

How to quit fast fashion: 'Sometimes we don't need retail therapy, we need actual therapy'

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Read the definitions below. Then, discuss the questions with a partner.

fast fashion: cheap clothing produced quickly and sold in large quantities in order to respond to the latest fashion trends

mass production: the process of producing large quantities of goods by using machines

retail therapy: the activity of shopping to make yourself feel happier

- Have you tried *retail therapy*? Does it really make you feel happier?
- How often do you think people should ideally buy new clothes? How can people buy less?
- What is the environmental impact of the mass production of clothes?
- What strategies might people use to quit *fast fashion*?

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

aesthetics conscious craving ditch engage ethics
gratification hot impulse purchase peddle pivotal reform

1. _____ is pleasure, especially because a desire has been satisfied.
2. To _____ something is to get rid of it because you no longer like or need it.
3. To _____ a story, explanation or idea is to try to make people believe it, especially when it is wrong.
4. If someone is _____, they are noticing that something exists or is happening and realizing that it is important.
5. If someone is _____, they are considered physically attractive.
6. A _____ is a very strong feeling of wanting something.
7. If something is _____, it is extremely important and affects how something develops.

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8. _____ is a set of principles that people use to decide what is right and what is wrong.
9. An _____ is something that you buy because you see it and want it.
10. _____ is the study of the nature of beauty, especially in arts such as painting and architecture.
11. To _____ in something is to take part in a particular activity, especially one that involves competing with other people or talking to them.
12. To _____ is to change your own or someone else's behaviour so that it is no longer illegal or harmful.

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. For a long time, beauty and fashion magazines _____ the idea that all women need to look a certain way.
2. They are very environmentally _____. They recycle and don't use plastics.
3. My teacher always recommended that we _____ the dictionary and try to figure out the meanings of the words using the context.
4. The first time he went to the theatre was a _____ moment in his life that eventually led him to become a playwright.
5. Shops usually place chocolates and other sweets close to the tills, hoping that customers will make a(n) _____.
6. I have a(n) _____ for something sweet now.
7. The music programme aims to _____ talented teens who have been in trouble with the law.
8. We have to write an essay about charity for our _____ class.

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From browsing Pinterest instead of retail sites to delaying gratification, four people who've ditched fast fashion share their anti-shopping habits

Lucianne Tonti
28 November, 2022

- 1 Fast-fashion brands have peddled the promise of a shiny new outfit resulting in happiness for more than two decades, which is just enough time for most of us to recognize happiness is not really what fast fashion delivers. But given how easy and cheap it is to buy, breaking up with fast fashion can be difficult, even for the most conscious consumer.
- 2 According to psychologist Chris Cheers, sometimes the first step to changing your behaviour is noticing the beliefs that are happening underneath it. "So maybe your belief is, 'If I don't buy this, I can't go to that party,' or 'people won't think that I'm hot,'" he says. The key is to notice the thought and understand you don't necessarily have to believe it.
- 3 Cheers says if your brain is suggesting you'll be more popular or desirable in the new purchase, think about what happens in reality. Is a new top actually going to get you the meaningful life that you want? "Sometimes we don't need retail therapy, we need actual therapy" he says.
- 4 In the meantime, there are some strategies you can use to change your buying habits. Here, people who have successfully stopped buying fast fashion explain how they did it.

The rule of three

- 5 In 2019 Lauren Bravo, the author of *How To Break Up With Fast Fashion*, decided to go the whole year without buying anything "new-new". On the last day of 2018, she panic-bought five dresses from a fast-fashion retailer (and sent four back). "Realizing that none of those dresses really satisfied my craving was a pivotal point," she says. Now she never buys anything new without thinking it over for weeks or months. This gives her time to research the brand's ethics – she only buys from brands who pay their workers a living wage.
- 6 She also considers how an item will fit into her existing wardrobe. For this, she uses her mum's rule: before you buy anything, name at least three items in your wardrobe you would wear it with, and three (real) places or occasions you will wear it to. She also believes in the joy of saving up for something. "Taking your time to invest in something really great, with a story you love behind it, feels so much better than a hundred impulse purchases ever could."

The unfollower

- 7 Writer and podcaster Maggie Zhou adheres to several principles. "One is the '30 Wears' rule, where I ideally want to wear an item of clothing at least 30 times." She has made a conscious effort to change her digital activity: unfollowing fast-fashion brands and influencers on social media and unsubscribing from email lists. But the ultimate shift was a realization that "style actually comes from re-wearing and re-styling clothes in multiple ways." She says anyone can make something look good once, but "being able to reimagine it for different aesthetics and occasions is where skill comes in."

The no-buy browser

- 8 "I know myself, and I know I'm not going to stop shopping," says Wendy Syfret, author of *The Sunny Nihilist*. She puts her energy into non-shopping platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram. "I make boards and saved folders of looks I like or brands I'm interested in," she says.

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- 9 "My interest usually fades pretty quickly. But I'm left with an abandoned Pinterest board, not a bunch of stuff in the mail that I bought at 2am and don't want any more." When she does see something she likes, she emails herself the link so she can consider it later on her desktop..
- 10 Ultimately, she tries to ask bigger questions of herself, so style is not about upholding "fresh" and "new" as aspirational aesthetics. Instead she tries to focus on the person she wants to be and the vibe she wants to project.

The educated switcher

- 11 "It's not so much that I have a strategy for avoiding fast fashion," says Nico Idour, "I just do not engage any more." The owner of Jawbreaker the Baker used to buy a lot of fast fashion, but has completely reformed his shopping habits since meeting his husband, designer Jason Hewitt.
- 12 "Minimizing my environmental impact has always been hugely important to me and so for me to immediately disengage from fast fashion, once I understood the damage, was not a difficult choice," Idour says. Instead, he shops exclusively second-hand. He also has a rule that he has to try something on before he buys it, which stops him from making impulse purchases online.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Who said it? Read the sentences below and write the name of who said them.

1. Browse and save images on online platforms instead of browsing to shop.
2. Change your digital behaviour and unfollow fashion brands and influencers on social media.
3. Not everything you think or initially believe is necessarily true.
4. Learn about the huge environmental cost of fast fashion.
5. Analyse the beliefs that drive your shopping behaviour.
6. Always try an item on before you buy it, and only buy second-hand.
7. Learn to wear and style the same clothes differently for different occasions.
8. Take time to investigate how ethical the brand is before you buy.
9. Style is more about who you aspire to be rather than wearing the latest fashions.
10. Before buying an item, think of what in your wardrobe you'd match it with and where you'd wear it to.

4 Key language

a. Match the verbs and nouns that form collocations from the article.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. delay | principles |
| 2. browse | a craving |
| 3. peddle | a conscious effort |
| 4. satisfy | second-hand |
| 5. adhere to | a site |
| 6. make | impulse purchases |
| 7. reform | environmental impact |
| 8. minimize | shopping habits |
| 9. make | a promise |
| 10. shop | gratification |

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- b. Choose five phrases from task and use them to write questions about clothes, shopping, or fashion. Ask and answer your questions with a partner.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

5 Discussion

- a. Discuss the following statements.

- "Not everyone can afford to invest in ethical clothing."
- "Fast fashion should be banned."
- "Neighbourhoods should have markets where people can exchange second-hand clothes."
- "Fashion advertisements should have tighter restrictions."

6 In your own words

- a. Write a formal email to the editor of the newspaper in response to the article. Follow the tips below.

1. Explain what the email is about.
2. Explain why the topic or issue is important.
3. Give criticism or praise and provide evidence.
4. Give your opinion and invite action.