

# MANTALK

David Young



## \* Men are DNA-deficient when it comes to browsing on the high street

**M**en would love to be able to shop. There, I said it. Not the supermarket trolley-dash kind of shopping or the gentle pondering over a second-hand motor. We can do those and manage not to lose our minds.

I'm talking about the Tour de France of retail – the skilled pursuit of fashion.

I can hear the tut-tutting already. Shh. Hear me out. The sheer capacity to while away hours contemplating what to wear, and how to assemble a wardrobe, just wasn't written into the male blueprint. And so we make the worst choices.

It's not our fault. Right? We're DNA-deficient when it comes to perusing the high street.

Ladies, think of it as a blind spot. And have a little sympathy for us lesser mortals, because we're just not wired to flit endlessly from rack to rail and back again.

But we do try. Every so often, to prove it, we climb back up on that giddy horse. Just the other weekend, I volunteered (!) to go to an outlet centre. Not any old cluster of shops, but a veritable Disney-like outpost. A place you could easily mistake as speed-dating for shopaholics.

And I knew this would take a whole day. With a 300-mile round-trip tag hung on it before we even left home, there was a palpable sense of mission. Well, for me anyway. I was embarking on an excursion of Everest proportions.

My wife sat baffled in the passenger seat – as she had been at the breakfast table – unintentionally casting quizzical 'I hope he's all right' looks my way, even as I hummed along to the radio and tapped the wheel.

The mellowness soon began to fade with the realisation we'd only get there in the afternoon. Against the clock, every shop visit would have to count. And as time ticked, I could feel my reason blurring.

Before I knew it, I had become borderline indecipherable – my head a fug of easy acquiescence. My wife would signal for my opinion, and all she'd get in return was a lumpy mash of nods, yups and lovelys.

Maybe it was the lighting, or the odd scent of new textiles blended with the warming perfumes of the shopping masses, but my body began to ache. It was a strange malaria-like concoction of muscle fatigue.

You may have spotted it before. It's where men can't quite locate where to stand.

We try leaning against things that aren't

well fixed, such as mannequins. And staff.

And around dressing rooms, we lose all orientation to the casual stance. Unknown to ourselves, we adopt folded arms, with bags wrapped into them, and legs akimbo. But a little too much, unsettling all and sundry.

But I thought I was keeping it together that day. That was until my turn came. Jaded by my valiant nodding efforts, I hadn't enough energy left to fend off the tide of insistence from my wife – to pick something up before hitting the road.

My stomach flipped. Think teen years; think a spinning bottle, and think "you're next". Just as those ensuing moments would engulf you in awkwardness, so too the adult me disintegrated with a defenceless "okay".

So, there I found myself, standing in front of mirrors for the world in a cubicle, with way too many angles to view myself from, the growing queues outside the curtain audibly shuffling to coax me to get a move on.

Emerging into banks of disapproval, I'd scan the shop for my wife. But she was on a permanent walkabout setting. Ladies! Trying to track you down while rubbernecking a changing stall is really tough.

A few shops later my confidence was growing, though. Buoyed by my new aptitude to speed dress, I could almost hear the other shoppers – kindred folk by now – applaud my lithe efficiency. But then came the leathers. And herself nowhere to be seen.

If the emerging shopping faculty in my brain was even running on a single candle, I'd have hedged, even hummed a bit, beckoning common sense to save me from the snug black biker number I'd picked up. Happy days? Not.

Somehow, I didn't notice that the sleeves rolled like outsize condoms up and down my arms every time I breathed. The store was closing. And my blood sugars were on the floor. Wanting to impress, I couldn't see any reason not to seal the deal.

Disoriented and deluded, I handed over my card. Not even the tapping of digits roused me from my stupor. Like my new jacket, I was kind of stretched out of shape. The only difference – neat little rings form around its elbows.

And now, every time herself spots it hanging in the spare room, it tickles her pink. Ireland's answer to the Fonzy won't be making his debut any day soon.

I told you – we're just not built for it. ❏

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# THINGS

## SOAK UP THE LATIN SPIRIT

Summer is the perfect time to hold a Latin-tinged festival, and the Latin American Native Community in Ireland is holding its second come-all-ye in the Temple Bar area until August 21.

The week will include music, art, dance, workshops and lots of fun guaranteed.

As for Weekend magazine, we're off to the capoeira workshop at 2pm. See [www.lancifestival.com](http://www.lancifestival.com).



## AND... STRETCH

Double the zen factor with a yoga session in Phoenix Park, with all proceeds going to the Dublin Simon Community.

Every Saturday from 11am-noon, Fiona Moloney and Tine Schnell take turns to lead a class, which is suitable for all levels.

Pay whatever you can afford, but be nice!

See [www.twopalmsyoga.com](http://www.twopalmsyoga.com) for details.



## WHOA, NELLY

Get on your bike next Friday, August 19, for the High Nelly bicycle run in Coachford, Co Cork.

It's part of a weekend-long festival that follows, which includes a vintage car show, the All-Ireland Ferguson Tractor Building fourth round and other vehicular delights. See [www.coachfordnews.com](http://www.coachfordnews.com).



## SHOW TIME

If you're a fan of all things country, then head to Co Offaly for the Tullamore Show today.

The agricultural show celebrates its 20th year with a €165,000 prize fund for nice-looking livestock, plus family entertainment and farm skills competitions to keep the rest of us happy.

See [www.tullamoreshow.com](http://www.tullamoreshow.com) for good maps and helpful tips.

