

Living in



Balance

Autumn 2002 The International Quarterly

Newsletter of Workaholics Anonymous

**The Nature of Recovery from Work Addiction
from Chapter 8, Steps to Personal Recovery in
Work Addiction: Hidden Legacies of Adult Children
by Bryan Robinson**

I have mentioned all through this book that work addicts feel something is missing in their lives. They try to fill that void through working at their jobs and staying busy. Work is a substitute for the spiritual hunger that only recovery can satisfy. Although work addicts can and do recover, self-sabotage is their biggest threat because personal healing requires more work, the very thing that addicted persons are trying to overcome. Your natural inclination will be to approach recovery in the same way you approach work—to hurry up, cram it in your schedule and rush through it. Such an approach is self-defeating because recovery cannot be rushed.

Abusive work habits do not begin at age 21 or 30; they start in childhood and have a long history with a stronghold on your life. Don't expect to reverse the early patterns in a day, week or even a month. There is no such things as a "quick fix" approach. My favorite poster is a breathtaking picture of the Grand Canyon that took nature centuries to carve. The caption says "Things Take Time." Recovery from work addiction does not happen overnight either. It is a gradual process as is withdrawal from any addictive substance, and it takes commitment and time. Give yourself plenty of time for recovery to occur and give

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yourself credit for small gains you make. Rather than focusing on all that needs to be done, pat yourself on the back for the baby steps you make along the way. It takes time to change the patterns that took you 30 or 40 years to develop. This is an important reminder so that you won't become frustrated and sabotage your healing process. You will not see an immediate concrete product that you are accustomed to. However, if you stay with it, you eventually start seeing results.

Recovery has already started if you are aware that you are addicted to work, and it will continue just as slowly and gradually as the addiction did when it got its foothold. Don't give up. Allow the process and approach it as an exciting new adventure that unfolds with each new day. There is a whole unexplored world waiting for you to experience.

**Welcome to the New WA-WSO Service Board
as of September 2002**

Role	Person	WA Home Group
Facilitator	A.L.	Palo Alto (appointed)
Registrar	P.S.	Palo Alto
Webmaster	D.K.	Colorado
Trustee	K.D.	Palo Alto
Treasurer	L.M.	San Francisco
Literature Services	A.B.	San Francisco
Outreach Coordinator	O.R.	Phoenix
Newsletter Email	M.H.	Portland, Oregon
Responder	B.D.	San Francisco
Telephone Answerer and Letter Responder		TBD

(Currently rotating coverage amongst the Board)

*Contact your WA World Service Board Members
through email.*

A Quick Thanks . . .

On behalf of the new board, I'd like to express the appreciation of the WA fellowship to the outgoing board members.
—From The New Registrar

Inside this Issue . . .

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Returning to Nature and Center in W.A.

Step Study: Step One

One Member Writes on Metrics for Step One

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Bay Area Retreat Yields Service and Laughter

World Service Update:

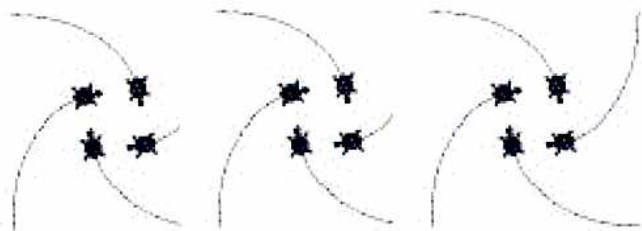
New Service Positions Filled

About Workaholics Anonymous

Workaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from workaholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop working compulsively. There are no dues or fees for WA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. W.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stop working compulsively and to carry the message of recovery to workaholics who still suffer.

Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are personal and belong to the person who shared them. Take what you like and leave the rest. They do not represent official opinions or policies of WA-WSO.



About The WA Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year and is sent to all active WA groups in the US & abroad and to all "loners" who subscribe. Suggested subscription fee is \$8 per year payable to the WA World Service Organization. Please keep your group's address and contact information current with WA-WSO. We are eager for your stories, articles, artwork, book reviews, and submissions. Submission timeline for the Winter Issue is November 30th, 2002, and the Spring Issue timeline is February 28, 2003. Thank you!

