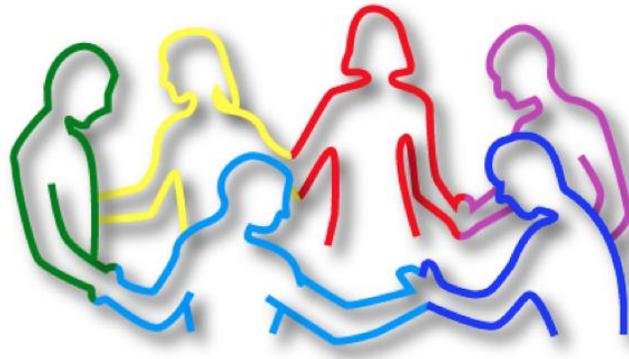


STORYLINE

From Workaholics Anonymous FALL 2013



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

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STORY: CHOICES

In my recovery, I had to face the fact that I was choosing to be a workaholic. When I admitted that my life was unmanageable and that I had been unable to change, I began to realize that life is a series of choices and that I was stubbornly making the same ones over and over.

To gain a new perspective, I had to slow down, and look at the choices I had been making. I had to cease allowing the choosing to be concealed from my conscious mind. Workaholism had been providing the comfort of avoiding change, enabling me to avoid looking deeper into myself. It trapped me in the fiction that if I worked hard enough I would look and feel better. I began to see that I was again and again coming to a “fork in the road” and deciding which path to take. The addict in me almost always chose the “left road,” toward activity and work. Day in and day out I was making these decisions compulsively and emotionally, without seeking to figure out what my emotional needs really were. I had been seeking merely to calm my agitation, to connect with people, to overcome feelings of shame and low self-esteem. With this understanding, I could then aim toward what might actually be meaningful and fulfilling, instead of using futile strategies.

The changes that I have experienced in my life and relationships since my decision to surrender have all come after joining WA and working the twelve steps. It is hard to explain exactly how this happened, but the steps formed a kind of guard rail that provided the safety I needed for dropping old guilt, shame and resentments. The steps encouraged me to accept myself as I am, not to be too hard on myself and to take small steps, one at a time.

But also, I had to open my mind to the spiritual side of things. I used to say to friends that I had never had a “spiritual experience,” and the truth was that I was not looking for one either. With this admission, I began to open my mind to experiences that were not aligned with my naturally logical mind. I didn’t have dramatic flashes of wisdom, but I began to avoid always examining the analytical aspects of choices before giving the spiritual side of me a chance.

I started to listen to others with more attention and compassion. I started to reach out to renew my relationships with my wife, my grown children and old friends, where before I had waited for them to come to me. I began to listen to my body, which told me when to stop work. I learned to watch myself when I was starting to work and think like a workaholic and to step back from my addictive behaviors. These were the starting points of my continuing return to sanity and ultimately to the serenity I experience today.

--from Harry W. (6/9/13)

POEM: THE STUDENT

NOTE: While cleaning out boxes of old awards and report cards from my parents' basement this August, I came upon a poem which was saved from what appears to be junior high school. I imagine I must have written it for a class, and I find it to be a perfectly chilling example of how deeply rooted my workaholism was - even as a young person. Although at some point I lost my taste for rhyming in poetry, the feelings are something that stuck with me until I found WA. I'm so very grateful for our fellowship. --from Amber

The Student

This boy knew of all things that could be taught,
He came from one of the best schools of thought.
He read many of the most famous books, and
From this insight he earned some jealous looks.
Young, he was scarcely a lad of twenty,
Blue eyes so tired as he had studied plenty.
His wrinkled face had him appear so old,
His lack of sleep, for knowledge, went untold.
The student wrote till his fingers went numb,
For fear that his peers would label him dumb.
For him there was no time to play,
He was forced to study his dreams away:
For this, he had a resentful mind state,
But his goals wouldn't lie on a silver plate.
He knew to read, and write, and speak, and add,
He tried his best for grades that weren't all bad.
Education for him had a high cost,
He tried his best -- often cheated and lost.
But perhaps he just didn't want to make mad
His parents that loved him, his Mom and Dad.
Pressure on a student -- don't say there's none,
The work of a student is never done.

--from Amber

STORY: ADRENALINIZING

When I first got involved in WA, I started to pay attention to when actions were adrenalizing me. I really was not very mindful of this dynamic prior to WA. I knew that over work stimulated me and got me going, especially with looming deadlines. I just did not really think about adrenaline. Learning about the detrimental physical effects of years of over-adrenalizing was an eye-opener to me. I realized that I did want more consistent peace of mind and serenity.

Letting go of adrenaline seeking has been one aspect of that goal. Regular prayer and meditation, writing to recovery friends, and attending my WA meeting all particularly help me to recognize when a potential action or project is adrenaline seeking or a healthy one for me.

I was really surprised to just realize in the last few days how much my trips back home in the last few years had continued to be adrenaline seeking for three weeks at a time: the week before I left as I frantically prepared for the trip; the entire week back home visiting my mom, friends, and colleagues; and then the week after as I played catch up, especially with work projects. My mother passed away on Dec. 5, just a few months ago. My next scheduled trip had been early Feb. Due to her death, I did not go.

I find that I am detoxing from those adrenaline highs that I got in the past. I just did not realize how stressful those trips were on me. I was committed to them so that I could spend as much time with my mom in these last years of her life. I do not regret them. I just am facing quite an adjustment without her plus without those three-week adrenaline rushes. In the last year, that really has been the only space in my life where I allowed the craziness. Now that I no longer need to go back home so often, I have more time, energy, and more money to devote to my life here in Colorado. It really is quite an adjustment but one for which I am ready! The adrenaline rushes really do rob me of my serenity and sanity.

