

*We've Got To Get
Back To The Garden*

Robert S. Swiatek

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First Edition

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for those who can't kick the habit

also by Robert S. Swiatek

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Introduction

One of the impediments to any kind of progress is addiction. This involves each of us, our family, friends, those who live in cities, towns, states and countries all over the world. We're familiar with bad habits when it comes to drugs, food and work, but those are only a few trouble areas. When I first considered writing this book, I made a list of topics and settled on a few. I began work on one chapter at a time – in no particular order. As I did so, I realized that I had left out an addiction or two, so I began a list of these. In time, the list grew longer and longer. I decided to have a chapter for miscellaneous addictions.

Since some habits are to be commended, I reserved the last chapter for what I thought were good addictions. I began the book with addictions to drugs, starting in the morning with a dose of caffeine and dealing with nicotine, alcohol and prescription drugs – from the pharmacist as well as off the shelf. The last one was probably the worse of the group, illegal drugs. Each attraction isn't easy to overcome and every one poses danger to the health of the user. If a dealer enters the scene, innocent people wind up in the crossfire. In any case, others always suffer from the drug addictions of family or friends.

Food is the next consideration. Just look around and you can't help but feel that the epidemic is spreading, along with the waistlines of the people. We all eat to live, but for many, it's the other way around as they live to eat. Just because you love food doesn't mean you're addicted to it, but you should be aware of the possibility. Omnivores are probably food addicts. There'll be consideration of specific longing for three bad substances: sugar, salt and fat. Each is necessary to live but overindulging can lead to health problems: diabetes, depression, high blood pressure, doctor and hospital visits. Obesity isn't good for the person who craves food, nor is it good for the health industry or the

health of the nation. Dieting can be dangerous if the loss is too much at once, but not trying it could be worse. Obesity results from sedentary lifestyles, lack of exercise as well as overindulgence. Too many people make bad food choices.

The next addiction is to sports. In the same chapter I include another one since it's connected: gambling. My first novel was all about the national lottery. That purchase of a ticket is the worse investment imaginable, although hoping the teams you bet on your football ticket cover the spread isn't a good deal either.

This is followed by four chapters of bad habits that work together in society. In order, they are money, control, materialism and work. People with an addiction to cash probably want to be in charge – they want power over others. Slavery is a result even if it's not an addiction, and discussion of it can be found in the chapter on control. Chapter 7 gets into work, an addiction for too many people, even if it's not desired. The plantation owners of the past and the corporation chiefs today may not be work addicts but they have an addiction to having others labor for them, paying workers as little as they could get away with. The chapter before concerns itself with materialism, which can't be left out of the money / control / work ménage à trois. You can see that the addictions to money and materialism aren't precisely the same thing.

Chapter 8 is an addiction that envelops all of us: sex. It's not to be confused with the love habit, which concludes the book. The Internet plays a huge part with its contribution of pornography. The web hasn't completely replaced magazines and red light districts, but instead provides the locations of the latter with its information overload. I'll get into more of the data preponderance and technology in chapter 13.

Then comes danger and excitement in chapter 9, which grabs many of us. From the choice of vacations for many citizens, it appears that a requisite might be that danger

is part of the package, even if airfare isn't included. I had to add a few words on *extreme* sports – however you spell it – which I chose to have here rather a few chapters before. Chapter 10 is about the addiction to war, which for some belongs with the addiction to danger and excitement. They are separate, but related.

What follows is an environmental chapter in which we are concerned with oil addicts. I'll not limit it to that black liquid but include all fossil fuels, since we need air conditioning in the summer – is that because of global warming? – plus heat in winter, which seems to last for six months. I think that is because of climate change as well. Of course, we need gasoline because of an addiction to the automobile, which I'll mention in passing. I could just as easily had the adoration of the car in the chapter on danger because of the addiction of many to speed – here I'm not referring to a drug. Since the car is also one of the benefits of technology, it will also be discussed in chapter 13.

News addicts are next in chapter 12 and I mention political junkies as well. It doesn't matter what the source is, whether the Internet, newspaper, magazine, radio or television. If you're a world information addict, you may rely on all of the mentioned providers. I mentioned chapter 13 before as the technology chapter, with emphasis on the computer, television, telephone and automobile. All these advances have helped us in some way, but today, people are overwhelmed by it. This is not unlike the information overload, which I brought up earlier.

We need to step back, because of the repercussions of what computers – as well as any other technology – have wrought. The environment has been besieged, people have become sedentary, developed bad habits and become more isolated. Many people swear by their PCs, while more individuals swear at them, so there has to be some repair done. We can't abandon technology, but need to retreat and not be so reliant on it. Over the holidays we should visit

family and friends and leave our cell phones, laptops and all the other distracting gadgets at home. This can be done for a few hours.

