Retail Therapy

Do you buy things to feel better? If you do so, you are having a retail therapy or a shopping therapy…

A new research suggests that people buy more things they don't really need when they are sad, bored or stressed. They are also prone to regret their shopping trip.

We are going to listen to a debate on the BBC about this topic. You'll also learn some vocabulary related to shopping and mood.

Neil
Hello and welcome to Six Minute English. I'm Neil and joining me today is Dan – who is weighed down with shopping bags and wearing something very… strange. What's going on, Dan?

Dan
Hi everyone. Well, I was feeling a bit miserable so I decided to cheer myself up by going shopping!

Neil
Well that's lucky because the link between shopping and mood is what we're looking at in this 6 Minute English – and of course we'll be giving you six mood and shopping-related vocabulary items. But first, our quiz:

Online shoppers in which country spend more per household than consumers in any other country, according to a report from the UK Cards Association?

a) The USA

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b) Norway

c) The UK

Dan
Norway seems to come top of lots of lists, so for that reason alone I'm going to say Norway.

Neil
We'll find out at the end of the show. Now, Dan, you said just now that you went shopping because you were feeling down.

Dan
That's right – I like a bit of **retail therapy**.

Neil
Retail therapy is a humorous expression which means going shopping to make yourself feel better.

Dan
Oh I do that all the time.

Neil
Yes, I can see. And you're not alone. According to some research done by the website moneysupermarket.com, people are more likely to buy things they'll later regret when they're feeling sad, bored or stressed.

Dan
Well I was feeling a bit **down in the dumps**. And that's a way of saying 'sad'.

Neil
Oh dear, Dan. Sorry to hear you've been **down in the dumps**. I only hope you don't also get a **pang** of regret about your purchases when you get them home – the research suggests that you will.

Dan
A **pang** is a sharp pain. We often hear it used figuratively to talk about strong emotions like guilt, regret and **remorse**. You're making me feel worse, Neil

Neil
Sorry Dan – it's all for educational purposes! Our audience will learn from your pain! **Remorse** is like regret – and there's a good expression to describe exactly that bad feeling you get when you realise you don't really need or want the thing you've bought. **Buyer's remorse**.

Dan
OK, OK, OK enough about me. Let's hear from Sam, Phil and Catherine from the Learning English team to see if their mood affects the shopping choices they make. Listen carefully. Can you hear the three types of things they say that they buy when they're **down in the dumps**?

Sam
Honestly, I tend to buy food. Anything that will bring me comfort, so it can be any sort of warm drink, hot drink but also anything kind of warm and **cosy** – so like a nice jumper.

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Phil
Definitely, if I've had a bad day at work, or for whatever reason or I feel terrible, tired, I am more likely to buy something on the way home.

Catherine
Oh when I'm feeling sad, I probably buy a little bit of wine and often something to wear. I find that a bit of **retail therapy** when I'm sad usually **does the trick** at the time, so it makes me feel better. But I do find that when I look in my wardrobe, the things that I bought when I was sad – I never wear them.

Neil
Sam, Phil and Catherine there from the BBC Learning English team talking about what kind of things they buy when they're feeling down. What were they?

Dan
Food, drink and clothes.

Neil
That's right. Sam mentioned she buys food, warm drinks and a nice jumper to keep her **cosy**. That's the feeling of being warm, comfortable and relaxed.

Dan
Catherine also mentioned drinks – this time wine. And she also said that buying clothes **does the trick**. That means achieves the result she intended. She feels down, she buys clothes, she feels better – it **does the trick**.

Neil
But what's interesting is that Catherine said she never wears the clothes she buys when she's feeling sad. That's exactly what the survey found – people regret the purchases they make when they're sad, bored or stressed.

Dan
Sounds like a case of **buyer's remorse**.

Neil
Indeed. Well, time now for the answer to our quiz question. I asked this: Online shoppers in which country spend more per household than consumers in any other country, according to a report from the UK Cards Association? Is it:

a) The USA
b) Norway
c) The UK

Dan
I said b) Norway.

Neil
And I'm afraid you might need to go and buy some more stuff to cheer you up – you're wrong! The correct answer is the UK. Apparently UK households spent the equivalent of $5,900 (£4,611) using payment cards online in 2015.

Dan
Well, I hope they were happy when they made those purchases or they may feel the **pang** of regret I'm scared I might get after today's discussion!

Neil
Well, a good recap of the vocabulary from this programme might **do the trick**.

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Dan
Shall we start with the first word? Do you ever go in for a bit of **retail therapy**, Neil?

Neil
Actually I try to avoid it. Especially after reading this survey – I don't think the happiness you feel after buying something lasts very long. In fact, you can end up feeling **down in the dumps**.

Dan
Down in the dumps - meaning sad/unhappy. Yes and a **pang** of regret might follow once you realise you've spent a lot of money on something you don't really need.

Neil
A **pang** is a stab – used here figuratively to mean a sharp pain used to talk about strong emotions. And after the pang can come **buyer's remorse**.

Dan
Hmm, I'm beginning to feel buyer's remorse from this leopard skin onesie. Seemed like such a good idea at the time.

Neil
Well it does look **cozy** – warm comfortable and relaxed, so I think if that's what you wanted, it **does the trick**.

Dan
Does the trick, meaning achieves the result you wanted.

Neil
OK before Dan heads off to buy even more stuff he doesn't need, please remember to check out our Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages.

Dan/Neil
Bye!

ANSWER:

Were the definitions of the words helpful?
Could you understand the dialogue?
Are you interested in retail therapy? Did you know about this?

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