

Statistics on over-shopping & over-spending

A recent study, published in the December, 2008 issue of the Journal of Consumer Research suggests that the number of compulsive shoppers/spenders may be closer to 8.9%, more than 25 million Americans.

17 Million Americans are compulsive shoppers/spenders!

- 2006 Stanford University Landmark Study

Men and women compulsively shop/spend about equally

- 2006 Stanford Study

Arguments over money are the number one reason for relationship stress and break-ups (Psychology Today)

The average credit card debt for a U.S. citizen is close to \$10,000--mostly accumulated from unnecessary purchases (Time, Money magazines)

Overshopping/Overspending is more than about poor budgetary or savings habits; many people need professional psychological help

- 2006 Stanford Study

What is compulsive shopping?

We all shop for many reasons but the addict buys to relieve anxiety and over time the buying creates a dysfunctional lifestyle and more and more of their focus is on shopping and sometimes the cover-up too.

What causes it?

- Emotional deprivation in childhood
- Inability to tolerate negative feelings
- Need to fill an inner void
- Excitement seeking
- Approval seeking
- Perfectionism
- Genuinely impulsive and compulsive
- Need to gain control

Types of Behaviors:

Compulsive shoppers – shop to distract feelings; “when the going gets tough, the tough go shopping”

Trophy shoppers – find the perfect accessory for outfits, etc. High class items will do.

Image shoppers – pick up tab, expensive cars, highly visible stuff

Bargain shoppers – buy stuff they don’t need just because it is a good deal. Out for the hunt.

Codependent shoppers – to gain love and approval

Bulimic Shoppers – buy and return, buy and return (similar to actual bulimia)

Collector Shoppers – have to have complete or many sets of objects or different colors of same style of clothing

Suggestions for change:

- Avoid people or places which tempt you to shop/spend
 - Cut up plastic; close charge accounts; rip up credit card offers and home equity applications
 - Make lists before going to the store; buy what you need only – call support people, take a trusted friend
 - Wait a good period of time before you make an impulsive purchase
 - Ask yourself: Do I need this or do I just want it?
 - Develop better ways to manage difficult emotions
 - Develop fun things to do to fill in your time better
 - Seek out specialized counseling, medication, support groups, read books about compulsive shopping/spending
 - Be aware of events that trigger urges to shop
 - Cancel magazine subscriptions or e-mail subscriptions and block certain Internet shopping sites or TV shopping channels
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Why do people over-shop / over-spend?

Grief and loss (to fill a void)

Anger/Feeling Life is Unfair (to get back/make life right)

Depression (to get a lift)

Anxiety/Stress (to comfort or soothe)

Acceptance/Competition (to fit in)

Power/Control (to feel empowered or in control)

Boredom/Excitement (to live on the edge)

Shame/Low Self-esteem (to distract from feelings of worthlessness)

Entitlement/Reward (to compensate for overgiving or sacrifice)

Rebellion/Initiation (to break into one's own identity)

Consequences of over-shopping / over-spending:

Loss of time

Loss of space

Loss of relationships

Loss of health

Loss of self-esteem

Embarrassment of others

Loss of focus

Loss of reputation

Loss of property

Other legal issues

Loss of finances

Help for over-shopping / over-spending:

Read books

Counseling

Medications

Support groups

Avoid friends who are shoppers

Enlist family/friends' help

Avoid places where one might shop/spend

Find new hobbies

Educate self on health hazards/negative consequences

Watch educational TV shows on this or related topics

Compulsive Shopping Checklist

Do you "take off for the stores" when you've experienced a setback or a disappointment, or when you feel angry or scared?

Are your spending habits emotionally disturbing to you and have they created chaos in your life?

Do your shopping habits create conflicts between you and someone close to you (spouse, lover, parents, children)?

Do you buy items with your credit cards that you wouldn't buy if you had to pay cash?

When you shop, do you feel a rush of euphoria mixed with feelings of anxiety?

Do you feel you're performing a dangerous, reckless or forbidden act when you shop?

When you return home after shopping, do you feel guilty, ashamed, embarrassed or confused?

Are many of your purchases seldom or never worn or used?

Do you lie to your family or friends about what you buy and how much you spend?

Would you feel "lost" without credit cards?

Do you think about money excessively – how much you have, how much you owe, how much you wish you had – and then go out and shop again?

Do you spend a lot of time juggling accounts and bills to accommodate your shopping debts?