**Workaholics Anonymous
World Service Organization**

web: www.workaholics-anonymous.org

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Focus on: Step One

Here's a list of activities that I quantified as part of my First Step:

- number of times I worked all night in college
- # of times I studied late at night
- # of times I sat in a bathroom stall all night (at graduate school) working on a paper
- # of times I worked all night in my current job
- # of times I worked all night
- # of times I worked until late evening
- # of times I worked until early morning
- # of times I made mistakes due to being tired
- # of times I worked all night and all the next day
- # of days that I didn't see my infant son, because I was working late
- # of times I came home too late to spend time with my kids ("bucking bronco"), but went ahead and spent time with them anyway (contrary to my spouse's wishes).
- # of times I said I'll be leaving by ___ or I'll leave in ___ minutes, but didn't (I worked longer)
- # of times I got home after dinner (with grandparents present) had already started
- # of times I would stay up even later, after getting home late
- # of times I consumed a lot of caffeinated pop
- # of calories consumed eating sweet foods when tired or stressed
- # of hours spent watching TV to escape
- # of years time lost for building relationships with my spouse and children
- \$ of lost wages due to probation or lack of promotion
- # of times I have given excuses (lies) for being late
- # of hours I have made people late or kept people waiting because I was late
- # of times I procrastinated doing tasks for one of my "moonlighting" jobs
- # of fatigue-related accidents
- net profit from "moonlighting" jobs
- cost (interest expense or lost interest income) of not submitting expenses timely for reimbursement
- cost to send things by express mail
- cost of health problems due to work addiction
- cost of eating in employee cafeteria versus at home
- # of hours of life lost due to overwork, sick, TV, errand/ shopping during work time, reading the paper (or other publications for personal reasons)
- # of times my tax returns have been way overdue
- # of projects that have been late
- # of times I have been late to work
- # of days I have avoided one or more tasks
- # of times I have tried to hide the fact that I was eating in my office
- # of times I have tried to avoid getting caught arriving late to work and hiding reading the newspaper on the job
- # of times I've been in a panic or whirlwind
- # of times I have been reprimanded (for being late, taking too long, not communicating my whereabouts, for projects being late)

WHY I GO TO W.A.

Each morning I walk across the street to a U.S. Forest Service trail, that leads up a mountain, in a ponderosa pine forest. In Flagstaff, there is no smog. The sky is always blue. You can hear the quiet of the sunrise, and see the stars at night – millions of them. The air is thin and clear at 7000 feet. You live nearer to the sky, the clouds, and some say, to God.

On the morning walk, I get hold of the idea that *this* is how I am supposed to be living. I belong in this place, on this trail, on this day. When I return home, it is time to begin a day of forgetting. I get ready for work. I prepare to lose myself to the rest of the day, as my mind focuses on the first of a thousand tasks, that will eat away the moments of my life, unnoticed. The day will end, with piles of work left undone. Exhaustion closing in on the final steps upstairs, to rest, finally, from another day, eroded.

The sunrise returns, and once again, I walk across the street, to the place I belong. I begin, again. I feel, again, that *this* is how I am supposed to be living. For the moment of time that it lasts, it is a moment resting on the edge of eternity, always elusive.

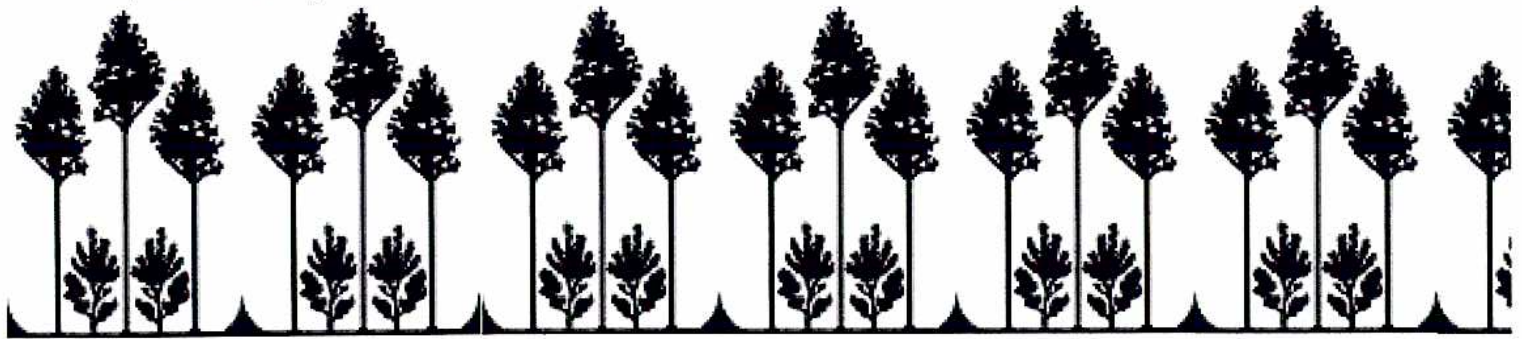
The days slip into a blur of busy-ness and too much tension. They grow short as winter closes in. Soon it is too dark to walk in the morning before the work day begins. Soon I forget, altogether, where I belong, where I am supposed to be, who I am. I never belong at work. It never feels as though "this is what I am supposed to be doing." There is just doing.

