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A Year Without Clothes Shopping:

5 REASONS TO STOP BUYING CLOTHES



For most people going a month without clothes shopping would feel like a life sentence, let alone 12, but for intrepid reformed shopaholic, **JILL CHIVERS**, it is the opportunity to demonstrate who is in control of her credit card! And she'd like you to join her...

On December 15, 2009, I started a challenge to take a year off from clothes shopping. I have a converted double bedroom as my walk-in wardrobe and I am a self-diagnosed in-recovery shopaholic. I love clothes.

So why am I taking a year off from clothes shopping? And why should you consider doing it as well?

FINANCIAL.

In 2009, my circumstances changed but my spending habits didn't. I was earning less but not spending less. In November 2009, I returned from a 10 day trip to San Francisco where I'd purchased \$900 worth of clothes and accessories that I didn't need and could ill afford. None were "necessary" and all were justification purchases – "ooh, I must have it because it's [insert justification adjective here]".

It's hard to get an accurate figure of how much the "average woman" spends on clothing each year, but some say it's about \$2000. However much you spend, taking a year off from clothes shopping will mean you don't end up like Becky from Confessions of a Shopaholic with a \$16,000 accumulated credit card debt – all spent on clothes!

PRACTICAL.

If it's true that most women wear only 20 – 30% of their wardrobe, then not going clothes shopping for a year offers an opportunity to get those numbers up. You won't be adding any new pieces to your wardrobe, so out of nothing more than desperation, you'll find yourself reaching for things you haven't worn for ages.

Not going clothes shopping for a year may inspire you to clear out the stuff that's not paying the rent in your precious wardrobe space. You'll have less to wear which will mean you'll wear more of what's left.

One of the ways to get more out of what you've got is "shop your wardrobe"; in a future article, I'll talk more about how to do this.

EMOTIONAL.

Why women shop is not a one-answer question, but we

know that it involves emotions. I was talking to two women recently, both of whom hate clothes shopping because they don't like their bodies and hate seeing themselves in change room mirrors. Other women say there is a lot of guilt associated with spending money on themselves.

For many people clothes shopping is about more than just the need to cover up our nakedness. There is often an unexplored thread of emotions running through. When you take a year off, you get to explore what this is about.

ECO-ENVIRONMENT.

Dyes, pesticides, child and slave labour are costing us all more than the resources that come out of our wallets. The International Labor Organisation estimates that over 200 million children are working in sweatshops, with many workers earning as little as 25 cents an hour.

There is a growing movement to "buy green" when clothes shopping, and we're not talking about the colour of the clothes here. Many dyes and pesticides used in clothing production are harmful to the environment, to the workers and to the wearers.

When you take a year off, you stop adding to the triple-bottom line cost of clothing production.

CREATIVE.

Shopping is a contact sport for many women, me included. I'm great at it. I could represent Australia in the shopping Olympics. But when you look at the bigger picture, it's rather a sad state of affairs to consider all that creative energy going into shopping, and getting better at it.

Taking a year out challenges you to put your brain and body to a better use than being a clothes-shopping champion. I'm living more of my life, rather than spending my life.

I'm not finished yet but already I know what a blessing this challenge has been in my life. Taking a year off and 'shopping my wardrobe' instead, has brought me a profound new understanding about my relationship with money, with my clothes, and with myself.