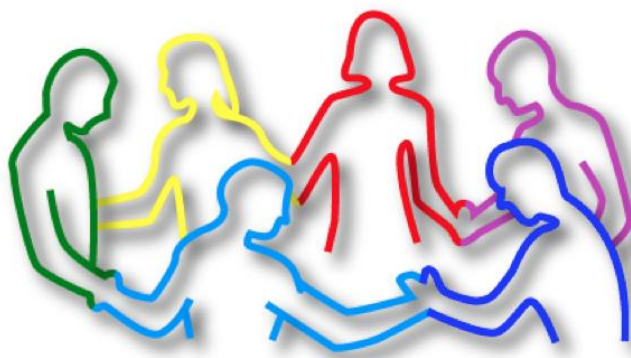


STORYLINE

From Workaholics Anonymous

MARCH APRIL MAY

2015



“Our primary purpose is to stop working compulsively and to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.”

CONTENTS FOR THIS ISSUE

STORY: FROM DESPERATION TO GRATITUDE (Page 1)

SHARING: BACK TO STEP ONE (Page 2)

CONTACT INFORMATION: EMAIL WSO (Page 2)

SHARING: SIGNPOST ONE (Page 3)

SHARING: UNDERSTANDING ADDICTION (Page 4)

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY (Page 4)

SHARING: PROMISE EIGHT (Page 5)

STORYLINE REFERENCE LIST (Page 6)

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT (Page 7)

ANNOUNCEMENT AND INVITATION: WA MEDITATION BOOK (Page 8)

MISSION STATEMENT (Page 9)

STORY: FROM DESPERATION TO GRATITUDE

I resonate with the fatal desperation of not wanting to let people down, something that could happen if I actually took care of myself. I also relate to not having any face-to-face meetings in the area. Where I am in Alberta Canada, the nearest face-to-face meeting is a plane ride away. I'd like to share my experience of how I got started in this program.

I encountered WA via an internet search. I looked up the meetings (http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/page.php?page=_meetings#online) and tried out a bunch of phone and online meetings. (At that time, they were yahoo meetings. Later they migrated to Skype. Much better!)

I found the Sunday online meeting fit my schedule the best. I committed to getting to that meeting every week, no matter what. I ordered the *Book of Recovery* and the Workbook, *the Book of Discovery*. I got started reading a little every day, which wasn't hard because it was MY story (ha ha); I found it hard to put the WA reading down so I started disciplining myself to read no more than 20 minutes each day lest recovery "work" become my new obsession! I also started writing out my answers to the workbook questions; I later found out this is called "working the steps." It wasn't until a few months on the journey that I approached a person in my Sunday group about helping me make changes in my work life, and helping me understand how to use some of the tools I was reading about.

That first one-on-one relationship became a co-sponsoring relationship. While it initially helped, it lacked a commitment to my ongoing growth. I later read about sponsoring where you find someone who has "something you want" from your recovery, and you ask that person to sponsor you. I asked a person whose calm serenity I desperately wanted and needed in my life. My sponsor and I have met via skype calls regularly to this day (now almost five years). I've been guided through all twelve steps. "Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps," I practice the principals and use the tools of this program in every area of my life. I carry the message by sponsoring two others (one is on Step Ten and another on Step Six) and giving service regularly at any of the four WA online meetings I attend each week.

My life, my relationships, and my work are all very different from when I first discovered WA in December 2008. Life isn't perfect, nor is recovery always easy, but I'm very grateful for a program to follow, friends to encourage and support me, and most of all, a relationship with something bigger than me (whom I call God). The disease of workaholism is cunning, powerful, and potentially fatal; the God of my understanding has loved me, accepted me, helped me, guided me, and saved me from this compulsion called workaholism. I hope you too find all the help you're looking for in this fellowship. Bless you in your journey.

-Glynis (grateful recovering workaholic)

SHARING: BACK TO STEP ONE

By turning back to Step One, when we struggle with lapses in our recovery we can discover that these are the iceberg tips of addictions that we secretly hope to retain. This is a typical way we can recognize addictions as more than just bad habits. We have all watched people desperately defend, lie about, and try to hide the very substances or behaviors they are addicted to. We can recognize them in ourselves by noting our perseverance and stubbornness in clinging to this thinking, these beliefs, and these attitudes. When we sense this kind of trickery in our search for recovery we can be sure that we are getting close to something important, and that we have touched something that we still believe we can control by willfulness; something that we do not want to believe is part of our unmanageability.

If I turn back to Step One when I am struggling with lapses in my recovery I can usually discover that this regression lays bare the traces of addictive behavior that I secretly have hoped to retain. I recognize them by noticing how they continue to resurface and resist my efforts to dislodge them. In my search for recovery, I try to ferret out this kind of self-deceit that still secretly believes I am in control.