Then I realize, in the middle of winter, that it is not *doing* at all, that I am missing. It is *being* that I miss. The sunrise walk is a moment of *being*, that is ritually sacrificed to the routine of daily *doing*. It is gone in the blink of an eye, erased by the hungry chase for more work.

My shoulders ache, as I wait for spring, and I breathe a sigh of relief as the trees finally come into bud. Soon there will be time for the sunrise walk again, just a short one at first. Then, as the days grow longer, and the mountain air grows warmer, the knot in my shoulders dissolves. Now there is time in my life, for a *moment of being*, in one work-driven day. And again, for a moment, I can feel that *this* is how I am supposed to be living.

The seasons fly. Work addiction gnaws away at life. In the back of my mind a fear grows that in the end I will look back, and wish for just one more moment – to *be* with my children, not to *do* one more thing. Only then do the moments become precious. In the meantime, they are wasted with the words "Not now, I am too busy."

This is why I go to W.A. I go because I need some hope that somehow I may find a way of *being* in this life, with my family, on the trail, for more than just a moment. It is slow progress, but every moment reclaimed is twice as precious.



SF Bay Area Meetings Throw A Retreat

On July 20th at 1:00 p.m. the second (annual?) San Francisco Bay Workaholics Anonymous retreat got under way. Put on by the combined efforts of members of the San Francisco and Oakland WA meetings, this was actually a great advance for the recovery of all in attendance. Members of the Palo Alto and San Rafael meetings attended the retreat as well.

Several members from around The Bay went early to the busy retail and restaurant district near the meeting place and not far from the University of California's Berkeley campus for a deli lunch in the fresh East Bay air. Then attendees gathered at one member's home, signed in with our telephone numbers and email addresses, got our name labels and sat down for a round of two-minute check-ins. It was suggested that each leave a donation (ten dollars was suggested) for WA-WSO in the basket provided.

An announcement was made that, with the election completed, three of the active posts on the board were still/again open, and every person present was encouraged to consider whether she or he might step into service.

The gathering opened with a WA meeting, with different members reading Preamble, A Definition of Workaholism and The Twelve Steps. We passed the sheets of Principles and Tools around for everyone to share in the reading. One member from the San Francisco meeting was the speaker. Then there was time for three-minute (timed) sharing. After the Promises we took a break to have some tea or talk or take a walk or sit or whatever.

We gathered after the fifteen-minute break and sat down for a few introductory comments about meditating and then a period of silent meditation. This was followed by a second WA meeting, this time reading the Characteristics. After the sharing time we took another break of about fifteen minutes.

Then we returned for a laughing meditation. This is a regular part of many people's lives in India, often done in clubs or large groups. Those who participate find it quite healing. Physicians and psychologists find it a boon to mental and physical health.

After a little explanation, we all sat (or stood) there and laughed for ten minutes. At the end we were breathless and happy.

People's minds were turning to food. Menus and envelopes were laid out for neighborhood French, Thai, Chinese, Mexican, Italian and deli take-out restaurants. We made our choices, put the cash in the envelopes and telephoned in the orders. One person took an envelope to each restaurant and carried back the order. It was an evening of fine dining. After dinner we shared in the cleanup and then chose to play Charades, to the continuing delight of all present until we dragged ourselves away and headed home.

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In the course of the afternoon one member volunteered to be the new Facilitator, one volunteered to be Treasurer. We discovered that for some jobs a detailed job description based on the experience of previous office-holders has never been written—only passed on by word of mouth, so job descriptions are being written. The process of completing the board is well underway.

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Return Address Requested