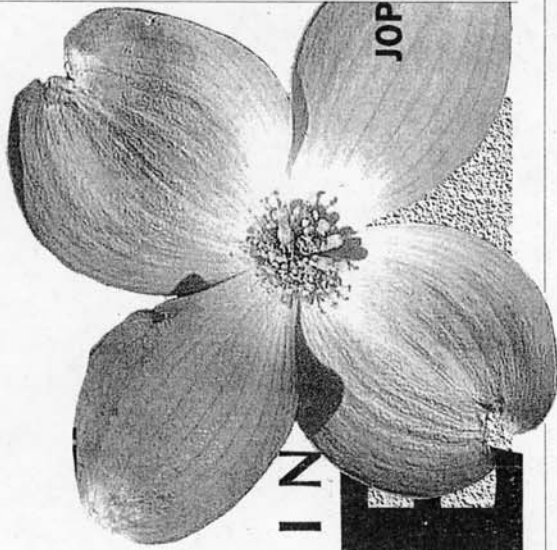


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# If you are what you eat, I'm nuts

I'm told that the first step toward overcoming addiction is to admit that you have a problem. Not necessarily to admit it to others, but to yourself. So I write this less as a cautionary tale for my fellow man than a warning to the self I will be when I read it. My name is Marian, and I have a macadamia-nut problem.

It all started with that cursed Dr. Sears, who wrote "The Zone." He recommends eating three or four macadamia nuts with dinner because they are a source of "good" fatty acids, the ones that raise "good" cholesterol levels. He might as well have instructed me to buy some "good" cocaine. Three or four nuts? You've got to be kidding. I can eat the whole can at one sitting, no problem. And just like that, I was hooked.

After spending the equivalent of my next house payment feeding my new dependency, I decided I had to lay off the Hawaiian delicacy and get my fatty acids elsewhere. But once in the store, the macadamias beckoned. I told myself (as all addicts do) that I could exercise moderation. I brought them home and made a solemn vow that I would eat only a few at a time. And that's what I did. I ate a few at a time, every five minutes, until I was in a dry-roasted stupor.

In order to recover from my addiction, I must take responsibility for allowing things to get out of hand. Macadamias are an expensive habit; I eventually had to cash in some savings bonds. I also became paranoid. I wouldn't go through a given cashier's line twice in the same week, lest they notice how many nuts I took home. I doubled my trash bags so the garbage men wouldn't see how many empties they were carrying away. I don't know if there's such a thing as macadamia rehab, and I don't care to find out.

The most insidious thing about a nut problem is that it takes on a life of its own and



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exerts control, robbing you of your dignity. There is nothing sadder than a grown woman stretched out on the floor; filthy, depressed, unaware of her surroundings, staring into a vacant can and whimpering through chipmunk cheeks, "I really can quit any time."

Once I decided to take back my life, it seemed that the nuts were everywhere. Macadamia ice cream, macadamia cookies. The menu of a pricey restaurant bragged about sprinkling them on the salad. The siren song was inescapable. It seemed that the world — and the nuts — were out to get me.

I learned that the key to recovery is not to do it alone. When I am tossing and turning in my bed, pretending not to think of macadamias, but nonetheless contemplating a hundred good reasons to go to Wal-Mart at 3 in the morning, I call my friend Tracy and she talks me down. She does not judge. She's had a Hostess Cupcake problem.

So I got myself clean. I have been nut-free for a couple of weeks now. It seems longer, though — another lifetime. Almost like it happened to someone else. But I have no illusions. There is no such thing as being "cured" of macadamias. I just have to cope with temptation as it comes. Take it one nut at a time.

*Marian Kelly lives in Seneca, is a standup comedian and writes a regular column for the Globe.*