Chapter 14 was the new chapter I added for all the bad habits I missed. Some of the miscellaneous addictions include vanity, good health, voodoo, vampires, ghosts, the occult, movies, change, reluctance to change, Harry Potter, conspiracies, racism, hate, *Seinfeld*, anything retro, discrimination, white, cleaning, education, religion, humor, hope, faith, charity, justice, truth, reading, learning and books. Many of these could be grouped under a major category and I probably missed a few.

By now it should be obvious that there are many connections between addictions. This forced me to decide how to split up the chapters. The option of writing a book with only one chapter never entered my mind, even though some writers have done it. Wouldn't that choice lead to a great deal of rambling?

Chapter 15 concludes the book with a good addiction: love. Since there are other positive ones, I listed those as well. The connectivity approach is important. One link not to be dismissed is that of addictions with the seven deadly sins. These are in alphabetical order: envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, sloth and wrath. A few of these are the results of addictions that will be discussed, while another will be briefly mentioned. What remains are loosely connected to the remaining addictions. Those two words, deadly sins, says a lot and can't be dismissed lightly.

Because of the books I have written, maybe I caused some of these addictions, but I hope not. Besides my first novel, I've written a cookbook – there's that food thing and it's in all three editions – a book on war, two on work, one on the failure of technology, a book on truth and a few on the environment, including a novel for sophisticated children about amazing animals. I'm sure I mention oil in at least one of that group of books. All my books are listed

before the introduction. For now, this book is available only as an ebook, just like the two that preceded it. From the titles listed you can figure out what each book is about. My web site is www.bobcooks.com – a source for recipes and really, truly free downloads, no requirements such as blood or kidney donations or having to sit through any of the 2012 Republican debates.

Addictions are difficult to overcome. It takes a great deal of effort, but it can be done. If you're the victim, you'll have to enlist all the help you can get from others. You'll need a lot of discipline and have to do much of the work yourself, including using the approach to work I describe in Chapter 7. Look for the reference to Grace Boggs. One approach to beat the food addiction that you can use is to hide the cookies, although I think it would be better to let someone else do that.

I have included quite a few references to outstanding books and movies. I'm neither a motion picture addict nor a reading one; I just like flicks and books. Of those books that I've read and movies that I've seen, I can't recommend them all. Since I almost have an addiction to music, each chapter represents the title of a song – I hope they're familiar – or the words from one. After you finish the book, you will understand the significance of the title. If not, consider the summer of 1967, which is connected to the last chapter.

For each of my books, I always write the introduction last, when I'll know what the book is about. I may have already selected the title – I hope for its cleverness – and I'll have to connect it to what the book is really about. Before I start writing, I select a book subject and some appropriate topics. Then I get to work. In my efforts, I have some ideas and a feel for where the book is headed. By the time I sit down to write the introduction, I realize I have learned a great deal and the final product isn't exactly what I originally pictured. I hope it's better than what it started out to be.

Before the concept of addictions occurred to me, I wanted to write a book about greed and criminal corporations. What resulted was a work on all three subjects. It's also about healing and taking action. To do this, changes will be needed and I hope I've provided a few ideas in this effort, especially in the last chapter. Throughout the book I comment on the environment, and though there's no chapter for earth addicts, this book is truly about the planet, without which none of us have to worry about addictions, greed or the business world.

Just as so many of these addictions are connected, we can see a parallel between the elements of the ecosystem on which we depend. It's another connection of its own. One species of life that is endangered is so necessary for plants and animals, that when it is extinct, a domino effect begins. It might take a while, but soon other species disappear, forever. Homo sapiens are as much a part of the ecosystem as weeds, vegetables, trees, deer and fish of the sea.

I included this in one of my books earlier, but I think it's worth another look because of interconnectivity. Consider the rain forest and the macaw, a creature that is so beautiful and colorful that individuals want to capture it and sell it for huge profits. In the process, as is expected, many of the birds die, which happens when they can't adjust to living inside someone's home, away from their natural habitat. In the forest they find nourishment, but what they're looking for isn't all that abundant. They seek out a special kind of nut, enclosed by a rock-hard shell. Even with a hammer, humans will find it extremely difficult to open. The macaw uses its strong beak and finds the task relatively easy. In the process of opening the nut, some of the fruit falls to the ground or water below. This excess is enjoyed by other creatures nearby, which in turn may become prey for larger animals. All these small events keep the system flowing and in harmony.

