



Shoe Love

BY JENNY ROUGH

Unlike most women, I'm not crazy about shoes. Why shove my feet — the foundation of my body — into pointy-toed, 4-inch, ciggy-heel stilettos, known to cause bunions, hammertoes and nerve pain? I feel similarly about platforms and peep toes, which are linked to other painful ailments. And though 60 percent of women say they're willing to endure pain for fashion, there's no way I'm following in those footsteps.

Yet the other day, I caught myself drooling at the sight of shoes. My heart fluttered at the array of colors and styles, textures and shapes. Where? In a sporting goods store.

I lifted a New Balance and caressed its "grippy" sole. I nodded at the breathable mesh of a pair of Brooks and admired the toecap on The North Face. After agonizing over my choices, I opted for a pair of

Montrails that felt as if they were designed exactly for my feet, long and narrow with high arches. I couldn't wait to slip into my new shoes and go for a trail run.

That's when I realized I am crazy about shoes — hiking boots, tennis shoes, flippers, ski boots ... When I open my closet, an entire collection of athletic shoes and equipment tumbles at my feet.

For some women, shoes are a way to feel sexy and empowered. For me, shoes are a gateway to explore the world. When I wear my rollerblades (shoes with wheels), I can glide along paths that wind through trees and parks. My snowshoes buoy me on top of heaps of fresh powder so I can enjoy the splendor of the Rockies. And, thanks to my waders, I can closely observe a tide pool's starfish and sea anemones.

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Recently, a lady in heels remarked on my comfy, podiatrist-approved Merrells with arch support and rubber soles: "I have a pair of those," she said. "I wear them as bedroom slippers."

What can I say? I may never look sophisticated when it comes to footwear fashion, but I've hit my stride. And, as the saying goes, "If the shoe fits ...!" ●