Compulsive Buying Disorder (CBD) or Oniomania †
Compulsive Shopping

• Loss of control over buying or shopping preoccupations, impulses or behavior resulting in impairment in social and occupational functioning
Case Study 1

• Betty Jean B., Branch Manager of her credit union embezzled $1.5 million over 8 yrs

• Bought hundreds of pairs of shoes, over 3,000 books, 58 coats, 16 chain saws even a $25,000 John Deere tractor - most item piled in her house, unused, many with price tags

• Her psychologist testified she was depressed to the point of suicide about her inability to stop spending money

• In 2006 she went to prison for 27 months
Case Study 2

Ilisa T. unlocks the rented back room of a day spa filled with stacks of brand-new $1000 Marc Jacobs and Miu Miu "it" bags, racks of Bebe and Ankh tops, True Religion and Roberto Cavalli jeans, and enough Ed Hardy sweatshirts to outfit several reality shows’ casts.

"This is only part of it" says the self-described "semi-recovering shopaholic“ who also filled her mother's garage and 2 more rented storage spaces.

The 46-year-old L.A. native’s debt is "in the six figures”. She’s trying to pay it off by selling on Craigslist but business is slow. Last week she sold a $1500 Gucci bag for $600; this week, nothing.

She calls her relationship to shopping "a sickness. It's not about needing it or wanting it; it's a high."

Though taking antidepressants, she blames most of it on her L.A. upbringing “Hollywood is really based on material things … how you look, how thin you are, how much plastic surgery you've had … In high school (I felt) if I didn't have a Gucci purse or a Louis Vuitton, I wasn’t accepted."
Case Study 3

• Joan C., a shopaholic, died in her home buried alive under a 3 ft mountain of suitcases.

• Piles of brand-new clothes, umbrellas, candles, ornaments, electrical items, videotapes and thousands of trinkets, many unopened - allowed only a 2ft-wide path through her house and garage.

• Her closest friend said she spent hours in stores. 'It just gave her pleasure to buy things - none of it was really essential. I went in three times to look for her and still couldn't find her.’

• After being reported missing, it took police two days with two teams of six policemen pulling stuff from the house to find her body.

The Guardian, Nov. 2009
IV. Incidence of CBD

- ↑ in industrialized consumer societies
- ↑ in younger consumers
- ↑ as personal levels of materialism increases
- Average onset: 18 yrs (range 6-30yrs)
- 5.8%-8.9% US population
- 4x more likely to carry credit card balances
- Earnings <$50K
- No gender differences
  - Earlier research females>males (Robert, 1998)
  - Recent research shows gender equity (Koran, 2006)
    - ~ 6% of females, ~5.5% of males
Gender Differences

• Why early research showed women > men?
  – Pool of subjects came from those seeking treatment
  – ~ 80% female seek help
  – "men don't seek help" for shopping addiction

• Why recent research shows women = men
  – Subject pool from general population

• Genders differences exist only in tastes and habits

*Koran et al, American Journal of Psychiatry 2006; 163:1806–1812

***Image enhancement differs by gender: women = physical traits, men = possessions
Gender Differences

- **Females**
  - Clothes, jewelry, makeup, gifts for others & home decor
  - *image enhancement*** ➔ Objects of adornment
  - Impulse-control problems arise: depressed or bored

- **Males**
  - Electronics, tools, watches, cameras, transportation (cars, trucks, motorcycles, jet-skis, etc)
  - *image enhancement*** ➔ “Collectors” of Things
  - Impulse-control problems arise: agitated, angry or elated
  - More likely to be addicted to online auctions
Diagnostic Criteria for Compulsive Shopping

Table 1. Diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying (reproduced from McElroy et al. [16], with permission)

Maladaptive preoccupation with buying or shopping, or maladaptive buying or shopping impulses or behaviour, as indicated by at least one of the following:
  frequent preoccupation with buying or impulses to buy that is/are experienced as irresistible, intrusive and/or senseless
  frequent buying of more that can be afforded, frequent buying of items that are not needed, or shopping for longer periods of time than intended

The buying preoccupations, impulses or behaviours cause marked distress, are time consuming, significantly interfere with social or occupational functioning, or result in financial problems (e.g. indebtedness or bankruptcy)

The excessive buying or shopping behaviour does not occur exclusively during periods of hypomania or mania
Assessing Compulsive Buying

• Do you feel overly preoccupied with shopping & spending?

• Do you ever feel that your shopping behavior is excessive, inappropriate or uncontrolled?

• Has your shopping urges, desires, fantasies or behaviors been overly time-consuming or caused you to feel upset or guilty or led to serious problems in your life?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you might have a problem with compulsive shopping
Tips to Help Yourself

- Avoid malls unless purchases are planned
  - What, where, how much $
  - Don’t eat at restaurants in malls
- Turn off HSN/shopping networks
- Cancel all catalogues
- Unsubscribe store/designer emails
- Throw away (w/o opening) Sunday newspaper store circulars
Finding Help

• DebtorsAnonymous.com
• Consumerjungle.org
• RecoveryConnection.org
• StoppingOverShopping.com

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