



SENSIBLE SPENDING

Overcoming Shopaholism

You've shopped till you've dropped, and now you're ready to pick yourself up, dust yourself off and learn to spend sensibly. You may have experienced what many shopaholics have identified as the Credit Card Curse: the buy-now-pay-later syndrome. You may have even felt at times that the money spent with credit cards wasn't real, and so continued spending. But now, you're ready to look seriously at that behavior and change it.

Responsible Credit

In this nearly cashless society, it's important to learn to use credit cards responsibly. If you're a recovering shopaholic, you may initially want to put credit cards away for safekeeping, or even give them to a trusted friend to hold, at least until they're paid off. When you're ready to use credit cards again, it'll be wise to limit yourself to one or two all-purpose cards.

Record Keeping

Shopaholism can be controlled. Shopaholics are impulsive shoppers, spending quickly and freely, sometimes not fully aware of where the money goes. It just seems to disappear. Writing down expenditures is a simple and effective way of making where the money goes very visible to yourself. A minimum of record keeping will let you know where and how much money was spent. This method of tracking expenditures will also help to

reveal your spending "weak spots." Recognizing patterns of impulsive purchases can help you avoid the reoccurrence.

Wants vs. Needs

"I want it." "I need it." These are two very different ideas. Compulsive shoppers are sometimes unable to differentiate between the two, and often confuse them. As a former shopaholic, you'll find using pencil and paper a worthwhile precaution. Taking the time to write down your needs vs. your

wants will help you focus your attention on the mental process that goes into differentiating between the two. In time, this process can become reliably spontaneous. Meanwhile, making the list will help you avoid impulse buying.

Shopping for Help

You've recognized your shopaholism, are determined to overcome the problem, have become aware of some of the challenges facing shopaholics, have given your credit cards to a friend, and have undertaken to change your behavior by using expenditure records and want/need lists. Perhaps you'd like some additional help.

There are a variety of agencies offering help to shopaholics. Many companies offer support and help to employees as part of an employee assistance program. Credit counseling services listed in the phone directory yellow pages are nonprofit organizations of professional credit managers. They can help teach you essential money management skills. Many social service agencies and organizations offer workshops and support groups or are able to refer you to the type of help you're seeking.

Sensible spending and responsible credit management will bring you confidence and peace of mind. You can achieve control of your shopping impulse; you do deserve that peace of mind.



Writing down your own wants and needs before you go shopping can help you control your credit card purchases.