-Harry W.

CONTACT INFORMATION: EMAIL WAWSO

For any Program issue, concern, initiative, suggestion, etc.:

Bruce A. facilitator@workaholics-anonymous.org

Lia F. secretary@workaholics-anonymous.org

Drew D. treasurer@workaholics-anonymous.org

For general information: communications@workaholics-anonymous.org

For meeting and WSR assistance: Bob wrsupport@workaholics-anonymous.org

For WA Literature volunteers or corrections: Amber literature@workaholics-anonymous.org

For eNewsletter and Outreach: Michele outreach@workaholics-anonymous.org

For STORYLINE: Shelley storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org

For Meditation Book: MeditationBook@workaholics-anonymous.org

For literature ordering questions: Sandi fulfillment@workaholics-anonymous.org

For technology matters: Ken technology@workaholics-anonymous.org

General mailbox: wso@workaholics-anonymous.org

SHARING: SIGNPOST ONE

Signpost 1: We find it hard to love and accept ourselves. Work has become our means of gaining approval, finding our identity, and justifying our existence.

While all the WA signposts fit me, this one really seems to be central. I don't know where the deep-seated idea began that I was only worthy for what I could produce. This goes even deeper than that for me (as the signpost says) because it has justified my existence. Yet not all work qualified, it had to be work which directly benefitted humanity. For example, in high school, working in nursing homes as a nurse's aide was acceptable whereas working in a fast-food restaurant was not good enough. Thus, almost all of my work in high school and college was that of nurse's aide or home-health aide. I don't regret any of those years because I loved working with my patients. In contrast, I did a five-week stint in fast food and hated it. In reality, I did not like the fast-food work but I loved the nursing work. A healthy person would just accept that difference and be okay with it. Not me, I had to harshly judge my work in fast food as not being good enough to help make the world a better place.

In my adult life, this attitude led me to nonprofit work, which I did enjoy. The destructive side was that I accepted low wages for over a decade of my professional life. The work very much fit my criterion to make the world better, thereby appropriately justifying my existence. I rationalized that it was okay to under-earn because of the good I was doing in the world. Those destructive actions in my professional life along with the underlying attitude have harmed me financially. I am grateful for WA in helping me see how I am/was responsible for so many poor choices. In the past, I easily switched into victim/martyr mode and blamed my organizations and bosses. WA also now helps me see how I can-- and am-- making healthier choices for myself in all aspects of work, including under-earning.

I no longer accept the underlying assumption that my worth is based on my work and that I must be engaged in only certain capacities to justify my existence. WA helps me embrace balance, relationships, spirituality, my health, and other aspects of life on an equal basis with work. I'm better able to accept that I am valuable simply as a human being. There is NOTHING I need to do to justify my existence. My presence here does that. I am so grateful that I now see that all of my chosen activity as helping self and my loved ones have a healthier, happier life—one that includes my housework!

-Tisa

SHARING: ADDICTION AND THE TWELVE STEPS

According to Webster, addiction equals habituation. But this to me seems a weak definition. Addicts are not doing these things out of habit, but feel compelled to use substances, behaviors, and thoughts regardless of the negative consequences. Alcohol and drugs are the obvious examples of substance abuse. Gambling and overworking are behavioral addictions. Even less acknowledged as addictions are mental states such as deep resentments, depression, and the ADD mind; these are similarly beyond conscious control.

All represent the hijacking of our brain's chemical reward system which produces persistent cravings that are no longer satisfied by the activity. The system has become "hard wired" so these mental states have become automatic and are very hard to modify. These connections are reinforced each time they are used and cannot be cut by will or reasoning. The current thinking is that new pathways must be built and also reinforced so they can offer an alternate path for our thinking. The precursors of these patterns often come from heredity or early childhood experiences, which further explains why addictions are so hard to break.

The 12 Step program approaches the need for change by first admitting our helplessness to make changes by willpower alone. We are then asked to seek help from a "higher power", which is a further admission of our own limitations. The crucial thing is the letting go of the ego and reason-driven problem solving, allowing other "pathways" a chance to form and grow. Only by facing the discomfort of sticking to the old can we gain the willingness to allow change to arise.

-Harry W.

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

Storyline is the quarterly newsletter of Workaholics Anonymous, published in order to share our experience, strength and hope with each other, and to announce information about our fellowship. We welcome shares, stories, commentaries, quotes, and poems: anything we can reproduce. Please submit what you have to share and encourage others to do so as well. Send us your own work, and if you see something you like in your email group written by someone else, please secure permission and send it in. Send your contributions for future editions to: storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org, with STORYLINE in the subject line.

