

# Kleptomania

by RickAlan

EnEspañol(SpanishVersion)

## Definition

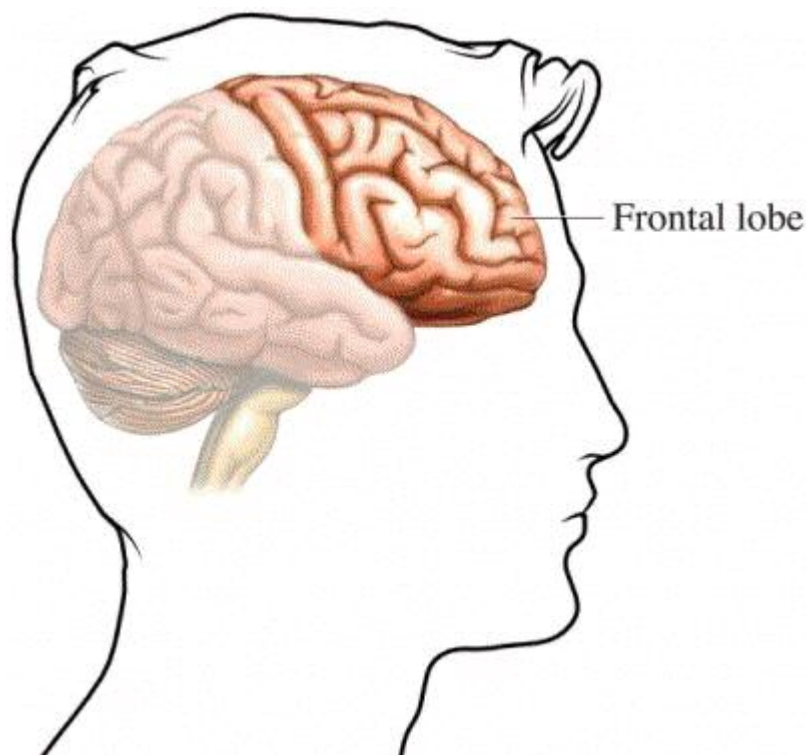
Kleptomania is the inability to resist impulses to steal. The things that are stolen are not needed for personal use. They are also not taken for their monetary value. This is a rare condition.

## Causes

The exact cause of kleptomania is unknown. It often occurs with other psychological disorders. These include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance abuse (eg, alcoholism, drug abuse)
- Eating disorders (eg, anorexia, bulimia)
- Other impulse control disorders

Frontal Lobe



Psychological disorders are sometimes the result of chemical imbalances in the brain. The frontal lobe of the brain is thought to provide impulse control.

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## Risk Factors

Kleptomania appears to be more common in females than in males. There are no other known risk factors.

## Symptoms

Symptoms of kleptomania include all of the following:

- A repeated inability to resist impulses to steal things that are not of personal value
- A feeling of relief, gratification, and/or pleasure when stealing things
- Thefts not committed out of anger or vengeance
- Lack of a better explanation for the theft, such as another psychological disorder

## Diagnosis

Kleptomania is different from shoplifting or ordinary theft, which is:

- Deliberate
- Motivated by the stolen item's usefulness or monetary value
- The result of a dare, an act of rebellion, or a rite of passage

A psychiatrist or psychologist will diagnose kleptomania when:

- All of the symptoms of kleptomania are present
- There is no other, better explanation for repeated thefts
- Kleptomania is not an excuse for shoplifting or ordinary theft

## Treatment

Treatment may include:

### Counseling or Therapy

Counseling or therapy may be in a group or one-to-one setting. It is usually aimed at dealing with underlying psychological problems that may be contributing to kleptomania. It may also include:

- Behavior modification therapy
- Family therapy

### Medications

Drugs used for treatment include:

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)—raises serotonin levels in the brain, such as fluoxetine (eg, Prozac), fluvoxamine (eg, Luvox), paroxetine (eg, Paxil), sertraline (eg, Zoloft)
- Lithium—balances the mood swing to prevent rapid shifts that may cause the urge to steal (eg, Eskalith)
- Trazodone (eg, Desyrel, Trialodine)
- Valproic acid (eg, Depakene, Valproate, Valrelease)

# Prevention

There are no guidelines for preventing kleptomania because the exact cause is not known.

## RESOURCES:

American Psychiatric Association  
<http://www.psych.org/>

Cleptomaniacs and Shoplifters Anonymous  
<http://www.shopliftersanonymous.com/>

## CANADIAN RESOURCES:

Canadian Psychiatric Association  
<http://www.cpa-apc.org/>

Canadian Psychological Association  
<http://www.cpa.ca/cpsite/home.asp/>

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