

 e-tips ...

to help you Live Well

## What I Learned During a Month of Not Buying Anything



My LiVe Well experiment was to not spend money on anything that wasn't necessary for an entire month. Necessary items included gas, food, bills and books. (I consider books one of the major food groups.) To succeed at this goal, I couldn't even go into stores other than the grocery store — because I can't stop at window shopping. I asked a friend to hold me accountable and began the experiment with the goal of learning more about myself and my spending habits.

It was hard — much harder than I thought it would be. After every stressful day at work (and there were a lot of them), my distinct response was to go shopping. I had created a stress-relieving ritual of walking through a store and thinking over the day while finding distractions in clothes, shoes, and trinkets. Thoughts of “I deserve this,” “This will help calm me down,” and “I'm not ready to go home,” were all a natural part of the ritual. I was stunned to discover how powerful this stress relief habit has become for me.

The good news is that I succeeded in not buying anything unnecessary not just for a month, but for 45 days. When I did buy some new things, it wasn't because I was stressed. They were planned, purposeful purchases. My next experiment is to find new ways of managing my daily stress that are better for me.

This has been one of the most productive, enlightening experiments I've done. There's true power in stopping a behavior for a period of time and observing what happens. Learning about ourselves increases our ability to make new choices — better choices -- that lead to greater well-being in all of its dimensions.

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**Intermountain Employee Assistance Program e-tips are messages that teach, remind, and inspire in our journey to live well.**