I say the same thing about excessive worrying and anxiety. In fact, I did engage in excessive worry in January before my wedding. Some last minute glitches happened. So for two weeks, I had such anxiety and excessive worry. But then those glitches were overcome and everything turned out absolutely beautifully. Once all the pieces fell together, I could not believe how much energy I had wasted with that worry plus how much serenity I allowed myself to be robbed of in those two weeks. All for nothing. The wedding and the trip turned out to be magnificent, lots of fun for all involved and such a delightful ceremony. I guess I have never been so aware of my excessive worry and anxiety and also so aware of how wasted that time, energy, and loss of health and well being were. I indeed am ready to have all three dynamics to be things of the past!

--from Tisa

QUOTE: PROCRASTINATION

Procrastinating means you know what you need to do and you don't do it.
If you don't know what to do, you aren't procrastinating, you are thinking.

-submitted by Harry W.

STORY: NOT BEING AFRAID

Some things have been going on with my work recently. I was sure I was a fraud, pretending to work when actually everything I do is useless. I was afraid that I was on the way to be fired.

During my vacation I received a mail from my boss with the report about my work for the past 6 months that I had to sign as an obligatory document for my position. I was shocked to read only praise. It was exactly the opposite of my fears. It stated: "I am a "hard worker", I am "well integrated in the team," I "play an important role," I look like "I have been working there for years." Of course, a part of me automatically started to doubt this and find strange reasons for my boss to lie about me, or that he doesn't know me well, etc... Then, last week I had an interview with the next higher boss, and again, I thought he would have had different feedback. He also praised my work, saying, "This amount of work done in six months is impressive." I officially presented some of my work to my team just today, and I got praised again. Of course, this is very nice, and I am partly relieved.

Some weeks ago I had nausea and was almost unable to breathe and stand on my feet, because I was absolutely sure I was going to be fired soon, and I was so afraid. I have to realize and accept how crazy I am. If I look at my work situation in the past years, it was sometimes not perfect, but everything turned out ok. And all this time, I have been so afraid of the future, I stayed in crisis mode. Every time I would say "ok, things turned out to be ok, but next time I won't be so lucky, it is going to be a nightmare, everything is going to collapse." I do have that anxiety even now, about some upcoming deadlines.

I ask my higher power to remove my fear and direct my attention to what He would have me be. I ask Him to remove my character defects that are in the way of "my usefulness to Him and to my fellows." I like these prayers from the AA big book because they remind me that my fear always brings my attention to myself, my situation, my future, and that it makes me self-centered and prevents me from being interested in others. With the help of my higher power, I now start to feel that I don't have to carry this these feelings alone. As my day is passing I start to accept the pain, fear and other feelings, and somehow I become patient and trusting of the future a bit more. I feel I am going "through" the pain, instead of hanging on to it or trying to force it away. Not all my attention is on my feelings, and I have started to put my attention on other things, despite my fear. My fear is there, but thanks to my higher power I can put it on the side, and continue to live. I am learning to let go.

It is difficult to speak about this with people who are not in WA. They often don't understand that I can be so afraid when my situation is quite good, and I understand if they don't. But even if my feelings are not justified by my life situation, this anxiety is very real, and I cannot make it go away. Lately I have started to feel allowed to have compassion for myself, instead of being ashamed for "complaining when everything is fine."

I realize also that I am afraid of a life without anxiety. Perhaps I have this strange idea: my anxiety protects me. It is true in that I procrastinated a lot in the past, and my anxiety was the only thing that could finally make me do things, which I routinely accomplished at the last minute. I am afraid that if I am not anxious enough I am going to procrastinate again, deny my responsibilities, and then have a bad surprise at the last minute, as often happened in the past. Maybe, most of the time, I actually don't really want the fear to go away completely. Not being afraid is actually not easy and I have to learn how to do it, and I realize, I have to be willing to learn how to do it, which I am. -- From Ivan 5/19

POEM: GROWING PAINS

Growing Pains

No one to trust or tell

No place safe to run

Aches pull me down where I fear to go

The house of grief

A basement fortress shrouded in secrecy

Underground passageways through my darkest days

A hidden staircase called sorry

For time I thought I lost

And people I never loved

And places I never saw

And things I will never do again

Wandering the depths below

I learn navigation

Forging the steel and mining the diamonds

I trade upon my triumphant return

To the land of the living

What I was convinced was my destiny

Hurt me worse than any torn skirt

--from Amber, Florida

STORY: I DON'T THINK ABOUT WORK ALL THE TIME ANYMORE AND I'M SERIOUSLY WAY HAPPIER**ANXIETY**

For a long time, I thought I was going crazy. I'd convinced myself that something horribly wrong was about to happen. I thought I would be stabbed, shot, or arrested, every time I left my apartment. I was sure that there was an impending disaster that would melt the social contract and pit my neighbors against me. I saw criminals and undercover cops everywhere I went. All that "world is coming to an end" talk — I bought into it.

Every moment was exhausting. I dreaded being around more than one person at a time. I eyed everyone like they were judging me, pitying me, or attempting to manipulate me. My attention was divided in every interaction: one half of me would pretend to be normal, while the other half would be trying to keep it together.

