



AL DIAZ/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

ON A MISSION: Personal shopper and style consultant Elysze Held suggests sticking to a carefully crafted list when you hit the malls for the holiday season.

COSTLY DISTRACTIONS

Just in time for the holidays, researchers find that shoppers who focus on the task at hand are more likely to get a better deal, and that interruption can get expensive.

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Miami-based personal shopper and style consultant Elysze Held, whose client list includes the on-air talent at WSVN's Deco Drive, teaches her customers what she calls "shopping tactics." And during the holiday season she's even stricter about her strategies: Shop with a list in hand to deflect pouncing salespeople, and avoid shopping near your home or office, so you're less likely to bump into chit-

chatting friends.

The goal? To free yourself from the distractions that will cause you to overspend.

"They take you off task," Held says. "When it comes to stimuli, we're all the same."

Yes, interruptions are expensive — and now scientists can prove it with research that explains how the human brain responds to information onslaught. Their data underscore



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what professional shoppers like Held have long known intuitively — and what many of us have seen on increasingly large credit card bills. Clamoring kids, the "40 Percent Off" sign and your ringing cell phone, they've discovered, crash into our train of thought and ultimately derail us toward more costly choices.

•TURN TO SHOPPING, 8C