

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Understanding Compulsive Shopping

Shopping has become such a common and socially acceptable pastime, it can be hard to imagine that for some it can be as addictive and problematic as drug or alcohol abuse.

Making a purchase of something we need or want can be a source of pleasure. But for those who are unable to limit spending, there are likely underlying issues of addiction at work. Compulsive shopping can be best understood as a coping strategy for other issues and concerns.

The biggest telltale sign of problematic shopping is debt, but other signs that may indicate a problem include:

- Shopping when disappointed, sad, angry or anxious
- Shopping that causes distress in other areas of life
- Arguing with others about purchases
- Feeling lost without credit cards
- Experiencing an emotional high when spending
- Feeling guilty, ashamed or embarrassed about purchases
- Finding that purchases go unused
- Lying about the cost of items purchased
- Juggling funds to cover expenses
- Excessive worries about money

As with any addiction, counselling can be of great help in understanding compulsive shopping and related behaviors, and learning about ways to bring it back into control.

A Word on Debt

Not everybody in debt has a problem with shopping. No matter what circumstances have led to a person being in significant debt, the experience is almost certainly stressful and can negatively impact other aspects of one's life.

For many people in debt, the light at the end of the tunnel can seem dim. Most people benefit greatly from the debt and credit management services offered by professional financial counselors.
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