I could feel various parts of my face twitching, like I was about to crack. My hands shook constantly. It got so bad that when a friend came to visit me, I couldn't drink a glass of water because it kept spilling just from me holding it.

Still, I tried to behave like nothing was wrong, when all I wanted to do was lock myself in a room and curl up in a ball. If someone had tapped me in the chest, my body would have shattered. If someone had ordered me to cry, my face would have flooded. I felt fragile, weak, and hollow.

I was ashamed. I didn't want to be around anyone — not because I stopped liking people, but because I didn't want them to catch my weird energy. I wearily watched my girlfriend cry when I confided that I felt dead inside, all the time, and I didn't know how to fix it.

I laid on the ground for 20 minutes one night, wondering whether I should call an ambulance. My heart was beating so hard and fast that I could actually hear it, and my left hand was going numb. This was my first panic attack.

PLAY

My anxiety lasted for more than a year. It affected how I breathed, thought, ate, slept, and talked. I was serious and tired and afraid, all the time. I wanted so badly to return to my normal, lively, care-free, confident self. But I didn't know how to shake it.

I tried everything to fix myself: meditation, yoga, high-intensity workouts, long runs, therapy, therapy books, keeping a journal, super clean diets, extended fasting, drugs, deep breathing exercises, and prayer. I took a six-week course, made specifically for men who wanted to overcome anxiety. A few of these things helped, but most of them didn't. Some of them made things worse.

Then one day, I discovered the cure! When my mind processed it and recognized it was the solution, I started laughing. The answer had been so obvious all along. In less than one month, I was back to my old self. The cure for my anxiety was free, fun, painless, and immediately effective. I have no fear that those feelings will ever return. If they do, I'll be able to wipe them out right away.

I read *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. The message of the book hit me like a brick wall — it explained what I'd been doing wrong this whole time. I had completely deprived myself of play for nearly two years! Even when I had been "playing" (doing fun activities with friends), I would still feel guilty or self-conscious. My mind was elsewhere: what I'd done

wrong in the past, how I was compromising my future, and how I was wasting the present. I was so critical of how I was living my life that I couldn't *be in the moment*. Getting out of that mentality saved me. I remembered how happy I'd been growing up, even just years before, and I knew why I'd been that way: I'd always allowed myself to play. I remembered:

Adults are just obsolete children. – Dr. Seuss

Have you ever witnessed a little kid working out on a treadmill? Or meeting up with a friend to chat over coffee? Or wearing a suit and making cold-calls? Or attending a networking conference to hand out their business cards?

HELL NO! That stuff is *lame and boring*. If you saw a kid doing any of those things, you would laugh and wonder what the hell was wrong with them. Kids don't run to get in shape; they run to feel the grass beneath their feet and the wind on their face. Kids don't have a chat over coffee; they pretend and make jokes and explore the outdoors. Kids don't go to work; they play their favorite games. Kids don't network; they bond with other fun kids while playing. There is no ego. There is no guilt. There is no past to regret, and no future to worry about. They just *play*.

And that's what I'd forgotten, and what I'd been missing, all along.

WORKAHOLIC STATE OF MIND

I am a workaholic, which can be pretty horrible when you work alone. No one tells you to stop or take a break, or that you're burning yourself out. I'd find myself tethered to the internet all day, sitting in a chair for 10 hours and staring at a bright screen. Even when I was "finished," I'd impulsively check email several times between midnight and 2 a.m. I know it's dumb and unnecessary and "What could be so important?" and "You need your sleep," but I did it anyways. I was oblivious to the fact that my nerves were being frayed for hours on end, and that I desperately needed fun face-to-face time with real human beings.

What made matters worse were the idiotic rituals I'd fallen into. Drinking coffee all day, then drinking alcohol with friends on the weekend. I didn't get outside, I didn't move enough, I didn't sleep enough. My weeks were a cycle of over-stimulation and numbing.

A lack of play should be treated like malnutrition: it's a health risk to your body and mind. – Stuart Brown

Giving myself permission to PLAY was the cure for my anxiety. It was a subtle but powerful shift in how I viewed the world. For two years, I had unknowingly prevented myself from playing. The real problem had been *my state of mind*. I'd become increasingly adept at rejecting any form of "non-productivity." I couldn't allow any form of play if it didn't contribute to earning money or doing something "meaningful." Even when I was with friends or doing something that was supposed to be fun, I couldn't stop thinking about all the time I was wasting. I wasn't being productive; I was losing valuable time. I had to get back to work! *What would the world do without me and my important work?!*

Without realizing it, I had become very serious, even though I'd never been serious in my entire life. I couldn't play because that meant I wasn't working, and I couldn't really work because I always felt tired and jaded--because I never let myself play! This resulted in me convincing myself that life was a miserable grind for adults, and that I needed to be very serious if I wanted to get through it. I approached everything this way, and treated my work as a form of self-imposed slavery. Little did I know how limiting that mindset was, and how much it was hurting the work I was doing.

I never did a day's work in my life. It was all fun. – Thomas Edison

Play is what has driven and shaped every beautiful part of our culture. Music, concerts, books, cooking, sports, movies, television, fashion, art, video games... We pay for these things so we can experience the fruits of another person's PLAY. And the most virtuous form of work, according to some of our most revered and accomplished minds, belongs in the realm of play:

Play is the highest form of research. – Albert Einstein

I know a lot of really, really accomplished people. Some of them approach their work in this way — they play. Others are very methodical, rigid, and systematic. It doesn't look like play — it is unquestionably *work*. And it took me a long time to finally realize... I do not function well in the latter group.