This issue says good-bye to Peggy as our assistant editor. Thank you, Peggy, for your sound suggestions, your creative ideas and your thorough editing. It has been a pleasure working with you and we will greatly miss you. STORYLINE has greatly improved because of your contributions.

Please know that STORYLINE needs help. We invite not only stories, shares, and other written contributions, but also administrative help editing, assistant editing, proof-reading, and outreach to get more contributions. Please let us know if you are available to help with any of these or with other tasks of your choosing. We truly support any abstinence that is part of your sobriety, yet reading the submissions and collaborating with others enhances my recovery. I find working on STORYLINE to be educational, creative, and highly gratifying.

-Shelley, Chicago

SHARING: PROMISE EIGHTPromise 8: Self-seeking and ego inflation do not drive our decisions.

When I am in my workaholic mode I do not think I'm selfish, prideful, and inflating my ego. However, as I look back on those times through the eyes of recovery, I see how all three descriptions fit me. So much of my workaholicism was fueled by codependence. I thought I had to do all that work to help save the world, to help make it a better place. By themselves these are noble goals and can drive healthy ambition, but workaholicism is sickness and addiction. I overdid it with volunteerism because I was afraid to say "no,"; I did not want to deal with others' disappointment and anger at me. I also had an unrealistic understanding of myself, my energy, and my limits. So while I thought my motivation was altruistic, most often I was simply working from that foundation of self-centered pride, self-seeking and ego inflation. This realization was humbling.

These discoveries help me as I wrestle with some current requests for service/volunteerism. I see that I still initially react from my old habits: wanting to immediately say yes and take on the pro bono work to help others. But the reality is that I am wanting to avoid their disappointment and anger. Many, many opportunities exist for me to provide service in this world, within 12 step program and beyond, and I do NOT need to accept requests that don't genuinely fit for me. At the moment, I am at my limit with service. I enjoy what I do. If I take on any more it falls within the realm of unhealthy giving. More would get me into the realm of self-seeking and ego inflation. Just in the last few weeks, I volunteered for a new position this fall. I prayed about that for a month before I offered. I was NOT asked to do this position. I knew we needed a leader for it and the task is something I want to do in order to further my career and to help this group. I feel very grounded, centered, and strong in moving forward with this if the proposal is accepted.

However, with other recent requests I have hesitated to take them on. They are something others want me to do, not necessarily what I want. And I'm actually weary of people asking me. It seems like I'm constantly being asked to do something extra. That is a pattern throughout my adult life. I've just got to remember that folks can ask but it's up to me to be honest with self, HP, and them about what I want and do not want. I do not have to get angry with the people who are requesting extra from me. Nor do I have to feel defensive when saying "no." Sadly, I often get a negative response but that is okay. I'm not in charge of them, just me! When I finish posting this share I will write to the volunteer positions I've been pondering and let the folks know. I will say, "thanks for thinking of me but I cannot add any additional volunteer tasks to my life right now."

Thanks so much for reading. Have a blessed, beautiful week. Peace, blessings, and support.

-from Tisa

STORYLINE REFERENCE LIST

STORYLINE is developing a comprehensive list of references on workaholism. We encourage input from our readership. Members of our fellowship may offer suggestions of reading materials that have helped them in their recovery. The materials are not WA Conference approved; the authors, publishers, presenters, and distributors of these materials are not endorsed by WA, but individual members are invited to refer to them according to their personal and professional interests. As we often say, "Please take what you like, and leave the rest."

Work Addiction and Work Anorexia Reference List

Clark, M., Beiler A., & Zimmerman L. M. (2014), *Examining the Work–Family Experience of Female Workaholics*, Springer, USA

Douglas, E.J. & Morris, R.J. (2006). *Workaholic or just hard worker? Career Development International*, 11 (5), 394-417. doi: 10.1108/13620430610683043

Fassl, D. (1992). *Working ourselves to death: The high costs of workaholism and the rewards of recovery*. London: Thorsons.

Furnham, A. (1997). *The psychology of behavior at work*. Hove: Psychology Press.

Griffiths, M. (2005, April). *Workaholism is still a useful construct. Addiction Research and Theory*, 13(2), 97-100.

Hornbacher, Marya. *Waiting: A Non-Believer's Higher Power*

Killinger, B. (1993) *Workaholics, the respectable addicts*. East Roseville: Simon and Schuster.

Korshak, S.J., Straus, B. & Nickow, M. & Straus, B. (2014). *A Group Therapist's Guide to Process Addictions*. NY: American Group Psychotherapy Association.

