

## LONDON RUNWAY

"Growing up in the suburbs of New Jersey, I didn't feel like I truly belonged and was bullied throughout high school because of my sexual identity. When I moved to New York City in 1998 and became a fashion stylist, that all changed. In the high fashion world, I found a community of people like me. Being gay was embraced instead of being seen as strange or something to be ashamed of.

But the depression and anxiety I struggled with throughout my life didn't magically disappear when I entered the fashion industry. I started using drugs and alcohol in high school to numb the pain of my loneliness and insecurity, and my use increased in the heavy-partying fashion scene. The industry that once welcomed me ended up being my downfall. I ultimately decided to leave that world to pursue my recovery and learn to accept myself for who I am."

Jason Arsenault, Director of Recovery Coaching at Mountainside Treatment Center. A former fashion stylist who struggled first-hand with depression, anxiety, and crystal meth addiction, Jason is now a Certified Addiction Recovery Coach. He draws from his experiences as a gay, HIV-positive man in recovery to help others strengthen their well-being and overcome the stigma attached to mental health disorders.

"I FIND THAT I DEAL WITH A LOT OF STRESS AND ANXIETY RUNNING MY CLOTHING LINE AS BOTH THE DESIGNER AND THE HANDLING ALL ASPECTS OF THE BUSINESS SIDE. I HAVE TAKEN UP WEEKLY MEDIATION CLASSES AT A LOCAL STUDIO IN MY HOME OF DALLAS. I FIND THAT MEDITATION REALLY HELPS ME RESET AND KEEP ME CALM WHEN ANXIETY HITS ME."

PHILLIP WHITE, DESIGNER OF PHIT CLOTHING

My coping mechanism are to not follow trends, yet to appreciate them, but to always being true to my authentic style and not being a slave to the fashion industry. When we have a high dose of self-worth we stop trying to be someone else, and for me this is the same in fashion and style.

Ways in which I have cultivated self worth is to stop trying to be liked by everyone, in every aspect of my life. To tap into my inner strengths and really getting to know myself through meditation and journaling. It is impossible to create your own authentic style if you don't get to know yourself on a deeper level.

It is important to not compare yourself to others and follow people as inspiration and not use them as a reason to self destruct and fall into the negative spiral.

Lou Stokes, Style and Confidence Coach

"Every year we take the time to organise an event that highlights the important of self care as a creative, particularly as a creative in fashion, whether you are a designer, behind the camera or taking care of press. The fashion industry is known for being cut throat, highly competitive and often not so exclusive, a combination of elements that can take a toll on mental health. Because of this it is important to teach the balance of hard work and remaining passionate while being aware of yourself and surrounding yourself with a network of people who are reliable and have your best interest in mind. This is a very difficult balance, as founders of Colèchi, we have found ourselves taking on extra jobs, having sleepless nights and battling towards deadlines, however for every manic period of work we make sure that we give ourselves a day or so to do nothing, be around good company and relax. It is even better that we have a great relationship as business partners and are able to be open and honest about work load engagements and how much we can handle. Being passionate is a unique trait that often means work and life merge together, which is great, however we need to encourage honest conversations with each other on areas that affect our joy, from being open about money to being around toxic colleagues and even picking up projects that do not align with our personal values"

Piarvé and Tina at Colèchi