

A Boy Called Dad

Move over fashion-conscious Mums; coast-walking Cambridge Dad Chris Howard salutes the 'barmy boutique' choices of his fabulously flamboyant daughters

The long art of dressing your children; it seems almost endless, doesn't it? As soon as they've worn something new it no longer fits and a whole new array of T-shirts, tights, dresses, pants, socks and vests must be replaced. I emphasise the vests because something we learnt from our grandparents was 'always wear a vest'. I tell you now, I never wear a vest (*internally apologies to Gran*). The great thing about having three amazing daughters is that they can all share clothes and hand things down. Well, so I thought. . . but how wrong I was! Of course, the twins swap clothes occasionally and sometimes begrudgingly give their younger sister an old beloved hoodie which now looks decidedly odd, with cuffs halfway up their arms. But I never expected to have to shop for children's clothes weekly! I hear parents all the time saying they find it hard to get their children to wear this or that for whatever occasion it might be. I am clever though *ahem* because I decided that the trials and tribulations of a child's wardrobe were not dramas I wanted nor needed in my already confused head. This dad was not for turning!

So instead of dressing our children, we taught them to get dressed and left them to it. 'Fools!' I hear you cry. Yes, I am well aware of the danger of arriving at a wedding with our child adorned in dungarees, a pair of swimming goggles and a cardigan. Or turning up to another child's birthday party dressed in a glittery sequin jacket, sunglasses, and a pink feather Stetson. Actually, she looked pretty cool, like Keith Richards during the 70's. However, for all the mismatched outfits and poorly-fitting garments from our Tesco Clubcard points, I have a real love of watching the three of them figuring out their own style. Becoming self-aware/conscious happens so young and I think it's healthy to encourage difference, to endorse the ridiculous and support the barmy boutique of their wardrobe practices. My wife and I would get asked if we dressed the twins the same. We never did and we always said 'we don't dress them, they dress themselves', like smug gits (with immediate regret in our choice of approach). But actually, it has been and will continue to be a way of them



exploring and being creative. It's important now, more than ever, that children learn to be comfortable in their skin and the clothes they wear. If Thing One wants to dress like a pretty, long-locked, carefree flowery dress-wearing catalogue model and Thing Two wants to go with the ripped jeans, clumpy boots, hoodie and beanie

school shoes, three pairs of trainers and three pairs of whatever else, all at once inevitably comes to approximately £600. Thanks Clarks; what a great day out that was.

Seriously though, they do last well; just sell them on Facebook Marketplace or Vinted when they've outgrown them in four

weeks - and make sure you declare it (*eye roll*).

We all want our children to look right whatever that means, like they're some sort of totems that represent our innermost style gurus. But the truth is, I don't think we should preen and prescribe too much; the world is ever more colourful and funnier

for seeing our children run around in attire that makes them happy, even if they look like a cross between Tim Peak and Mr. Blobby some days. After all I was a Goth, a grungy Kurt Cobain and even a hipster, back before hipsters were a thing. And, I even remember wearing shell suits, so, you know, when you find yourself in times of wardrobe trouble 'Let It Be, Let It Be, Let It Be. . .'

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Read more about Chris's adventures at thecoastwalker.com

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grunge apparel then so be it. If Youngest Thing wants to dress like a Led Zepelin concert, I am in total support, though the lines between rock star and Dame Edna Everage are increasingly fine these days. Let's not even start on shoes! Every Christmas it's become my 'Daddy Daughter Day' to go out and buy party shoes, the most memorable of which were red velvet slip on numbers. And just why do they all have to grow at the same rate? This means we can't spread the cost throughout the year. So, three pairs of