One of the addictions, also an affliction, is to technology. On Easter Sunday 2012, I conducted an experiment. My sister Pat and her husband Lou were kind enough to have dinner at their house. A week before I talked to Pat about the possibility of that Sunday being technology free, meaning no cell phones, laptops, Kindles, iPods, iPads or anything similar. However, we could watch television and listen to music. We were allowed to converse as we sat down to a dinner of fresh Polish sausage, baked ham, Challah bread, pierogis and many other delights. The weekend before I decided not to engage my PC on that Saturday and Sunday. You'll have to wait until chapter 13 to see how things turned out.

We can't deny the addiction of technology and its connection to the environment. The computer, telephone, television and automobile and all their derivatives have wrecked havoc on the earth. We can't abandon the benefits but have to control the technology and repair it. We need to change and in many ways, to retreat. We have to get back to the garden.

“All human actions have one or more of these seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reason, passion and desire.” – Aristotle

1. Good morning starshine

When I moved to New Jersey for a teaching job, I remember being welcomed to the area by the voice of Harry Harrison on WABC radio as he greeted listeners with a good morning and the words, *Coffee's on*. I'm pretty sure he said that. The title of this first chapter is a song made popular by Oliver. I didn't do the research so I'm not sure if he had a last name, or maybe that was it. My favorite version of the song is the 1969 rendition by the rock group, The Strawberry Alarm Clock – if you have one of those, it may not help you get out of bed. Someone else will have to make coffee. *Good morning starshine* is from the 1967 Broadway musical, *Hair*, with which you're probably familiar. If not, nudity is featured along with sexual freedom, environmentalism, pacifism, astrology and religion. It also mentions drug use, which is the subject of this chapter.

Our initial consideration is caffeine, which you probably figured I would be mentioning first. Research has shown that a cup of java might have some health benefits, although all bets are off with drinking the entire pot of the liquid throughout the day. I have an excellent sense of smell, both a blessing and a curse. One of the most pleasant aromas is that of fresh coffee brewing in the morning. When I worked in Norwalk, Connecticut a few years ago, there was another fragrance, just as delightful, that of roasting coffee beans, which I encountered on my lunchtime stroll. In this connection, I can't drink coffee in the afternoon – in the morning or after dinner is fine, though. This could have something to do with some aromas I'm not fond of, that of cold coffee with milk or cream and instant coffee.

Another nasal delight – at least to me as a kid – was what I experienced on Sunday afternoons in the presence of my dad and uncles. At my grandma and grandpa's house, they brought out the stogies – not my grandparents, the other guys – and I remember with fondness what permeated the

air. Certain blends of tobacco that pipe guys smoked were all right too, especially cherry blend. The other odors emerging from some pipes I can do without. I've never smoked cigarettes or a pipe, but indulged in an occasional cigar. I haven't had one of those disgusting cancer sticks in years. I'm not sure why I started lighting them up, even if they were Cubans. Smoking any of these three will deliver our second drug to avoid, nicotine. Even just chewing tobacco isn't good for you, as many baseball players have found out. Now they stick to *Double Bubble*, although they'd probably prefer Home Run Bubble, if it were available. Nicotine kills despite what some doctors in the 1950s preached when they pointed out that smoking a cigarette is really good for you. Do you think they were getting paid off by Marlboro or R. J. Reynolds? There were plenty of lawsuits and huge settlements, and yet people today still light up. After all, cigarettes are quite addictive, made more so by the manufacturers as they add ingredients to keep smokers hooked. If you kill off the customers, who's going to buy the product? They just find new victims.

Caffeine may be bad but not nearly as harmful as *nicotine*. A good rule may be to avoid anything that ends in the last three letters in those two words, or with a similar ending sound, such as codeine, benzene, propoxyphene, Marlene and Darlene. Perhaps not all of these are trouble. There is one drug that doesn't end with that very sound: alcohol. Drinking a glass of red wine can be good for you – emptying the entire bottle by yourself not so good. The same thought applies to a glass of beer. Sadly, our society doesn't really give you the moderation option. Just check out the size of a glass of the beer that's served at the local tavern. It's sixteen ounces and you can be poured a twenty-ounce serving of lager, or even thirty-two ounces. But officer, I only had one beer.

Television promotes the liquid with the hops and malt and you may be encouraged to drink responsibly, but

what can you do at all those holiday parties and tailgating events before and after football games? We're bombarded with advertisements as well as social pressure to imbibe. It's not easy to refuse a drink, whether it's beer, wine or hard liquor. You can order cranberry juice and pretend it's a glass of red wine, but you can't let anyone hear your order if you want to be one of the crowd. Keg parties won't leave too many participants anything other than in a state of inebriation or at least mellowed out.