CREATING MY OWN GAME

I HAVE to approach work as play, otherwise my work sucks. When I tackle a problem with a sense of play — voluntarily because I'm inherently attracted to it — my creativity and optimism and happiness soars. I become fascinated with the world. I fall in love with people. And whoever I'm working with helps me make the game more fun, and our positive energy becomes contagious.

The only way to do great work is to love what you do. – Steve Jobs

I realized that nearly every important career decision I'd made had been rooted in *play*. All the cool jobs I got — and the very concept of FREE WORK — ultimately came from me viewing the work as a form of *play*. They were activities I didn't need to be rewarded or paid for (even though I was), because they were *fun*. It didn't feel like hard work because I got to "play" with cool people, I got to be challenged and learn a ton, and most of the time, it felt like it was just a game I'd made up. And that's where my best work came from: *the belief that I was creating and playing my own game*.

Once I saw that I'd forgotten to treat my work as play, I knew what I had to do in order to fix it. It was simply a choice. For example: when I moved down to Austin, a friend introduced me to his buddy David via email, and suggested we should meet. David replied to me with the usual request: he asked if I wanted to grab coffee. I paused a moment, then wrote back: "Hey David, good to meet you. This is an irregular request, but you want to meet up at a park and play catch? Haven't done that in awhile and it's a lot more stimulating than sitting around and drinking coffee." His response: "SURE THING. Playing catch sounds like a f*ing blast! I'll ping you in a bit and if we can't do it today, let's play ball tomorrow!" And it was a blast. It removed the pressure of us having to talk and impress each other, so we could just focus on the game.

I used to feel a bit nervous on first dates. I had to be "on" for hours at a time. The last date I went on was great — the energy wasn't uptight at all because we played around the whole time. We ordered whisky Shirley Temples, shot cherry stems through our straws at random people, and cracked jokes about the karaoke singers. There were no attempts to be cool or charming, or thoughts about where this date might take us — it was all about making the moment fun.

That's how I'm approaching my meetings and dates from now on: *what games can we play together?* Life is funny. Back in college, I used to read Tucker Max's site and think, "What a fun guy." I'd go out with my friends and drink, and we'd try to create our own crazy stories. Now, Tucker is a close friend. We play homerun derby together every weekend. We come up with fun pranks we can pull. We make inappropriate jokes until we're doubled-over laughing.

Without work, all life goes rotten, but when work is soulless, life stifles and dies.
 – Albert Camus

I just finished six weeks of improv classes — three hours every Monday. Every session, I was thrust into situations where I was essentially guaranteed to fail and look foolish. At first, I was nervous and slightly mortified. My heart beat rapidly and I would sweat when I had to perform in front of 15 other people. But by the end of the six weeks, improv became a tremendous source of strength. All of us were there to play, to go with the flow and say “YES” to every possible situation we were thrown into, to cheer each other on and have fun together. We all looked foolish, but we all trusted each other. And that’s how it should be all the time — saying “YES” to every moment, knowing it’s another opportunity for you to embrace life and have fun (Improv, by the way, was the most effective remedy to curing social anxiety that I could have possibly conjured). I’m signing up for more improv classes. I’m scheduling travel. I’m having fun because I’m making play a priority. And you know what? I feel 1000 times better than I ever thought I would. I’m back to my normal self. I love life again.

JUST PLAY

Play is what we all LOVE to do. Play is where our subconscious naturally guides us. Play is the state where we are truly ourselves, once we let go of our egos and fear of looking stupid. Play immerses us in the moment, where we effortlessly slip into flow. Play allows us to imagine, to create, to bond with and understand each other. Play is what creates our strongest social circles.

And most importantly, play utterly destroys anxiety. Play gets you around other humans, face-to-face, and allows you to form a real connection with them. Play allows you to stop taking your life so damn seriously, so you can start living again.

A master in the art of living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play; his labor and his leisure; his mind and his body; his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both. – François-René de Chateaubriand

Life was never supposed to feel so serious or scary in the first place! The people who try to convince you that it has to be that way just aren’t very good at playing. They’ve forgotten what it’s like. So have a laugh, remind them, then go find better playmates. Everyone is looking for someone to have fun with. Go out, create your own games, then get others to join in. *Just play.*

--from Charlie H.

NOTE ON WORKING THE WA PROGRAM: *Different people work the program in different ways. What follows is one member's journey. Would you send us the story of yours?*

CONTRIBUTION: The Transformation Process

My Journey:

I am now approaching my mid-seventies, and what do I see life has been and what am I learning? It has been one series of birth-growth-death situations. My talents have been in the physical sciences and intellectual pursuits more so than physical pursuits. There was the birth of a project, the actual executing of the project, and the end of the project. Sometimes I was aware of the grief from ending the project and sometimes not. Some of what I learned as a child, I had to unlearn and replace with new or more advanced analysis that I was not capable of previously, as well as having to build on what I already knew. I often look at life as having a home, and I want to transform it in some way. However, before I can have the new or different, I had to remove the old by a process, and with a different process I then had what I used to put in the new.

In my own journey of workaholism, I noted that it was a weakness at my 25th high school reunion. It was another nine years when I read an article on "Workaholism: the Respectable Addiction" and put myself into counseling for it, only to be told that alcohol needs to be eliminated before I could achieve recovery from workaholism. This led to being clinically defined as an alcoholic. Giving up alcohol was easy, but the AA program did not register with me although my frozen emotions told me that I had what others had. It is another 18 years well into retirement before I hit my workaholic bottom, and I sensed that I was to lose myself and also what I had established for a bridge club. When I read the WA literature it registered with me, and I have been active ever since.