Lawford, Christopher. *Recover to Live: Kick Any Habit, Manage Any Addiction: Your Self-Treatment Guide to Alcohol, Drugs, Eating Disorders, Gambling, Hoarding, Smoking, Sex, and Porn*

Lazear, Jonathan. *The Man Who Mistook His Job for a Life: A Chronic Overachiever Finds the Way Home*

Reddy, Sumati. *Workaholism Perspectives And Experiences*

Oates, W.E. (1972). *Confessions of a workaholic: The facts about work addiction*. Cleveland OH: World Publishing Company.

Palo Alto Group. (1990). *The twelve steps of Workaholics Anonymous*. Palo Alto, CA: The Palo Alto Group.

Porter, G. (1996). Organizational impact of workaholism: Suggestions for researching the negative outcome of excessive work. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 70*, 70-83.

Robinson, Bryan E. (2007). *Chained to the desk: A guidebook for workaholics, their partners and children, and the clinicians who treat them.* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: New York University Press.

Robinson, B. E. (1989). *Work addiction: Hidden legacies of adult children.* Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.

Workaholics Anonymous. (2005/1996). *Book of Recovery.* Menlo Park, CA: Workaholics Anonymous World Conference.

Workaholics Anonymous Book of Discovery

Research Reference List

Andreassen, C.S., Griffiths, M.D., Hetland, J. & Pallesen, S. (2012). Development of a work addiction scale. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 53*, 265-272.

Burke, Ronald J. *Research Companion to Working Time and Work Addiction.*

Flowers, C. & Robinson, B. (2002). A structural and discriminant analysis of the Work Addiction Risk Test. *Educational and Psychological Measurement 62*(3), 517-526.

Sussman, S., Lisha, N., & Griffiths, M. (2011, March). Prevalence of the addictions: A problem of the majority or the minority? *Evaluation & the Health Professions, 34*(1), 3-56. doi: 10.1177/0163278710380124

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Have you read about workaholism in the news? Send us articles and links that are of interest to you.

[Are You a Workaholic or a High Achiever? 3 Ways to Tell](#)

Care2.com, 26 January 2015

[Work too much? Tips for balancing professional, family life](#)

Daytona Beach News-Journal, 16 January 2015

[Advice From a Recovering Workaholic: Make a Shift to 'Less Is More'](#)

Entrepreneur, 1 January 2015

[Be resolved: here's how to really live and turn off obsessive thoughts of work.](#)

Monterey County Weekly, 1 January 2015

[4 Subtle Differences Between Workaholics And High Performers](#)

Business Insider Australia, 2 January 2015

[You're a workaholic in banking. What's so wrong with that?](#)

eFinancialCareers, 17 December 2014

[Workaholism: the modern workplace danger](#)

The New Daily, 8 December 2014

CALL FOR BOOK REVIEWS

Readers are invited to submit a review of any book of interest to our readers. The review might be about two paragraphs.

ANNOUNCEMENT AND INVITATION: NEW MEDITATION BOOK

The W.A.W.S.O. Literature Committee is creating a meditations book. We would like all the meditations to come from the fellowship, so . . . **We need your help!**

All members are welcome to write and submit meditations for publication. These can be submitted individually, or as a group. Consider having a writing play day for your home group. Not only would this activity provide opportunities for reflection and meditation, but it would also allow group members to make contributions to a book that will serve the needs of the whole fellowship.

A suggested meeting format for writing meditations is available at the WA website. For more details about submitting meditations, please visit: <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/page.php?page=bookofmeditations>

Also, a suggested meeting format for writing meditations is available at the WA website at: <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/pdf/MeetingTypes.pdf>

We look forward to receiving your meditations!!
Have fun with us!!

Your trusted servants,
W.A.W.S.O. Literature Committee

STORYLINE: OUR MISSION

- To produce a quarterly publication of news about WA in a way that serves as an example of balance between service and our program.
- To provide a space for people of the fellowship to share their experience, strength and hope with the broader membership.
- To provide real stories from real people to those in our fellowship who do not have access to a local meeting.
- To bridge the gap between the fellowship and the WA Board, and aid in replenishing the Board with new members as the trustees' terms run out.

STORY LINE invites WA members to share their experience, strength and hope with the WA fellowship around the world. Each of us has something to share that can help another workaholic to abstain from compulsive working. Please send your submittals by email to: **storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org**, with **SL** in the SUBJECT LINE. Include your contact information and please also let us know if we can include your first name as author. Your contribution will make this publication more alive, while improving your recovery by helping others.

Note that materials submitted are assumed to be intended for publication, are subject to editing to provide conformity for the newsletter. They become the property of WAWSO, which may publish them in any format in any Workaholics Anonymous literature. The tentative deadline for submissions for our next issue is: May 15, 2015.

Workaholics Anonymous World Service Organization

PO Box 289 Menlo Park CA 94026

Telephone: 510-273-9253

www.workaholics-anonymous.org storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org

