

## **Kleptomania**

Kleptomania involves a failure to resist impulses to steal items that are not needed or sought for personal use or monetary value. Kleptomania should be distinguished from shoplifting, in which the action is usually well-planned and motivated by need or monetary gain. Some clinicians view kleptomania as part of the [obsessive-compulsive](#) spectrum of disorders, reasoning that many individuals experience the impulse to steal as an alien, unwanted intrusion into their mental state. Other evidence suggests that kleptomania may be related to, or a variant of, mood disorders, such as [depression](#). The main diagnostic features are:

- The person repeatedly yields to the impulse to steal objects that are needed neither for personal use nor for their monetary worth.
- Just before the theft, the patient experiences increasing tension.
- At the time of theft, the patient feels gratification, pleasure or relief.
- These thefts are committed neither out of anger or revenge nor in response to delusions or hallucinations.
- The thefts are not better explained by [Antisocial Personality Disorder](#), [Conduct Disorder](#) or a [Manic Episode](#).

### **Associated Features:**

[Depressed](#) or Guilty (concerning the thefts)  
[Major Depressive Disorder](#)  
[Anxiety](#).

### **Differential Diagnosis:**

Some disorders have similar or even the same symptoms. The clinician, therefore, in his/her diagnostic attempt, has to differentiate against the following disorders which need to be ruled out to establish a precise diagnosis.

An Ordinary Criminal Act.  
[Bipolar Mood Disorder](#).  
[Conduct Disorder](#).  
[Antisocial Personality Disorder](#).  
Manic Episode in response to [Delusions](#) or [Dementia](#).

### **Cause:**

Most person's with this disorder seem to be women; their average age is about 35 and the duration of illness is roughly 16 years. Some individuals report the onset of kleptomania as early as age five. While we do not know the causes of kleptomania, there is indirect evidence linking it with abnormalities in the brain chemical serotonin. Stressors such as major losses may also precipitate kleptomaniac behavior.

### **Treatment:**

Treatment will include counseling and psychotherapeutic approaches and in some cases combined with drug therapy.

**Counseling and Psychotherapy [ [See Therapy Section](#) ]:**

A variety of psychotherapies have been used to treat this disorder, but it is not clear which one is best. [Family](#) therapy may also be important, since this disorder can be very disruptive to families.

**Pharmacotherapy [ [See Psychopharmacology Section](#) ] :**

Prozac, an antidepressant that boosts levels of serotonin, has been found useful in some cases of kleptomania.