I had already been on a long spiritual journey of understanding the dichotomy between science and religion, why religion came about, and study of religious systems and how they may be applicable to my life in this plane. One of the aspects of religion that I concluded is about control of the masses and not about spirituality. Once I got down to the more basic fundamentals, however, I found that religion is about personal inner transformation and not about control of others. Also the western concept of a power in the sky, often termed God, is false because the power resides in me, and I am one with the universal power with its unique expression working through me for the benefit of others and myself in our journey in this plane.

In my own way I have been working the steps in various aspects of my life as I have been continually transforming as I progress in age. One thing that I have long recognized is that life is impermanent and in constant change. Some changes only come when it is their time, such as my entering recovery when I did. It is similar to seeds being discarded or planted. Each seed sprouts in its own time, some more quickly than others, even of the same type.

The following presentation is my thinking as a physicist starting with the very basics of mental activity in simple terms leading to the inner and outer transformation processes.

Presentation:

Before we can talk about transformation, let's look at how mental activity happens (see Graphic).

We get sensory information from our surroundings.

The brain processes this into information:

1. During waking hours into thoughts and emotions.
2. During sleeping hours into thoughts and may trigger dreams (these may be also from subconscious).

What happens to this information? It gets stored,
 First in our short term memory,
 Then it may progress into our long term memory as time passes,
 And eventually it may be buried in our choice process.

We now have **AWARENESS** to make a choice on the information resulting in a preliminary decision.

1. Rejecting it, or
2. Accepting it.

The decision will be based on our previous experiences and how this new information meshes with those experiences and where we are striving to grow.

The new information that we created in our choice also gets stored to come back through our recall of the event or a similar event needing that information.

Now that we have awareness and we have a preliminary decision, we progress to the next stage of **ACCEPTANCE**. The time between **AWARENESS** and **ACCEPTANCE** varies depending on the situation, and these factors:

1. Denial, essentially doing nothing or putting on hold (the extreme is to bury what we know is true but don't want to face because of the emotional pain.
2. Creation of a plan of simple actions to change the situation.

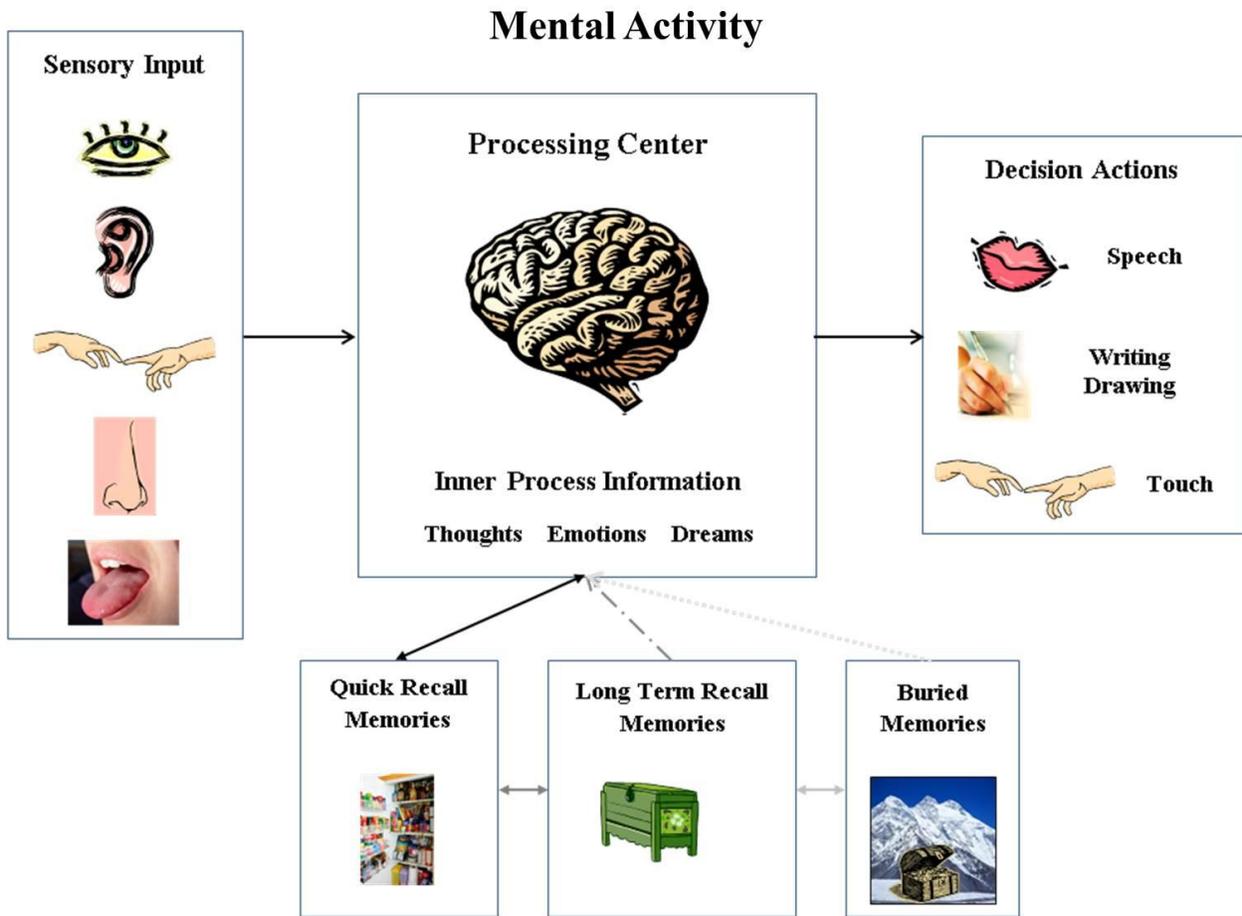
The new information that we created in our choice also gets stored to come back through our recall of the event or a similar event needing that information.

