

me | YOUR STYLE

Shop your wardrobe

Spend 12 months wearing only clothes you already own? Sounds impossible . . . but it can be done
GUEST COLUMNIST JILL CHIVERS

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 reformed shopaholic. I love clothes. And I'm not alone - there are an estimated 18 million shopaholics in the US. At dinner parties, women have been known to choke on their entrees when I tell them I've taken a year off from shopping for clothes. So why a year off? Is this really necessary? And why would anyone else 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. I was starting to feel bad about the new things I was buying and a new emotion was creeping into my heart - guilt. I'd never felt guilty about clothing and accessories purchases before, but I was increasingly gripped by a sense of unease as I bought things I knew I couldn't

afford. Taking a year off from clothes shopping means you won't end up like Isla Fisher's character, Becky, from the movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic* with a \$16,000 accumulated credit card debt - all spent on clothes, shoes, scarves and belts. When you take a year off you can divert those funds into more life-enriching activities.

PRACTICAL

One of the ways to get more out of what you've got is to tune into "shopping your wardrobe". This means you go into your wardrobe and pick and choose an outfit for the day like you would if you were in a store. Sure, it might be a small store, but the emotional component of shopping your wardrobe is you feel you have loads of choice. Many women wear only 20 to 30 per cent of their wardrobe because they don't know how to mix and match properly to get more out of what they have. They "set" dress - this top goes with that bottom and never the

two are separated. If you learn how to get a little creative with what you've got, you'll get more out of your wardrobe.

EMOTIONAL

There is often an unexplored thread of emotion running through shopping for clothes and other adornments of the body. Some people shop when they feel low or have had some bad news; it's a pick-me-up. Others shop when they feel great - it's a way to celebrate. Of the hundreds of women I've spoken to about this challenge, those who love to shop nod their heads vigorously when we talk about the emotional punch shopping provides. Those who

don't get this connection are usually those who hate to shop or are downright shopaphobic.

ECO-ENVIRONMENT

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

CREATIVE

Shopping is a contact sport for many women, me included. But when you look at the bigger picture, it's rather a sad state of affairs to consider all


that creative energy going into becoming a better shopper. When I woke up to this in late 2009, I was slightly mortified at how much effort had gone into shopping. I decided then to live my life, not spend it.

OVERVIEW

Taking 12 months out has changed me. I feel so much lighter about my relationship to my spending - I feel I understand it better. I can't tell you what a relief this is.

Jill Chivers is a reformed shopaholic who has been featured on *Today Tonight*. Find out more about her online 12-month course at www.shopyourwardrobe.com





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