



Unplugged: My Journey into the Dark World of Video Game Addiction

Ryan G. Van Cleave

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WARNING: THIS VIDEO GAME MAY IMPAIR YOUR JUDGMENT. IT MAY CAUSE SLEEP DEPRIVATION, ALIENATION OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY, WEIGHT LOSS OR GAIN, NEGLECT OF YOUR BASIC NEEDS AS WELL AS THE NEEDS OF LOVED ONES AND/OR DEPENDENTS, AND DECREASED PERFORMANCE ON THE JOB. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN FANTASY AND REALITY MAY BECOME BLURRED. PLAY AT YOUR OWN RISK. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR SUICIDE ATTEMPTS.

No such warning was included on the latest and greatest release from the Warcraft series of massive multiplayer online role-playing games—World of Warcraft (WoW). So when Ryan Van Cleave—a college professor, husband, father, and one of the 11.5 million Warcraft subscribers worldwide—found himself teetering on the edge of the Arlington Memorial Bridge, he had no one to blame but himself. He had neglected his wife and children and had jeopardized his livelihood, all for the rush of living a life of high adventure in a virtual world.

A fabulously written and gripping tale, *Unplugged* takes you on a journey through the author's semireclusive life with video games at the center of his experiences. Even when he was sexually molested by a young school teacher at age eleven, it was the promise of a new video game that had lured him to her house. As Ryan's life progresses, we witness the evolution of video games—from simple two-button consoles to today's multikey technology, brilliantly designed to keep the user actively participating. For Ryan, the virtual world was a siren-song he couldn't ignore, no matter the cost.

As is the case with most recovering addicts, Ryan eventually hit rock bottom and shares with you his ongoing battle to control his impulses to play, providing prescriptive advice and resources for those caught in the grip of this very real addiction.

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