When we have taken **ACCEPTANCE** to the planning stage, we then can progress to the **ACTION** stage. The time between **ACCEPTANCE** and **ACTION** varies depending on the situation. It is characterized by:

- Do I have the resources to carry out the action?
- Am I willing to invest the time to change?
- Am I willing to expend the energy to change?
- What is hindering me to move into action?

Only after I have taken the inner **ACTIONS** which complete the inner transformation process may I and others see an **OUTER TRANSFORMATION**.

Now let's look briefly at the table. In this table I have paraphrased the 12 steps in more simple terms and then defined in a few brief words what I see for each step as Inner Transformation—Awareness, Acceptance, and Action; and then what the Outer Transformation may be.



	Step	1 Admitting powerlessness of a condition	2 Needing help outside of our humanity.	3 Acceptance of help from outside of humanity	4 How do we see ourselves, both positively and negatively
Inner Transformation	Awareness	Realizing that how we have been living is not working.	Changing on our own is not working so needs something greater than ourselves	Overcoming the stumbling unbelief	Accumulated both positive and negative baggage through this stage of life
	Acceptance	We concede that we need help to change.	Decided to seek what others are doing	Willingness to give it a try	Need to enhance the positive and release the negative baggage
	Action	We search for appropriate assistance: 12-step program, psychologist, etc.	Open our minds with a beginning of humility	Begin prayer and meditation	Writing our assets and liabilities
Outer Transformation	Character	We meet with appropriate person or group for us.	We start being less egocentric	Expressed trust in a Higher Power and in others	Awareness of how we treat others and ourselves in daily interactions

	Step	5 Sharing Step Four with another	6 Willingness to be changed	7 Allowing the help outside of humanity to change us	8 Who do we need to reconcile with
Inner Transformation	Awareness	Need to give up secrets	Striving to keep doing how we are living is futile	Surrender of self is necessary to allow Higher Power to guide	Covering up our long held negative feeling towards others and ourselves hinders spiritual growth
	Acceptance	Sharing with another human is necessary	Willing to make changes in accordance with living life with its constant changes	Seeing the Higher Power behind the situations for us to let go of old behaviors and form new positive ones	Recognizing the harm we have done to ourselves and others
	Action	Meeting with the appropriate person	Living with the flow of life as guided by Higher Power	Bit by bit give up self-centered life to let Higher Power guide	Recalling who we have harmed in the past via listing them

Outer Transformation	Character	Honesty starts to be evident	Increased serenity as we stop fighting ourselves to remain constant	Seeing the Higher Power in action in the challenges that bring the learning experiences creating change	Expressing a different attitude towards others as we let go of our secrets
	Step	9 Doing reconciliation	10 How have we lived today	11 Gaining perspective with our help outside of humanity	12 Sharing our growth with others in all our affairs
Inner Transformation	Awareness	Seeing the harm that we have done to ourselves and others with the need to share our part in the harm	Maintenance of spiritual condition required	Although often viewed outside find the help is inside ourselves	Sharing our journey and hearing others' journey aids my serenity
	Acceptance	Deciding to reconcile with those who we can without further harm	If not maintained, one falls into old habits	Having made small steps and seeing the positive impact helps in desiring a greater communication with the Higher Power	Seeing that our journey has positive effects for others
	Action	Forgiving ourselves and others	Practice reinforces new behavior	Practice the forms of communication that work for centering ourselves to follow the guidance of the Higher Power	Shares our journey as we live each day with its ups and downs
Outer Transformation	Character	Honesty on our part in past situations and a freedom whether the other person is accepting or not	Daily admitting our failures to ourselves and others	Greater serenity in challenges of life	Others see us coping better with the flow of life

--from Jerry S.

NOTE ON SHARING: *At WA meetings, time is generally allotted for individual sharing. No one speaks for WA, but we recover by sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other, that we may solve our common problem and help others recover. Please submit pieces from members who have shared on emails and at meetings. The names can be changed, to protect anonymity.*

SHARING: CONNECTING WITH STORIES

I have been reading from the WA book and I am astounded by how many people have similar experiences to my own! The funny thing is that I used to joke with friends about a decade ago that I needed some kind of 12 step program --having no idea what that meant--because I worked so much. I am hoping some of you might share here in Storyline how you came to the program.

For myself, I knew I was a workaholic but I never thought of it as a compulsive disease as powerful as other addictive processes. Besides, I always had so many positive things to show after a binge! Finally, learning to honor myself and wanting to practice REAL self care brought me to the realization that I can't break this workaholic process by myself.

Reading and connecting with the stories has really helped me this week. I actually got 8 hours sleep last night, which was always unheard of in my world. Anyways, I invite people to share how they came to connect with WA. Any shame diminishes as I accept all of me as a work in progress.

Peace --from Denise

QUOTE: THE FRENZY OF OUR ACTIVISM

There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence—activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence.

To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence.

The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.

