



ARE YOU SPENDING BECAUSE YOU DON'T FEEL GOOD?

By Yvonne Thomas, Ph.D.

Happy New Year, everybody! What a glorious, wonderful time of the year we are in! The holidays have settled down and now we are beginning a New Year, filled with new experiences, opportunities, and maybe some New Year's Resolutions. This is also a time when people are often taking advantage of the countless sales being promoted all over town. Sure, it's great to spend some money and get remarkable deals. However, one needs to be aware of how much money can be spent that will still keep him/her within a pre-determined budget.

Although the spirit of the holidays and/or vast savings offered by different stores may influence a person to spend some hard-earned cash, there certainly can be OTHER reasons as well that entices one to buy something. Frequently, people may actually be motivated to purchase something because of what they ARE OR ARE NOT FEELING. What this means is that a person may have the need to buy something when he/she feels too much of some emotion, or feels empty inside, or feels deprived in some way. For example, if a person is experiencing some UPSETTING FEELINGS (i.e., these can include hurt, anger, sadness, disappointment, loneliness, fear, depression, anxiety, etc.), he/she may buy things to cover up these uncomfortable emotions and to (at least temporarily) "feel better." Or if someone FEELS EMPTY and hollow inside (i.e., there are no positive or negative emotions for the most part), he/she can purchase something as a subconscious way to "fill oneself up," similar to what someone may do by eating food when emotionally, but not physically, hungry. In addition, if a person feels DEPRIVED and left out of enjoying the same privileges as others, buying something can be a way of feeling more "caught up."

Certainly, it is NOT HEALTHY to cover up feelings or create a more "filled up" feeling by buying things. Instead, it is very important to recognize that one's feelings (or lack of feelings) need to be dealt with DIRECTLY so that a more permanent and positive resolution can occur. This more direct approach can include becoming aware of WHEN and WHY one first feels the need to purchase something. For instance, a person can ask him/herself if the need to buy something stems from the genuine desire to own a particular item or is it PRIMARILY coming from the need to squelch some uncomfortable feeling/s or to fill oneself up in the attempt to feel something? If it turns out that the person wants to buy something to cover-up or create feelings, this should serve as a tip-off that a person probably wants to buy for the WRONG reasons.

In this case, the next step for directly dealing with the desire to cover up or create feelings literally would be to ask oneself to identify what emotions he/she is feeling now, and why he/she is feeling them. For instance, a person may discover that he/she is currently experiencing sadness and then track it to a specific reason such as maybe he/she has just experienced a loss. Or maybe a person will find out that he/she is feeling NOTHING or empty, and discover that this is because he/she feels very small and unimportant and generally like a "nothing" in his or her life. No matter what feelings one is able to identify, they all provide a very significant guide in helping a person directly understand and face both one's emotions and from where they actually originated. Since, as the saying goes, "knowledge is power," a person can then attempt to feel some of the feelings and to work on what made them occur to begin with by truly trying to come to terms with these original situations. However, if a person feels confused or leery about identifying and/or experiencing his/her emotions and the original issues related to them, it can be very helpful to seek the assistance of a Psychologist trained in this area.

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