People use alcohol to avoid responsibility while others just join in with the others, some unconsciously. Before long, one beer turns into a six-pack and if you're the recipient, you shouldn't drive home or get on the train, subway or bus. Some parents train their children in the *art of alcohol* by having them drink enough booze so that they'll never touch the stuff again. Sometimes that strategy works but you've seen people in an inebriated state one day who swear off the juice, but then a week later start all over. A drunken grandparent or parent might inspire someone to stay off the hooch, never touching the stuff, but in many cases the relatives turn out to be good tutors.

Stress on the job is relieved by downing one or two Molson Canadians, maybe more. A person drinks because of the spouse or children he or she has to come home to. The habit may start in college or high school, maybe sooner. It's not as bad as doing crack or heroin, but it's the wrong way to get high. One's liver will be affected, as will overall health. Marriages have been ruined by drink, jobs lost and families destroyed. Excessive consumption of beer, wine, gin, whiskey or tequila brings no benefits, only side effects.

You may not be drinking, but can procure another kind of drug from the pharmacy. The choices are endless. The first type is what you buy by just going over to the shelves in the drug section. You'll find laxatives, aspirin, vitamins – which I'll expound on shortly – cold medicine, relief for indigestion and something to remove warts. I don't

think you can get placebos off the shelves, as you have to obtain them with a prescription, which is the second means of procuring a remedy for what ails you. Your friendly doctor will write out an order – good luck reading it – which you can hand over to the pharmacist. What you receive from him may bring some relief, but also something you didn't bargain for: an unwelcome side effect. You may receive the same bonus from that stuff you found on the shelf without a prescription.

When you think about it, if you need Sominex to help you fall asleep, maybe what you did during the day wasn't all that great. Ingesting some drug so you won't experience heartburn before devouring numerous pieces of pizza and wings might be a sign that you should see your doctor. Is it possible that you're devouring too many slices of the pie and more than your share of those fiery things? The same applies if you've been having stomach problems for a few weeks. Most likely, no prescription or substance off the shelf will ease your suffering. It may even make you feel worse.

Antibiotics are drugs you can get from the pharmacist. For some pharmacies in supermarkets, you don't have to pay for them and store detectives won't chase you down. What does that tell you? Either the store really cares about you as a customer – not very likely – or they need to get rid of the stuff since it's bad for you. The latter has a ring of truth to it. Perhaps, it just passed the expiration date. Unfortunately, antibiotics are necessary to ward off infections, so sometimes you have to swallow the pill. The same applies to painkillers, such as Darvocet and Demerol, both of which I've been introduced to in the last fifteen years. It wasn't my choice. The former was withdrawn from the U.S. market in November 2010 – a bit too late for me – and contains a combination of acetaminophen and *propoxyphene*. What did I tell you about words ending in *ene*? Darvocet may leave you constipated. On the other hand, Demerol or meperidine is a narcotic pain reliever, similar to

morphine. Now you tell me. As far as the antibiotics go and my hospital adventures, I was prescribed tequin, levaquin, and cipro (TLC). For the first two, I think they left the letter *e* off the end of each. If you're not aware of it, cipro is the mother of all antibiotics, having been used in cases of anthrax encounters.

Each of these three antibiotics left me relieved of the contents of my stomach. I would have preferred that they just left me. It wasn't a good time. Maybe I should have taken one of these antibiotics along with the Darvocet and let them fight it out. I wouldn't have had to worry about infection setting in or being too loose.

The biggest concern has to be side effects. A few summers ago my doctor's office gave me two prescriptions for my minor bout with arthritis. I couldn't pronounce the names of the drugs, but after reading the label and what side effects were possible, I decided to swallow as few of these pills as possible. In all, I might have taken two and disposed of the rest, environmentally. These warnings are typical of any prescription that you hand to your pharmacist. You've seen the list: may cause drowsiness, headache, the desire to become a car salesman, heart attack or death, but the latter condition doesn't happen in all cases.

You may take a teaspoon or two of Vicks 44 to relieve a cough, but you'll be relaxed and may not want to do much of anything except sleep. Forget about driving that backhoe. A long time ago, I used Contac for a cold on occasion, which really didn't help that much. One thing that tablet – or capsule or caplet – did was zap me. It was snooze time. Respectable health care people say that there is nothing from the pharmacy that you can take to overcome a virus or flu, once it hits. It will take a few days to exit your system before you're back to normal. I suggest plenty of juices, chicken soup and rest. Better yet, to ward off those germs, make sure your diet is loaded with fiber, fruit and vegetables,

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