--Thomas Merton

CONTRIBUTION: CONFERENCE COORDINATION AS AMAZING GRACE

I have learned that everything has a birth-growth-death sequence and has value for a while and then is no longer of value. To this end the earthly will remain as my spirit sojourns away from this plane, because I take no earthly things with me, only spiritual growth goes with me. Having lived now into my seventies, I ponder what this life is about. So what I have I learned, I dearly want to share with you. What I know is that I am a spiritual being, and the spirit within my body is what keeps it alive. It is this spirit that is learning to grow while in this plane for its sojourn in other planes. I came in to this life with a set of abilities for earning a living for maintaining the body, but more importantly to share with you in your journey as we need each other, because we are not self-sufficient. I find that as I live I am continually deprogramming myself from earlier experiences and reprogramming as I grow spiritually through age.

So how does this apply to coordinating the conference? In my personal spiritual development I had committed to being a co-creator with my Higher Power as I live my life interacting with those who are coming in for a season and then moving on. One of my skill sets is being highly organized through my career as a scientist managing projects which enabled me to coordinate the conference similarly to my science career projects.

The conference was birthed two years ago when the Chicago groups decided that they would support me in hosting the conference here in Chicago and deciding that I should be the coordinator. In this role it has been interesting to watch the Higher Power work without my intervention in the conference preparation (early growth), all I needed to do was walk doing my part and allowing others to come forward and to do their part. To this end Angela stepped forward volunteering to lead the program effort forming a committee and having a draft on the WA website in February. Then, Liz stepped forward volunteering to lead the transportation efforts earlier than needed. When it came time to have the Silent Auction needing a leader, the Higher Power sent Maria to us and at her first meeting said let me think about that. Either of the next two meetings she agreed to be the leader and use her skills in that area as well as preparing the schedule of events handout. Then when the registrations showed 30 attendees out of 90 had special dietary needs and Cenacle could not meet our Hospitality needs, in asking for help in this area for these 30, two locals, Rachel and Sue, stepped forward to handle this task in a very organized manner meeting all attendees' needs.

As we progressed through the preparations in late 2012, an uneasiness came forth in an interaction in my bridge world that as I dealt with it, my Higher Power showed me that I was to resign as active director of the club. As I did, I had a sense that I would need my energy for other developments in my life. During late July and August, before the conference, because of increased activity related to the conference, I realized that I would not have been able to handle both healthily, i.e. handling both wouldn't have felt sober to me. I was thus blessed with my decision of having resigned the active directorship in January 2013. Leaving the directorship made it easy to do the coordination work at the pace needed, never feeling being rushed, even as the activity increased in the month leading up to the conference.

Now the conference came (later growth) and the Higher Power is sent attendees to volunteer to man the registration desk and be leaders of the meetings. Glitches, always expected, were handled with grace and ease. As the "go to" person, I was in peace and relaxed, and attendees commented they had never seen me so peacefully relaxed. And, of course, without the attendees there is no conference, and it was the Higher Power who brought all of them from all over to the Cenacle in Chicago.

Through the conference experience I clearly felt the Higher Power working through me so that the conference was not about me. My ego detached from the work, because I was aware that I was not the center, but merely a vessel for the Higher Power. Even though you have been giving me accolades for how I was handling this, it was not registered in my spirit due to my frozen emotions, with which I have lived for most of my life. This dam broke a little at the last session on Sunday when those attending thanked me for my service in a standing ovation, and all I could do was accept their appreciation, breaking into tears, sobbing from never having had the experience of appreciation before.

It is a wonderful thing that I was able to see and recognize my addiction raise its head when, being tired from a series of emotional events outside of my control, it said that I wasn't doing enough, even though people were saying that I was doing more than enough. Deciding to rest so that my phone could charge, it was saying that I needed to be *doing something* and rest was forbidden. I am blessed that I was able to recognize the dark voice of the addiction, so that I could put it away and tell it that it was not wanted here.

One of the most sobering insights is that while there was a healthy adrenaline level that came with the peace and relaxation of the conference, I crashed after the conference when my body needed to recharge. There was not a sense of any of the adrenalizing activities. My partner said that as similar to his performing as a concert harpsichordist, I was on stage performing with a higher level of adrenaline flowing in my body. In the disengagement of my ego I was able to recognize that certain adrenaline levels are not sober and others are quite sober. When the ego is attached, the adrenaline rush is a self-centered, self-important manifestation of that ego connection. When I recognized this, the adrenaline rush became one of light and not of darkness. It became a sober manifestation, rather than that the darkness of addiction.

My bad perfectionism kicked in days after the conference telling me that I didn't do it right, even though the Higher Power said it was enough by cutting short my workshop presentation and discussion time on "The Transformation Process," with no one objecting. The perfectionism was very emotionally painful, but I sat with it for I knew from experience that this would be healing, and it was.

As I was writing the minutes of the Board meetings, I became aware of the multi-tasking that occurred in being Conference Coordinator and Organization Secretary. I sensed that it was like my being director of a bridge game and having to play at the same time. Therein my focus is more on directing, and I am unable to give as much attention to playing, as my partner deserves. I have the same sense of that having happened to the Secretary duties. They took a secondary role, as my primary role was the conference coordinator. It made me realize that multi-tasking is not necessarily a manifestation of my addiction if I can place one of the tasks as secondary to the other. When I try to make both tasks equally important, my workaholism kicks in, and I lose my serenity.

