang it on a patch, spice it up. Have some fun. That t-shirt cut it up, tie it in a knot. It's so cute.

Lindsay: Utilize maybe some of the fast fashion that we already have to its maximum potential but then re-purpose our closet with this sustainable fashion.

Megan: Then swap with friends like Amanda and I swap clothes with friends. If Amanda's bored of wearing three shirts, I'm like, "Hey boo give them to me. I'll wear them." Then the same thing I'll get for some of my clothes because all of a sudden it's like new clothes for your wardrobe but no one's spending any money. You're not contributing to buying more fast fashion.

Lindsay: Yes, perfect. Thank you both so much for taking the time to get on today and to teach us about this as we're such newbies most of us. I cannot thank you enough. I hope



everyone goes out and support to Accel lifestyle and buy something to thank them for their time today and really invest. It is going to be an investment up front but I can tell you firsthand already. I can tell the difference in that shirt and I cannot wait to buy more. Thank you all again so much for being here.

Amanda: Thank you so much, Lindsay. We are beyond appreciative and we think you're absolutely incredible.

Megan: Thank you, Lindsay. I love that you're promoting sustainability, especially in the New Year. We're all trying to improve our lives a little bit more than yesterday. Thank you. Thank you. We're so excited to meet you soon.

Lindsay: Thank you.

[music]

Hey there, Miss Unstoppable. Thanks so much for tuning into this episode. If you enjoyed it, share it with a friend. Send them a picture of this episode via text, via email, share it on social media, I'm sure they would be so appreciative to know these strategies and tips on how to accomplish your dreams. If you are ready to guarantee you're going to accomplish your goals and dreams, then it's time to start coaching with me.

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