

One man's trash is another's treasure, and other lessons I learned about the environment by getting older and dating a narcissist

I'm a self-proclaimed shopaholic. I attribute my impulsive spending to the long list of ways having ADD makes my life more difficult. But, at the end of the day, nothing makes me happier than a new T-shirt. Besides, maybe a new pair of jeans. Or a new hair clip. Anyway, I digress.

Even though the state of my bank account after an exhilarating day at the mall does cause me panic, I felt even more panic when I learned about how much water it takes to produce a single t-shirt- about [2,700 liters](#)- which is enough for one person to drink for 900 days. What's more, once all that water is used, [it's discharged into wastewater](#), and the chlorine it contains is not biodegradable and travels in water, poisoning plants, animals, and humans.

As I've gotten older, I've learned that you can't truly change a person or their habits (and believe me, I've tried). The only thing you can do is redirect behavior. I will probably be a shop-a-holic forever, but that doesn't mean I can't learn to become an environmentally conscious shop-a-holic who purchases and donates clothing responsibly. As I've gotten older, I've ALSO learned that one man's trash is another's treasure. And no, I'm not just talking about my ex-boyfriend, but I also AM talking about my ex-boyfriend.

So, after this particularly sobering and depressing realization that my shopping addiction was impacting more people than just myself (another lesson I wish my ex could have learned), I realized that there are ways to still enjoy your hobbies without being irresponsible and contributing to the increasingly dire environmental situation we're facing—and yes, shopping CAN be a hobby!

A way that I've found to continue my hobby of purchasing things I definitely do not need is to buy from companies that utilize sustainable business practices. For example, my favorite lousy decision, [Reformation](#), has a phenomenal environmental program. Not only do they practice sustainable business practices, but they also practice ethical ones. They believe who makes your clothes and how they are treated matters. This kind of mindset has a trickle-down effect not only on the physical and emotional health of factory workers but also on the health of the environment that they live in. Their company logo is "Made smarter, made better, made for good." I searched up the store to add a link to this article, and accidentally shopped (do as I say, not as I do).

Not only does Reformation use sustainable production and packaging programs, but they have also partnered with [ThredUp](#), which "makes it easy to give your quality preloved clothes the best possible chance at a second life, and keeps wearable garments where they belong—in use and out of landfills."

Reformation provides its clients with complimentary ["ThredUp"](#) bags, which they can fill with gently used women's and children's clothing from any brand. The team at ThredUp processes the kit, and the items are sold through their online consignment and thrift store. In

return, the client receives Reformation credit to use towards adding new and sustainable items to their wardrobe. Just because I have a shopping problem doesn't mean my clothing is damaged, or has gone out of style. Participating in the ThredUp program allows me to donate clothing to someone who will use it, instead of letting it fill up a landfill somewhere.

I know that donating old clothes to buy new ones isn't a perfect situation for the enormous problem of the fact that unless water use is drastically reduced, [severe water shortage will affect the entire planet by 2040](#). But I believe in progress and not perfection. Obviously, we can contribute to the increasingly concerning water situation in other ways- taking shorter showers, fixing leaks, and turning off the faucet while brushing teeth. Evaluating my closet is usually a good place to start when I have a problem, and I figured it couldn't hurt in this situation, either.

As I've gotten older, I've found that the most apparent change is sometimes the hardest to make. I've also found that making the slightest change can result in the most significant difference (you guessed it- I'm also talking about the ex-boyfriend again). I'm working on managing my money, and my closet, more effectively. But, that's a hard change to make, so I'm also focused on ways I can make smarter and healthier decisions for myself and the planet while on my journey to meeting nice boys, and reducing my personal carbon footprint. The way I see it, if I start shopping more thoughtfully, I will have somewhere to wear all my fabulous clothes in 20 years, and I'll meet a nice new boyfriend!