The experience of coordinating the conference taught me many things, particularly about how to work in an entirely sober fashion. It taught me that work qua work is not addictive per se. Rather, it is how we approach the work that makes the experience either sober or not. I am blessed to have been given the opportunity to have done this work, and to have learned so much about myself as I have. I thank the attendees profusely for allowing me to enter further into my program of sobriety, and I am grateful to my Higher Power for having given me the strength and insight for carrying on this task soberly.

Be well, be blessed, be a blessing to others.

--from Jerry S.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

What a fabulous conference! We had over 90 members attend, it was in a beautiful location in Chicago and a wonderful venue. Sandy was swamped with orders for books! BTW - Thanks so much Sandy for such a great job. :)

The conference committee really did an outstanding job! I cannot thank you enough for putting this together. The program was well organized and well balanced with step meetings, speakers of different with topics, play and meditation times.

I was so inspired by the speakers and the private talks I had with numerous people. Connecting with friends that I hadn't seen since last year and meeting new friends in this environment is something not to be missed!! I treasure it and look forward to it each year.

It is so exciting to see our fellowship growing!
Can't wait until our next national conference in Malibu in 2014!

STORY: MOVING FORWARD WITH UNKNOWNNS

I just read a quote on Facebook today that fits:

"One is never afraid of the unknown; one is afraid of the known coming to an end."
~ Jiddu Krishnamurti ~

This quote is so true. I always thought it was the unknown that I feared. No, it is the known coming to the end, as the quote so aptly captures. I then have always turned to the work addiction to cover up those fears, and also feelings of inadequacy and shame for not being able to handle the feelings and difficulties. What a vicious, vicious cycle for almost three decades of my adult life.

I got into WA at age 50. Am 52 now. Thanks to WA, this vicious cycle is going away. I've really dealt with a lot of my compulsive thinking, that is, *stinkin' thinkin'*, which has ruled the workaholic behavior. At same time, the tools of WA help me to make changes in my outward behavior, through taking one day a week off, having a set amount of hours for work activity each day, prioritizing tasks, and so on. All of this work in WA helps me grow in trust and confidence in HP, self, and others.

Working my program, the unknown does not scare me so much anymore. Even though I am NOT in control and I realize that I never was (the old feelings of being in control were illusions), that is okay today. I no longer have the time, energy, or inclination to over-plan, over-organize, and to worry all the time. It is much easier to "let go and let god", to focus on the present moment, and to focus on the next right step. I trust that all will work out for my highest good. In the past, whenever I have really clung to this promise and gone forward in faith, all has unfolded in beautiful ways, wonderfully beyond my control and beyond my imagination.

I am moving forward right now with lots of unknowns. When I focus on the present day, I find that I have plenty to keep me occupied. My time is very full but not over-full. I can't thank WA enough. These miracles of my life are here because of the WA program and all my trusted fellows.

--from Tisa

MEETINGS AND WEBSITE INFORMATION

Please see our website or google *Workaholics Anonymous* for additional information.

Online Voice Meetings:

Monday - 7:00 PM United Kingdom Online Voice –

Wednesday - 7:30 PM United Kingdom Phone –

Friday - 7:30 AM East 12:30 GMT - Living in Joy and Recovery Phone –

Friday - 7:30 PM (BST) - Work Anorexia Meeting

Saturday 7:30 AM GMT Online Voice –

Sunday 10 AM Pacific - On Recovery Online Voice –

Sunday - 6 PM UTC+1 in Danish Online Voice –

Phone Meetings:

Monday – 7:00 PM (PT)- Refresh Step Study & Book of Recovery Phone

Monday - 7:30 AM (ET) - Fresh Starts: Steps to Recovery Phone

Saturday - 2 PM (ET) - Serenity & Sanity

Sunday - 7 PM (ET) - Step Study

Thursday - 5:30 PM (PT) - Recovery through the Steps

Tuesday - 8:00 P.M. (ET) - Work Anorexia/Work Avoiding

Weds -7:30 AM (ET) - Workaholism linked w/ Trauma/Abuse in Early Life Email Meeting –

Finding Balance Email Meeting: Tools and Principles

Meeting Resources on Website

All About W .A. Meetings Online and Telephone Meetings

Order the W .A. Book of Recovery Start a Meeting Connect with Others Seeking Meetings

Register or Update Registration for a Meeting

Attend a Conference Sign up for the eNewsletter

Resources for Media

Resources for Family and Friends

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

ANNOUNCEMENT: Seeking Volunteers We are looking for volunteers to help with the publication of STORYLINE. We can use help with encouraging submissions, updating our distribution list, proofreading, and other tasks. We also have an opening for a co-editor or assistant editor. Please let us know at sjschicago@juno.com if you are interested in helping in any way.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

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. Send your submissions for future editions to: storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org, with STORYLINE in the subject line, and send your email address to receive future issues by email. After a summer break, we now have a new and improved email distribution system.

Stroyline is created by you, so please send in your stories, poems, songs, blogs, jokes, step work, and meeting shares. What was your experience of our recent conference? What step work are you willing to share, so others may benefit from what you have discovered useful? What's your favorite slogan and when do you find it useful? We invite you to contribute to Storyline, and to encourage others to do likewise, to keep this publication enjoyable and meaningful for all.

--Shelley, Chicago

STORYLINE: OUR MISSION

- To produce a quarterly publication of news about W.A. 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 the winter issue is: November 15, 2013.

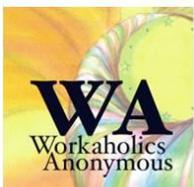
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