

Her final good buys

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LIFE WRITER

After a full year of writing my daily Constant Shopper column, in which I sourced five cool and different shopping ideas every week, I've learned one very important thing.

You can't shop constantly if you want to stay sane.

This year has been an incredible ride. I've met some amazing people and discovered some creative products. Perhaps most importantly, by watching which columns inspired you, the reader, to go out and buy the items I wrote about, I learned more about what you desire and admire.

Together, we explored new products that are more ecologically friendly than their predecessors. We bought Oqoqo clothing, a chic and comfortable line made of bamboo, soy and hemp, and we discovered TerraCycle plant food, a non-toxic growth booster that's made entirely from garbage.

We also championed mom-preneurs who saw a niche in the market place and created more stylish baby products than were previously available. Posh Mom diaper bags, Nummies nursing bras, and BeesKnees baby pants are just a few cutie-pie examples.

We, like many Canadians last year, finally embraced the fun and ease of shopping online and bought stuff from stylish local sites: goneshopping.com, lilou-organics.com, honey-bunch.com, hello-sunshine.com, gelaskins.com and stylefly.ca, to name a few.

We showed our devotion to buying locally in person, too, by flocking to stores that place Canadian designers front and centre, such as Nathalie-Roze & Co., Planet Kid and Boutique Le Trou, and by buying home-grown fashion brands such as Bos and Co. shoes, Soia & Kyo coats, Fidelity jeans and Blush underwear.

It has been incredibly satisfying to help these great products earn the recognition they deserve, but crafting a daily ditty about buying stuff has also been a real challenge. Over the past year, as I've been rushing from mall to boutique and then back to my desk to file a new story each and every weekday, I've also been deepening my study of yoga and making personal choices that reflect my commitment to a spiritual path.

At times, I've felt that my personal values were in direct conflict with the requirements of the column.



KEITH BEATY/TORONTO STAR
Daphne Gordon is taking a break from pounding the pavement in search of interesting new products and is heading to a yoga ashram.

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During a recent yoga retreat, I asked myself what I hope for in life. The answer was pretty clear. Neither pretty purses, nor chic gadgets appeared on the list. I don't want to have more stuff in my life; I want more fun, more space, more time and more love, and based on feedback from readers, I know I'm not alone.

So, starting now, I'll no longer be writing the Constant Shopper daily dispatch.

I know there will be disappointed readers. For many, reading a daily column about shopping provides a healthier — and much cheaper — substitute for the real thing. But don't worry. I'm not giving up shopping altogether. In this hyper-commercialized, super-fast world, that's practically impossible.

I'll still be writing for the Shopping section this fall, but without the constant grind of a daily column, I'll be able to take on tougher topics and go more deeply into stories that deserve substantial research. For example, in the next few weeks, I'll be looking at bamboo as the new miracle material, and why spending more than a week's pay on The Perfect Purse is actually a good investment.

Then, starting in January, I'll be taking an eight-month leave of absence from my job here at the *Star*. I'll kick it off with a three-month retreat at a yoga ashram in British Columbia. There will be no shopping. There will be no deadlines. In fact, there will be no alcohol, no TV, no paycheque, and for that matter, no Captain Romance! Ever the supportive boyfriend, he'll be holding down the fort here in Toronto while I'm on my solo vision quest.

I'm excited, but it will be a big change for me. I'll be turning my life upside down for the purpose of finding out more about myself. Three months in the mountains will give me a chance to commune with nature and reflect deeply on what I *really* want to write about, if it's not bags and baubles and baby booties.

Of course, I have a few book ideas in mind, and an extended break will give me a chance to work on those ideas.

When I return, I'm sure I'll have much to share with you, readers, about what I learned from the experience. But in the meantime, let's stay in touch. Email me your questions, comments and requests. I may not respond personally to each and every one, but I will keep your suggestions in mind for future stories.

And as they say in yoga class, *namaste* — the light in me honours the light in you.

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