



3 Proven Strategies for Stopping Overshopping

Over the past ten years, these strategies have proven extremely successful with overshoppers I've worked with. They represent a small but important part of the Stopping Overshopping Program. Use them faithfully and you'll see a definite change in your overshopping habits. Mindful awareness, rather than judgment, is the key to changing your behavior.

Proven Strategy #1: Identify your triggering emotions.

- Shopping is an equal opportunity, all purpose mood changer.*** Overshopping is a problem common to people at all points on the income spectrum, from people on welfare to billionaires. Given the fact that consumption fuels our economy, our culture has seen fit to smile upon the problem, making the destructive use of money practically a cultural imperative. While there are as many reasons to overshop as there are overshoppers, the desire to change your mood is one of the most common. Anger, sadness, loneliness, boredom, and excitement, to cite only a few emotions, can all lead to a shopping binge.

How do you use shopping to change your mood? In the left-hand column, are some common feelings that trigger overshopping. Think about your own overshopping patterns and in the blank column on the right, list the triggering emotions that apply to you. There may be other triggering emotions that apply to you. If so, write them in.

Common Triggering Emotions

Sad
Depressed
Hurt
Bored
Inadequate
Needy
Rejected
Unattractive
Anxious
Doubtful
Afraid
Angry
Frustrated
Ashamed
Guilty

My Own Triggering Emotions

Keep in mind:

These strategies may appear simple on the surface, but each is a powerful new way of addressing your overshopping problem. Do not be surprised if you try one and discover it may take some time to succeed. Overcoming a long-term destructive habit doesn't happen overnight; it takes commitment and daily attention. Be patient with yourself, congratulate yourself for every step in the right direction, and above all, resist any tendency to judge yourself for the inevitable occasional step backward.

As you stop overshopping, you might feel worse before you feel better. The feelings that you're trying to handle by buying can well up, because you're no longer anesthetized or distracted from them by your buying behavior. Be ready for this; having solid strategies for riding out those intense initial feelings is crucial. As you continue to resist the shopping impulse and begin to practice healthier ways of dealing with your feelings, the intensity of the difficult feelings will lessen and your power to resist overshopping will grow.

The change you are making is a significant one—you wouldn't be struggling with it if it weren't—and anxiety always accompanies major change. Diffuse that anxiety by focusing on your new tools and strategies and by visualizing what you'll gain: self-control, self-esteem, better relationships, relief from debt and shame and secrecy, and a general feeling of being grounded and competent. If the compulsion to shop is so strong that you can't follow through on the strategies outlined above, you might be interested in working with the Stopping Overshopping Self-Help Program, which will be available this winter.

**I wish you the best in your commitment to stopping overshopping,
and to moving from mindless buying to mindful being.**

April Lane Benson

