

**W**e might be the one who sets the pace. When we change the expectations, we might be amazed at how the level of creativity and cooperation rises.

Or, we might realize that we must leave. Our job doesn't use our talents, is alienating, and meaningless. We may find that our values have changed. We are no longer willing to work in ways we find harmful, unethical or demeaning.

We might work for a cause we believe in but in a way that contradicts our recovery. We now believe that in order to be of highest benefit to society, we and our workplace must be healthy examples.

We begin to shift our focus from results and getting what we want to behaving in accordance with our moral principles in every situation. Thus we have found a new standard for what constitutes success.

## **OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE**

Our new way of thinking attracts us to like-minded people. We find the position that is looking for us or we create it.

Turning work into play affects the rest of our life. Because we are gaining satisfaction from our work, we no longer feel driven to accomplish. We no longer need to own more to reward ourselves for the drudgery of work. Our health improves when we believe we are entitled to excellent self-care.

**C**ontentment becomes a natural part of living. Ironically, we achieve more and we do it more easily. We don't need to get or do enough because we know we are enough. The feeling of inner emptiness and the craving for self-importance disappears. Work, as proof of self-worth, doesn't work anymore.

Our relationships change. We attract people who have firm personal boundaries—people who like themselves, are independent, and not controlling. We no longer need to be needed or to earn friendship by care-taking. When we give, it's after we've taken care of ourselves. What we give is of higher quality because it's given freely without resentment.

When, instead of flogging ourselves and forcing a project before its time, we work refreshed, at the moment of ripeness, everything falls into place. Work itself, like play, has become its own reward, because work is now play.



## *Turning Work Into Play*

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## ATTITUDES

**A**s workaholics, we have used work and activity to deny our being and escape our feelings. Overdoing may have been our only means of gaining approval, finding our identity, and justifying our existence. Play, compared to the all-important role we give to work, may seem trivial and superficial. We may feel so guilty playing that we make our play into a work project so we can feel useful.

Or perhaps we were raised with the idea that work is drudgery (the daily grind, the rat race), and play is frivolity. We use one as a respite from the other.

In either case, we don't take play seriously. Work is what we do for money; play is what we do for enjoyment. Work is serious. In fact, the more painful it is, the more we prove to ourselves that we have earned our pay. The idea of being paid for playing seems ridiculous.

We may be self-employed and have the idea that we cannot charge much because we love what we do or that we are justified only by suffering. But buyers don't care about our struggle; they only want to know if a product fits their needs. In fact, if a book or film is produced in joy, that feeling shines through and attracts buyers.

Some of us have realized that spending most of our day to earn money to have a few hours of enjoyment is absurd. We have come to understand that our attitude toward play and work can be the same. No matter what we do, we can do it with a playful, creative, experimental spirit of enjoyment instead of focusing on the outcome.

## REWARDS

**M**any of us are in our right field, one that uses our talents; others are not so fortunate. Or we might be doing the work we love, but in a workaholic setting or manner. In all cases, we came to W.A. because, whether we realized it or not, we were working out of ego, not love. We worked to be distracted, to be admired, to be loved, to be validated, to be stimulated, to take pride in how much we had done. Sometimes we worked to fail because failing proved we were *not* okay and that felt comfortable.

Sometimes we worked for extrinsic rewards: a second house, a partnership, a bigger paycheck. We may have begun the work because we liked it, but once we connected what we did with such rewards, the rewards became more important than the work.

Whatever our situations, we had destructive attitudes toward both work and play. Our work was done *by* us, but not *through* us. We may have been doing our right work, but it wasn't done rightly. We set impossible deadlines and forced projects before their time. We followed killing schedules and wondered why we recoiled from doing what we once loved. Or we found ourselves unable to work, paralyzed by our perfectionism, and took refuge in addictive behavior.

## RECOVERY

In W.A., we know that our Higher Power is our employer. By doing the Steps, we turn our life over to the care of God. We ask for guidance on what to do and when and how. We realize that our bodies and minds have limits; that we must nurture them with rest, healthy diet, and exercise.

**W**e learn that any activity no matter how pleasurable can become tedious if overdone. We understand that tired work is wasted work because we often have to redo it.

Enjoyment in the process becomes our criterion. Often we can use our will to continue working, *but not with enjoyment*. If, instead of concentrating on output, we ask ourselves, "If I keep on, will I enjoy it?" we will find the answer is often no.

Once we grasp the idea that we *deserve* to savor what we do, we will no longer have to ask. We won't have to wait till our eyes droop and our neck aches. We'll know long before that to turn off the computer, close the book, put down the phone, or store our tools.

This change takes time—to stop thinking of how many items we're accomplishing or what reward we'll get for the work and to stay in the present and truly experience our feelings.

What we are doing is growing a healthy self, one that savors life right now instead of dreaming of future rewards. Once we get in touch with our feelings, we become more clear about what we want.

## WORKPLACE CHANGES

That clarity changes how we see our environment. Suddenly, we notice that there are other people in the workplace who do the same work, but sanely; that we don't have to overdo or try to become indispensable to keep our job. We begin to be treated differently as we establish boundaries. We don't enable anyone and no one enables us.