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Morning Advantage: Feeling Blue? Go Buy Some Stuff

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One would think — i.e. me — that attempting to cure one's sadness with shopping isn't the best strategy. Dog sick? Buy a Snickers. Rough day at work? Buy a watch. Just doesn't seem right, does it? Well, according to new research (http://www.bus.umich.edu/NewsRoom/ArticleDisplay.asp?news_id=25277) by Scott Rick and Katherine Burson of Michigan's b-school, I may be wrong — in fact, it looks like retail therapy is the real deal.

Here's the rub. In one study, the researchers showed a sad video to participants, and then offered them a snack to buy. The snack buyers reported lower sadness scores — after the video — than those who chose not to buy a snack. In a second experiment, the researchers tested the effects of buying versus browsing: the buyers, it turns out, reported lower sadness scores than browsers. So why the changes in sadness? Buying things, the researchers suggest, can help to restore our sense of control. "Shopping is a natural, easy vehicle for choice," Rick says. There are other situations that afford opportunities to choose and restore personal control, but they may be less tempting and harder to find than the mall."