

Love of shoes led her to quit smoking

WRITTEN BY DEBRA D. BASS • PD FASHION EDITOR

You don't have to be rich to go on a shoe diet. The only thing you have to do is love shoes.

What's brilliant about Isabelle Shaw's first book, "The Shoe Diet" (Elbasy Press, 78 pages, \$12.95) is that shoes are the hook, but the weight of her argument is common sense and a little scientific data.

But you don't need to know about neurobiology to know that rewarding yourself for good behavior with Christian Louboutin leopard pumps is better than punishing yourself for bad behavior.

"I didn't invent anything new here. I just explained all this data that's already been out there and that people kind of already know, but don't want to admit to themselves," says Shaw of Compton Hills.

In a nutshell: People do bad things — smoking, overeating and not exercising being pretty high on the nation's top 10 list. To shake these bad habits, we should buy more shoes. Makes perfect sense to me.

If shoes aren't your thing, try a handbag diet or perhaps earrings. Men might apply the wisdom to whatever it is that they collect.

Shaw says shoes were the motivator that got her to quit a 15-year cigarette habit. (If her parents ask, make sure you tell them it was a 10-year habit.)

While she smoked, her parents tried bribing her, and her friends criticized, but nothing helped. Not even completing a master's degree in biomedical science at the University of Montreal. Shaw, 31, is a French Canadian born and raised in Quebec. Two years into



PHOTO BY ROBERT COHEN • PD

PUMP IT UP • Isabelle Shaw, author of 'The Shoe Diet,' encourages dieters to reward their progress with a pair of shoes.

her doctoral degree, she decided to adopt a new tactic and accidentally experimented with shoe therapy.

"I knew smoking was a nasty, horrible habit, but I couldn't quit," Shaw says . . . until she decided to dangle a carrot as an incentive. A furry, high heeled, strappy carrot in a size 8½. She stopped smoking on Dec. 22, 2002 at 11:30 a.m., she says.

Warning: Some people are excited by collecting pretty things, and some are excited by collecting cash. For the latter people, saving money gives them a high. If you like saving, research buying things that will appreciate in value (maybe you like stocks, maybe you like collectibles). If you love travel,

save for a vacation. If you love cars, good luck. Whatever makes your heart go pitter-patter, go for it.

Shoes worked for Shaw. When the cigarette cravings were virtually irresistible, she would browse online or at a local shop for an object to inspire her. She'd set a time limit and make herself a deal: If I finish the day/week/hour without a cigarette, I'll buy the shoes.

"Sometimes it was just a \$3 pair of flip flops," says Shaw, who was making \$15,000 as a graduate student at the time. "It wasn't about how much you spent but the idea of

rewarding yourself." It worked for smoking, and then she

used the same principles to lose weight when her waistline expanded.

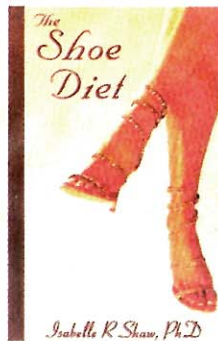
"The first time I went running, I was so miserable. It was over after 10 minutes and I wanted to cry," Shaw writes in her book. But she kept her eyes on the prize. She still owns the pair of purple snakeskin leather boots she bought for \$30 after she lost 10 pounds. Shaw will not disclose how many shoes she actually owns, however.

"I don't count because I don't even want to know, but I do give a lot away to charity," Shaw says.

In the end, she says that it's not about collecting shoes. It's about taking the time to pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

"No one is going to say, 'Great job on not eating that cookie even though no one else was looking,'" Shaw says. "Only you can know how really hard that was."

You and that new pair of wedge heels with the zebra stripes.



Forget South Beach and Atkins. Here's "The Shoe Diet."