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Going cold turkey on Black Friday

by Heidi Schlumpf

NCR Today

I like a bargain as much as the next shopper. In fact, I'm something of a full-fledged penny pincher and rarely pay full price. But more and more I have come to realize the implications of some of my purchasing habits. Which is why I'm staying home on Black Friday.

For years, anti-commercialism activists have promoted Black Friday and Saturday as "Buy Nothing Days" as an antidote to the excessive consumerism promoted on those days, in the name of Christ's birthday, no less. For years I declined to "buy nothing" because my mother and I had a tradition of hitting a huge craft fair in Milwaukee every Friday after Thanksgiving. But our Thanksgiving traditions have changed now, and I'm no longer in Milwaukee, so I have no excuse. Last year I made a late-afternoon run to the craft store to buy on-sale flannel fabric for some handmade gifts. But no more.

This year I'm going cold turkey--and I'm not referring to Thanksgiving leftovers.

In part, it's distaste over the excessiveness of the whole Black Friday phenomenon. I mean, Black Friday ads in early November? And turning it into Black Thursday? (Check out this petition to ask Target to allow its employees have a Thanksgiving with their families rather than open at 9 p.m. that night.) Or, seriously, risking your life or health for a flat-screen TV?

Someone once explained to me that standing in line outside Walmart at 3 a.m. is an "experience," maybe comparable to any other large, public gathering. I'll confess that my family has slept on the streets of Pasadena to get a good seat for the Rose Bowl Parade, that I waited in hourslong lines for Notre Dame football tickets, and crowded into Millennium Park when Obama was elected in 2008. If hordes of people have gathered somewhere, it must be for something fun, right?

But somehow a crowd of un- or underemployed, debt-ridden Americans yelling "Charge!" as they trample

over someone's grandmother, all to get the latest electronics or some new clothes (and studies show that most Black Friday purchases are not gifts but rather for the shopper him or herself), well, it just doesn't seem fun. Or right.

What will you do be doing on Black Friday?

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