Stealing [1]

I have a job at a typical retail place. This place has no cameras so I steal on a regular basis. I don't think I would be stealing if they had any sort of security. I feel like a criminal, which I am, but is it not their fault as well for having such lax security? And also should I even stop, because even though it is wrong, I am making a hefty profit and getting many things for free, but I know it's wrong...I dunno what to do!! Klepto

Answer

Dear Klepto,

It sounds like you know that you should stop shoplifting. Stealing has ethical, legal, and lifetime consequences; whether or not your employer has cameras should not affect your decision regarding shoplifting. The laws concerning shoplifting vary by state, however, under most state laws, a store has the legal right to stop and detain a suspect if they have "probable cause." This means that they have seen the suspect take the merchandise, conceal it, move or modify the item and/or fail to pay for the item before leaving the store. The store also has the right to demand the return of the merchandise, to ban the offender from their store for a period of time, to prosecute the offender criminally, and charge the offender with a civil penalty as well? all under local and state law.

If your employer catches you stealing, you would likely be charged with a misdemeanor, such as petty theft or larceny, if the total value of the stolen goods is less than $500. However, if it exceeds $500, it is typically considered to be a felony and you could be charged with grand theft or larceny. In New York State, for example, shoplifting is a Class A misdemeanor which has a finite sentence up to one year. In addition to possible community service and/or jail time, you would be expected to return the merchandise and/or pay a fine. This would go on your permanent record and you would have to report it to future employers.

So, to recap, shoplifting can lead to losing your job, possibly going to jail, or having to pay a fine, and you could find it difficult to become employed again in the future. That all sounds like a lot to go through simply to make a few extra dollars and get some items for free. Knowing the consequences of your actions is important when assessing risky behaviors, especially when one small slip can lead to jail. Any way you look at it, it doesn't pay to steal.

If you don't think you can stop, there are many support groups and programs available. One program, the Pathways Institute for Impulse Control [2], specializes in impulse disorders, "process addictions," and out-of-control behaviors, which includes shoplifting.

Alice!

Category: