

Living in



WEB EDITION Balance

Summer 2004 The International Quarterly

Newsletter of Workaholics Anonymous

The Gifts of Rest

Draft from the Forthcoming W.A. Book of Recovery

Most workaholics discount or ignore rest, thinking it wasteful and unproductive. Rest includes getting enough sleep at night, naps and breaks, silent time alone, or just sitting or lying still. Strolling along the beach or reading an engrossing mystery may be relaxing, but they are not restful. And neither is lying awake worrying.

Rest is the most important "activity" we do. Here are some of the gifts of rest, if we accept them:

1. Physical and mental RENEWAL. No matter how pleasurable the activity, you will enjoy it much more if you are rested. If you are tired, you will have to draw on adrenaline for energy. Even if offered the best, say no if you need rest. Rest is the best reward you can give yourself.
2. Experiencing our BEING. Being alone with ourselves without the distraction of props or activities. Appreciating the pleasure of solitude. Learning the art of self-enjoyment.
3. SLOWING our pace. Regaining a healthy breathing rhythm.
4. INTEGRATING the interconnections and impacts of our actions and those of others.
5. Quietness to listen for GUIDANCE from our Higher Power. Reminding ourselves of our spirituality and to get out of the way of God's plan for us. Noticing when we have shifted from flow to effort, from God's will to self-will, from letting go to trying to control.
6. Gaining PERSPECTIVE by a temporary withdrawal. Unwinding from being overly focused. Seeing where we lost our vision. Noting what we do that is unnecessary. Reminding ourselves to be selective. Being silent to reflect on the deeper meaning of events, speech.
7. Putting space into our day to SAVOR each event. Digesting impressions. Freshening our perceptions. Unwinding from being overly focused.
8. Catching ourselves before we RELAPSE into ego and self-will. Keeping awareness of our emotions and body signals, including energy level. Changing our thoughts to healthier ones. Regaining our patience, flexibility, humor, wisdom and creativity.
9. When ill, allowing our body to HEAL itself.
10. Cooperating with the universal RHYTHM of ebb and flow, winter and summer. Treating time as a friend.

Summer 2004 World Conference & Plans for the W.A. Book of Recovery

The W.A.-W.S.O. Conference, planned for July 30th-August 1st at the beautiful Mercy Retreat Center near San Francisco, California already has over 20 people registered to attend. **There is still time to sign up for individual days at the Conference! The cost is \$25/day. Please fill out and send in the registration form at**

www.workaholics-anonymous.org. At the conference, the complete draft of the W.A. Book of Recovery will be reviewed and distributed, one per registered meeting. The Book will include over forty articles, a guide on step work, and a dozen personal stories of recovery. There will be a several-month review period for comments and feedback to be sent to the W.A. World Service Literature Committee. Then, at the next Conference, in September 2005 in Portland, the revised W.A. Book of Recovery will be put forward for Conference approval. W.A. hopes to print the book shortly thereafter and begin distribution.

World Service Ballots Due in July

Ballots for the 2004-2006 W.A.-W.S.O. Board were sent in early June, one to each registered meeting's World Service Rep. The ballots included three returning Board members as nominees, and four new W.A. members stepping into service. Ballots need to be RECEIVED at the W.A.-W.S.O. PO Box in Menlo Park by July 25th, 2004, or meetings can also submit their ballots at the conference. If your group did not receive a ballot, please email wso at workaholics-anonymous.org.

Inside This Issue . . .

Tool Review: Underscheduling and Prioritizing
One member's stories with these powerful tools

Literature Review:

- Draft Literature for Groups and Members to Review
- Draft "Definition of Workaholism"
- Draft "Work Aversion" Article
- Adrenalizing & The Gifts of Rest

Step Study: Step Eight

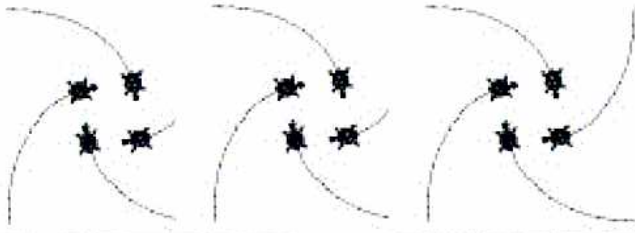
Becoming completely willing to make amends

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 W.A. 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 necessarily represent official opinions or policies of W.A.-W.S.O.



About The W.A. Newsletter

This newsletter is published four times a year and is sent to all active W.A. groups in the U.S. & abroad and to all "loners" who subscribe. Suggested subscription fee is \$8 to \$20 per year sliding scale payable to the W.A. World Service Organization. Meetings are also welcome to subscribe! Please keep your group's address and contact information current with W.A.-W.S.O. We are eager for your stories, articles, artwork, book reviews, and submissions. Electronic submissions can be sent via email. Please note that submitting materials to the newsletter means that you consent to have them published in print and online and that excerpts or in whole may be republished in other WA literature in all forms. Submission timeline for the next Newsletter is August 30th, 2004. Thanks!

**Workaholics Anonymous
World Service Organization**

**email: wso at workaholics-anonymous.org
web: www.workaholics-anonymous.org**

**W.A.-W.S.O.
PO Box 289
Menlo Park, California 94026-0289
510-273-9253**

Treasurer's Report

World Service has received \$524.93 so far this year in donations for the 7th Tradition, newsletter subscriptions and literature. Our year to date expenses total \$1,453.00. Expenses include newsletter production, teleconferencing for board meetings, postage, and telephone for the W.S.O. voicemail. We have had our web hosting generously donated, but that will end soon and the website will be an additional expense.

We have received \$2,120.00 in conference reservations and scholarship donations. Conference expenses so far this year have been \$730.00, which was to reserve the space for the 2005 conference. Our deposit on the 2004 conference was paid last year. We will have an additional large conference expense in August, when we pay the balance of the cost for the conference to the Mercy Center. The board was able, thanks to the generous contributions of last year's conference attendees, to set aside \$1,000.00 in scholarships and give scholarship assistance to several members.

The balance in the World Service bank account is \$5,770.76. Despite a deficit in 7th tradition donations, we have been able to maintain a healthy bank balance because of the money coming in for the conference. The second conference payment will take a significant chunk out of the remaining funds.

I encourage meetings that are able to consider sending funds above your prudent reserve to help sustain W.S.O. Subscription contributions to help support this wonderful newsletter are also most welcome.

Thanks to everyone in the fellowship for your support of W.A.!

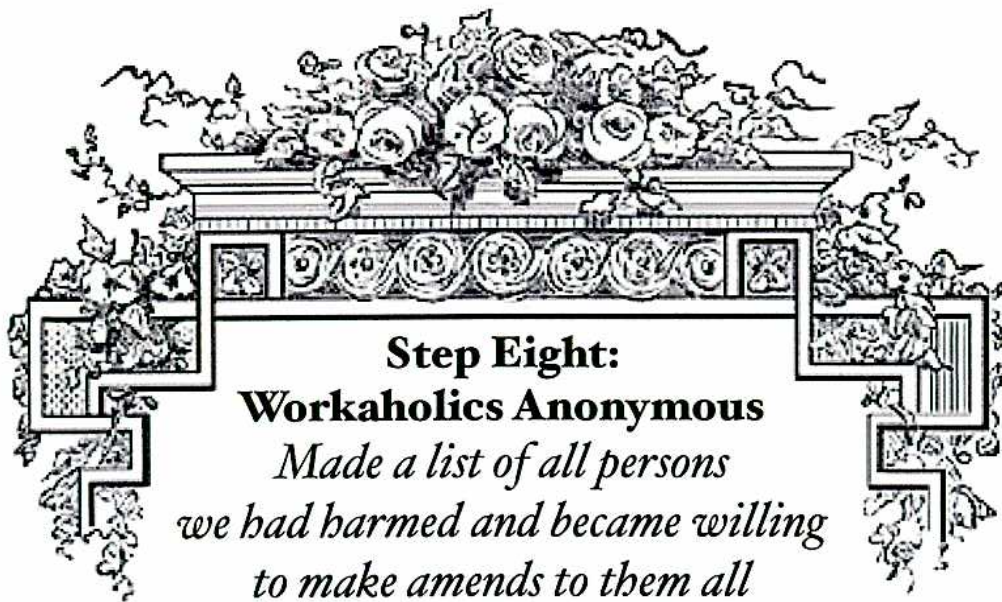
Open Board Positions

Even with seven members nominated on the World Service Ballot for the 2004-2006 Service Board, there are still four positions open for service, including Email Answerer, Telephone Answerer and Letter Responder, Literature Chair, and Recorder. Please consider if you or perhaps your local meeting might like to step into service for one of these vital W.A. positions. It would be great to be able to Conference-approve a full slate of candidates at the July Conference.

Newsletter Themes

From the Nominated New Newsletter Editor

The Theme for the next Newsletter is Step 9 and Traditions 1, 2, and 3, with a submission timeline of August 30th. We are also recruiting contributions for a regular "Our Meeting," with highlights and innovations from different W.A. meetings. Please send us your articles, thoughts, and artwork.



Step Eight:
Workaholics Anonymous
*Made a list of all persons
 we had harmed and became willing
 to make amends to them all*

After we have humbly asked God, as we are coming to know God as our Higher Power, to remove our shortcomings in step 7, we turn our attention to our relationships. In our past times of long hours, frantic deadlines, stress depletion, and burnout, we had little time to nurture healthy relationships with other people. Even as we begin to work and schedule more realistically many of us discovered we could not deal with the pressures of life or the pain of our pasts. If we are to stay in a healthy relationship to work, activity and other people, we need to take an action on those patterns that bring harm to others and ourselves.

In this step we begin by making a list of all persons we had harmed, including ourselves, with our addictions and or character defects. Most of us go back over our 4th step and list names we had listed there, including our own.

The next action of this step is to become willing to make amends to all the people on our lists. It means being willing to see our part in the problem. It means to have compassion for the other, to forgive them and ourselves. We begin to admit that we are human with character defects and that we make mistakes. We begin to experience the inner calm that comes with forgiveness. The step calls us to become willing to make amends to "all" the people on the list. Most of us have found that real serenity come when we can finally truly and completely forgive everyone and when we are not yet ready, we pray for the willingness.

This is a two part step, first the list, than the willingness to make amends. Amends can mean we are truly sorry. As we progress through the steps we admit our character defects with the help of our relationship with Our Higher Power. Most of us define amends to mean a change in our thoughts and behaviors. A change in the way we live that will not harm us or others. It is very meaningful for others to hear us say we are sorry but what will really have an impact is seeing the changes we make in life as the character defects and addictions are removed. Questions that may help in doing Step Eight:

1. Going back over my 4th step, who have I harmed ?
2. What are my patterns of harm to others?
3. Who am I not will to make an amends to? Do I understand how keeping that resentment is hurting me?
4. How have I harmed myself? Am I willing to make amends to myself?
5. Have I gotten help from a sponsor with this step? What are other stories of strength and hope in doing step 8?
6. Am I willing to make amends for my part in the relationship problem?
7. How does progressing through the steps in Workaholic Anonymous help maintain spiritual and physical changes?

This reopening of emotional wounds, some old, some perhaps forgotten, and some still painfully festering, will at first look like a purposeless and pointless piece of surgery. But if a willing start is made, then the great advantages of doing this will so quickly reveal themselves that the pain will be lessened as one obstacle after another melts away.

These obstacles, however, are very real. The first, and one of the most difficult, has to do with forgiveness. The moment we ponder a twisted or broken relationship with another person, our emotions go on the defensive. To escape looking at the wrongs we have done another, we resentfully focus on the wrong he has done us. This is especially true if he has, in fact, behaved badly at all. Triumphantly we seize upon his misbehavior as the perfect excuse for minimizing or forgetting our own.

Right here we need to fetch ourselves up sharply. It doesn't make much sense when a real tosspot calls a kettle black. Let's remember that [workaholics] are not the only ones bedeviled by sick emotions. Moreover, it is usually a fact that our behavior when [working compulsively] has aggravated the defects of others. We've repeatedly strained the patience of our best friends to the snapping point, and have brought out the very worst in those who didn't think much of us to begin with. In many instances we are really dealing with fellow sufferers, people whose woes we have increased. If we are now about to ask for forgiveness for ourselves, why shouldn't we start out by forgiving them, one and all?

When listing the people we have harmed, most of us hit another solid obstacle. We got a pretty severe shock when we realized we were preparing to make a face-to-face admission of our wretched conduct to those we had hurt. It had been embarrassing enough when in confidence we had admitted these things to God, to ourselves, and to another human being [in Step 5]. But the prospect of actually visiting or even writing the people concerned now overwhelmed us . . . Why, we cried, shouldn't bygones be bygones? Why do we have to think of these people at all? These were some of the ways in which fear conspired with pride to hinder our making a list of all the people we had harmed.

. . . Though in some cases we cannot make restitution at all, and in some cases action ought to be deferred, we should nevertheless make an accurate and really exhaustive survey of our past life as it has affected other people. In many instances we shall find that though the harm done others has not been very great, the emotional harm we have done ourselves has. Very deep, sometimes quite forgotten, damaging emotional conflicts persist below the level of consciousness. At the time of these occurrences, they may actually have given our emotions violent twists which have since discolored our personalities and altered our lives for the worse.

Continued on Page 4

While the purpose of making restitution to others is paramount, it is equally necessary that we extricate from an examination of our personal relations every bit of information about ourselves and our fundamental difficulties that we can. Since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our [work addiction], no field of investigation could yield more satisfying and valuable rewards than this one. Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight. We can go far beyond those things which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws which were basic, flaws which sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives. Thoroughness, we have found, will pay—and pay handsomely. . . .

Such gross misbehavior is not by any means a full catalogue of the harms we do. Let us think of some of the subtler ones which can sometimes be quite as damaging. Suppose that in our family lives we happen to be miserly, irresponsible, callous, or cold. Suppose that we are irritable, critical, impatient, and humorless. Suppose we lavish attention upon one member of the family and neglect the others. What happen when we try to dominate the whole family, either by a rule of iron or by constant outpouring of minute directions for just how their lives should be lived from hour to hour? What happens when we wallow in depression, self-pity oozing from every pore, and inflict that upon those about us? Such a roster of harms done others—the kind that make daily living with us practicing [workaholics] difficult and often unbearable—could be extended almost indefinitely. When we take such personality traits as these into shop, office, and the society of our fellows, they can do damage almost as extensive as that we have caused at home.

Having carefully surveyed this whole are of human relations, and having decided exactly what personality traits in us injured and disturbed others, we can now commence to ransack memory for the people to whom we have given offense. To put a finger on the nearby and the most deeply damaged ones shouldn't be hard to do. Then, as year by year we walk back through our lives as far as memory will reach, we shall be bound to construct a long list of people who have, to some extent or other, been affected. We should, of course, ponder and weigh each instance carefully. We shall want to hold ourselves to the course of admitting the things we have done, meanwhile forgiving the wrongs done us, real or fancied. We should avoid extreme judgments, both of ourselves and of others involved. We must not exaggerate our defects or theirs. A quiet, objective view will be our steadfast aim. Whenever our pencil falters, we can fortify and cheer ourselves by remembering what [W.A.] experience in this Step has meant to others. It is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and from God.

Excerpted from "Step Eight," pages 77-82, in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, with word substitutions in brackets

Meeting Success Strategies

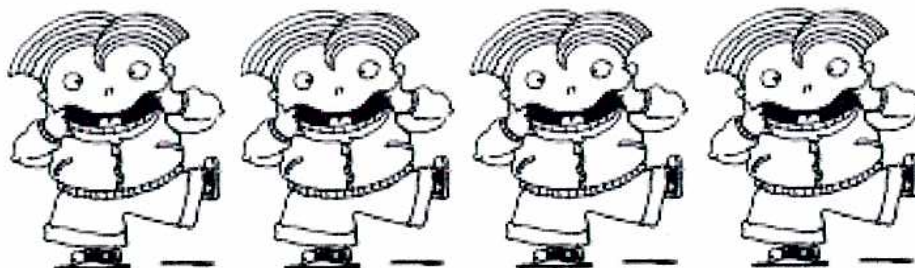
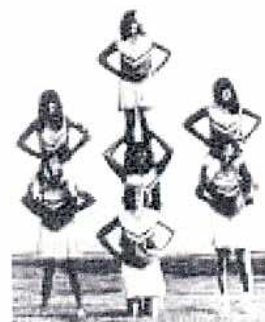
Our meeting is doing a number of things that we thought we might share with the other groups.

At the beginning of the meeting, the chairperson asks if anyone has any "successes" they would like to briefly share so that we can clap and cheer for members making progress towards abstinence from compulsive working. This consists of brief statements ranging from "I left work at 5pm every day last week," to "I got to the meeting on time." After each statement, the group claps, pounds on the table, cheers, and stomps.

We started doing this because another 12-step group meets downstairs from us and we could hear them clap and cheer every week. We wanted someone to clap and cheer for us! Where else will someone cheer for you just for leaving work on time?

We also wanted to read some "promises" at the end of the meeting, so the chairperson chooses to read either the last two paragraphs of the pamphlet *Recovery from Workaholism: The Twelve Steps of Workaholics Anonymous* ("Following the Steps brings us in touch with our inner wisdom and spirituality. . .") or the last three paragraphs of the pamphlet *Turning Work into Play* ("Contentment becomes a natural part of living. . .")

We don't have set topics for particular weeks, but usually use one of two formats. When a newcomer is present, we usually go around and each member tells a little about their story: what it was like, what happened, and what it's like now. If there is no newcomer, the chairperson usually picks some literature to read, and we go around the room, each person reading a paragraph or two and then sharing on that paragraph, and then passing the reading to the next person, who reads a paragraph or two and then shares if they wish. This format seems to help some of us who have short attention spans and have trouble listening to a long reading.



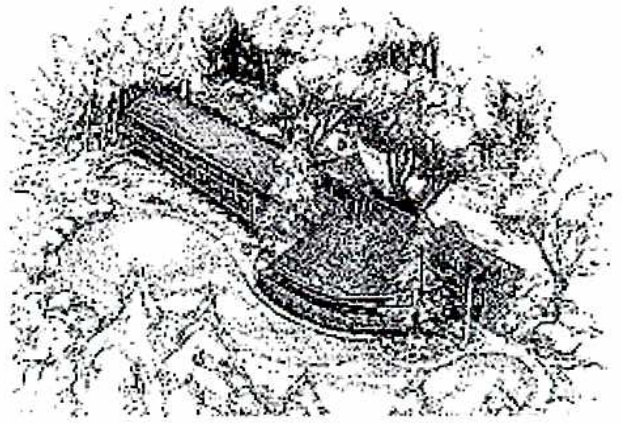
Prayer to Be Free of Resentment

If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or the thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free. Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don't really want it for them, and your prayers are only words and you don't mean it, go ahead and do it anyways. Do it everyday for two weeks and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you will now feel compassionate understanding and love.

Page 552, Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition

Location Selected for the 2005 Conference

Good news, the W.A.-W.S.O. Board made formal reservations for the 2005 World Service Conference, to be held near Portland in a wooded setting at the Alton-Collins Retreat Center. The retreat center offers state of the art conference facilities nestled in miles of forested hiking trails. It also features comfortable sleeping rooms and conference rooms with views of pristine wilderness. The location offers proximity to the cultural resources of Portland and the waterfalls and sites of the Columbia Gorge. The dates of the 2005 World Conference are September 23-25, 2005. There will be a daily shuttle available to and from the Portland International Airport. Conference highlights will include review of the proposed WA Book of Recovery, featured speakers, meetings, and time for relaxing in the forest. Check out the facility at www.collinsretreatcenter.org.



Adrenalizing

Proposed Draft for the W.A. Book of Recovery for Group and Member Review

Adrenalizing: Creating pressure, suspense and chaos by overscheduling and underpreparation. Forgetting priorities and pacing, operating with a scattered, cluttered, racing mind. Too little forethought, savoring, and assimilation.

1. Starting trips and projects without enough information or preparation.
2. Not asking when you're lost or puzzled.
3. Not reading instructions before using something.
4. Worry.
5. Difficult people (angry, unstable, controlling, critical, scattered, demanding, rushaholics, people who talk too fast), codependent relationships.
6. Adrenaline junkies.
7. Provoking people—you provoke them because you're bored.
8. No social life.
9. Car maintenance/imminent breakdown, not refilling gas tank until almost empty.
10. Speeding.
11. Illness.
12. Ignoring body signals.
13. Junk food-especially sweets. Overeating.
14. Not enough rest, exercise, or play.
15. Not getting regular physical checkups.
16. Overspending; living without a spending plan.
17. Not balancing checkbook and not checking due dates for payments or forms.
18. Too many credit cards.
19. Unrealistic deadlines.
20. Time-stuffing (adding to agendas, cramming one more item into a spare minute).
21. Simultaneously running water, heating food, starting car—requiring one to be in sync. Multitasking.
22. Leaving a message for someone to call you back on one line and then making a complex call on another line.
23. Too-hard classes.
24. Unrealistic to-do lists; overly tight scheduling.
25. Not allowing for the unexpected.
26. Too many interruptions.
27. Non-stop work, no bathroom break.
28. Hurry.
29. Lateness.
30. No extra keys; inadequate security for your property.
31. Data overload.
32. Too much world news.
33. Too many magazine subscriptions.
34. Too many library books out at one time and putting in even more reserves.
35. Too many classes, lectures, organizations, commitments.
36. Not keeping your clothes and property in repair.
37. Clutter. Break, drop, spill, misplace, trip over.
38. Not putting items away.
39. Being disorganized about time, paper, people, ideas, objects, space.
40. Practicing addictions. Not following your program.

Work Aversion

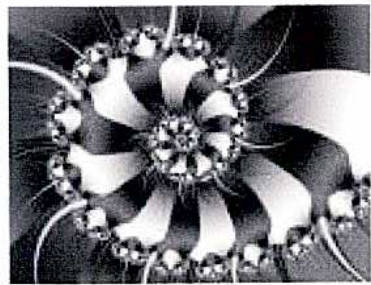
Proposed Draft for the W.A. Book of Recovery for Group and Member Review

Work Aversion, Work Avoidance, Slowaholism, Action Anorexia, Work Anorexia- The terms are many but the behaviors and problematic lives of those who have this disease, by whatever name, are very similar. Like any illness, identifying the problem is the prerequisite to implementing a solution. This problem, however, like many other forms of "reduced living" such as underearning and/or spending anorexia, sex and relationship avoidance, or food anorexia, can be quite difficult to see as it hides in subtle shades and shadows.

It has been said that work anorexics would rather perfectly avoid life-than imperfectly live it. Probably addicts of many kinds can identify with that approach to living. However what separates the Work Avoidance addict from other kinds of work addicts is an ultimately severe and recurring pattern around the refusal to deliberately act at all, the only counter balance being to sometimes throw themselves into action towards a certain direction or goal only with the fervent hope of a perfect outcome. But usually they putter along spending a lot of their days on non-priority living, sometimes using food, television, or rescuing others to occupy their time. They engage in these behaviors as a diversion from the pain born out of a wholesale avoidance of the true priorities in their lives: deliberately facing problems, allowing others to help with solutions, and, just as important, admitting their dreams and aspirations to themselves and to others as well and then acting to achieve them.

The delay and distract pattern is characterized in the expression that "Work Anorexics are overachievers at under-achieving." We, who have this illness, do work very hard; it is just that we work very hard to avoid having to commit to any specific consistency of action or planned living. Unlike other work addicts, we can be very conscious of our actions but where we go unconscious is in the goal or planning department. As such, we especially avoid awareness about any aspects of the results of our actions that aren't the ideal we sought. Of course perfect results would suit us perfectly, or so we think. Deep down, though, we know worshipping such standards is only trouble in the long run. We have avoided adjusting these perfectionist standards because to do so means we would risk realizing what may be our greatest fear: we are only human and, as such, we cannot completely control outcomes. Our pain filled pasts have already convinced us that outcomes or results are always painful and just recur and recur. Sadly, therefore, our game plan has become to prevent as many results from occurring as possible. The less action taken, the fewer results, and therefore the less pain,

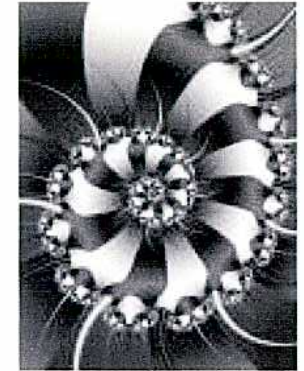
or so we reason. And it's true you can't lose a race into which you don't enter. Or is it? There are many desirable experiences in life that are only reached at the expense of experiencing at least some losses along the way. Ultimately, it is the chance to achieve these very desirable outcomes, some that many others would say, as might we as well if we were honest with ourselves, are the kinds of experiences that make life worth living to begin with. And that is where we have become stuck. Somehow work anorexics have come only to be inspired by damage control as a long term plan, a standard way of facing all of life's situations. We have become obsessed with preventing any disappointment, only taking action we believe will result in perfect "loss free" outcomes. But there



are no truly perfect outcomes, only imperfect ones. Furthermore, the trouble with using damage control as a centerpiece is that life becomes so safe and uninspiring that eventually we can't let in the light of hope or new solutions either. Ignoring these facts results in a very painful downward spiritual spiral, and we can be blocked from any real progress or forward momentum.

The pain of such a block drives us ultimately into working more and more to commit to less and less as we progressively back away from life's challenges and choices. It has been said "the greatest risk is not to risk at all," but that is exactly what this disease ultimately tells us to do, to not risk at any expense. Therefore we have justified our over-procrastinated life with sky-high standards which we have become terrified to release or reconsider.

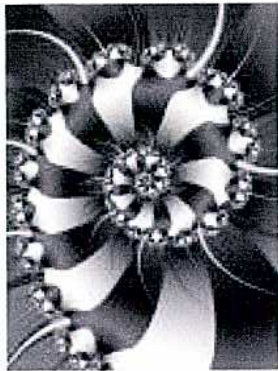
As time goes on, some of us desperately want to take action in certain areas of our lives, but we are frozen. We may find the only way to justify the hope that a particular effort will turn out to be worthwhile is to lie to ourselves, promising ourselves a perfect outcome. Then we commit to involvement, sometimes heavily, and the pendulum swings the other way for a time. At some point, though, we come out of our fantasy and are forced to see some or many imperfections about this new endeavor. At that point our voices tell us that we are "losers, once again" and the best way to live is to cut our losses by stopping. And so we do.



Continued on next page

Work Aversion, Proposed Draft for the WA Book of Recovery, continued from page 6

Most of us have trouble in getting and/or holding jobs for any appreciable length of time. If we do have jobs we may find that we work for or with an active work addict. In such cases it would be easy to blame this person for our troubles by saying that if they didn't wear us out with ever increasing demands we wouldn't try to slow things down so much and there is probably some truth to that. However, many of us discover, upon examination, that we have a childhood that includes a work addict in the form of a parent or guardian, perhaps even an older sibling and our work avoidance may be a reaction to the abuse we once received. In fact, we are probably attracted to working with some style of work addict as we try to heal our old wounds or just try to function in the world. But the pain of teaming up with other work addicts makes things very confusing, so much so that many practicing work anorexics find ways to stop working with others altogether either by becoming self-employed or being enabled financially by family, friends, or disability payments. At some point, we see that we are rarely if ever satisfied with the results of any of our actions. Such hopelessness is too painful to go on with alone. We realize we need to risk letting others in.



In W.A. we find help for taking action of all kinds and for letting go of results, however imperfect they may be. We even learn to celebrate unexpected outcomes as part of life. We may need outside help from a therapist, caring church member, or doctor to face the emotional and physical workload involved in recovering from the spiritual abuse and rigid perfectionism that is often behind anorexia in any form. With the encouragement of W.A. friends, sponsor-guided stepwork, and the experience of no longer being alone with the problem, we finally have courage to take positive steps on our own behalf. These actions are not compulsive, intense bursts followed by quitting, but rather slow, small, solid steps to build a forward momentum of healing. However, at some point, we may be tempted to quit our connection with W.A. The quitting may be part of our illness. If that is the case, we don't worry about someone judging us for leaving; instead, we pray to Higher Power for the willingness to return. We have no requirement for perfect attendance. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop working (or avoiding work) compulsively. Work anorexics in relapse need not feel ashamed to return. Many in the fellowship have experienced such flip flops. Recovery can feel like work and so can receive the disease's temptation to avoid or quit it altogether.

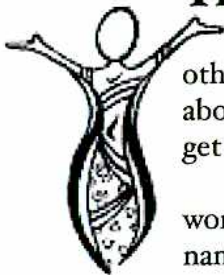
Recovery is a kind of work—as much as or more work than most paying jobs! And it is a job that will also, in time, pay us back many spiritual dividends not found anywhere else. Therefore we are encouraged to risk disappointment by taking the action of sharing with one or more recovering acquaintances any secret practice of perfection worship in which we may be invested. Such alliances combined with a healing spiritual framework for self discovery, like the Twelve Steps of W.A., are essential parts of acquiring the relief from this kind of painful living. Sometimes we are not so skillful in choosing safe people with whom to share our recovery journey. If we find this is the imperfect result of our actions, rather than condemn ourselves for yet again failing in some way, we persevere with new dignity of purpose remembering that imperfect outcomes are not to be feared, only accepted. We know we have reached a new place in our lives when we come to embrace the “paradox of acceptance.” Briefly explained, it means the way to serenity, ironically, is found not by achieving perfection, as we had always thought, but rather through the acquired discipline of taking regular intervals, at least several times each day, to connect with a power greater than ourselves and to accept—and even embrace—the imperfections any particular moment may bring to us.

Finally, we wish you peace in your recovery work towards this new serenity and we firmly believe that undertaking recovery from work avoidance is a risk well worth taking.

A New Employer

This is the how and the why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. . . . When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, [Higher Power] provided what we needed, if we kept close to [God] and performed [God's] work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of [Higher Power's] presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow, or the hereafter.

Adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book), "How it Works," page 62-63, substituted words in brackets



The Power of Underscheduling

I used to think I was a very honest person. In WA I finally saw how dishonest I was with myself and others. In particular, I was frequently dishonest about how much time it would take to do something, about how long it would take me to get somewhere, and about my limitations and skills. Of course I could get it done! As soon as you need it!

When I came in to WA, I started keeping track of how much time I spent on various projects at work. Whenever I started a new task or project, I would write down the current time with the project name. In this way I learned a lot about how I spend my time at work.

When I had been in WA a few months, my boss gave me a new project, to fact-check a long report. She asked me when I could get it done. Normally I would have guessed, and then started the crazy cycle of working extra hours, stress, and shortchanging other projects to get it done. Instead, I asked if I could get back to her. I decided to start the work and see how much I got done in two hours. I got through a certain number of pages. I then looked at how many pages were in the document, and figured out how many hours I would likely have to spend on the document.

At first I thought I could spend five days a week, all day on this one project. But then I realized I had other responsibilities. In fact, I couldn't take this project on at all if I didn't have something to give up. I turned back to my task log. I had two projects that were ending that week. I could use the time I normally spent on those old projects for this new project. I figured out how many weeks it would take me to finish the new project, based on my average hours per week on the old projects. Then I doubled it, just to be safe and "underschedule."

I told my boss when I could get it done. She told me that was unacceptable, that it had to be done sooner. Again, I was tempted to say "OK, sure." Instead, I explained how I had figured out the amount of

... I could use the time I normally spent on those old projects for this new project. I figured out how many weeks it would take me to finish the new project, based on my average hours per week on the old projects. Then I doubled it, just to be safe and "underschedule." ... I told my boss when I could get it done. She told me that was unacceptable, that it had to be done sooner. Again, I was tempted to say "OK, sure." Instead, I explained how I had figured out the amount of time it would take. ... She said "Can't you just streamline it?" Again, I was tempted to say "sure." But this time I said "What does that mean? Do you want me to check only some of the facts? Only do part of the document? How could I streamline it?" The reason I could discuss this with her that way is because I had honesty on my side. ...

time it would take. If I needed to get it done sooner, we had to take something else off my plate. I suggested that we delay another project assigned to me, or give part of this new project to someone else. None of these suggestions were acceptable to her. She said "Can't you just streamline it?" Again, I was tempted to say "sure." But this time I said "What does that mean? Do you want me to check only some of the facts? Only do part of the document? How could I streamline it?"

The reason I could discuss this with her that way is because I had honesty on my side. She couldn't argue with the facts, which were that I had evidence of how long the project would take, and a record of how much time I spent on other projects. For this project to get done sooner, something had to go.

My boss finally said she would get back to me on this. The next day she called and said that it was OK for me to get it done when I said I could. She wasn't willing to take any other projects away from me in order to get this done sooner.

What a miracle it was to have a project where I didn't have to lie about my progress, or work free over-time to get it done, or skip parts of the work hoping no one would notice! As it turned out, I got the project done early. My boss was happy. And I had some experience with serenity. Now I know when I am feeling rushed or stressed about a project, I probably just need to get honest with myself and my boss about how long it will take.

A Definition of Workaholism Proposed Draft for the W.A. Book of Recovery for Member and Group Review

We workaholics work or keep busy with activity compulsively and leave little or no time to be alone and quiet. Therefore, we usually don't know who we are and what we really feel and want. Work, worry, and activity are the primary focuses in our lives, often excluding others.

We work addicts usually don't respect time, underestimating how much time it will take to do something or trying to do several things at once. Because we have an overwhelming need to be active and productive, we enjoy seeing how much we can do in the least amount of time. It makes us feel worthwhile and alive. Work is our obsession and its adrenaline rush is our drug of choice.

Not realizing how powerless we really are, we seek to control all phases of our lives. We take responsibility for the outcome of our work and worry about how it will make us look. We try to control people and, if we could, the outcome of everything. Distracted by detail, we lose site of our direction. Some of us attempt to control results by compulsively avoiding failing our perfectionistic expectations, which leads to patterns of work and vision avoidance. We usually have little faith in the ability of others, of any higher power, or of universal wisdom.

Many of us experience burnout and work avoidance. After years of this, naturally, our health begins to fail from stress, exhaustion, and health related problems. We may find ourselves alone and isolated, having not bothered to form meaningful relationships or leisure activities. Our love was for work, activity, and perhaps money, which we believed would solve all our problems.

WA World Service Conference Schedule San Francisco, California



Friday, July 30, 2004

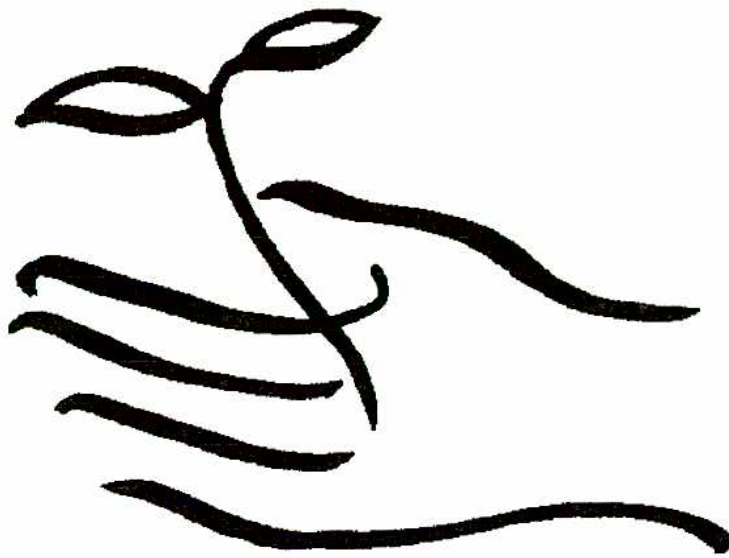
Time	Activity
3:30-5:00	Registration
5:00	Social Hour
6:00	Dinner
7:30	Welcome Meeting
9:00	Bedtime

Saturday, July 31, 2004

Time	Activity
7:00-8:00	Room 1: Early Bird Meeting Room 2: Quiet Time Outside: Morning Ritual (labyrinth walk, meditation)
8:00	Breakfast (Dining Room)
9:00	Silent Auction Begins
9:30	Room 1: Speaker Meeting Room 2: Meeting: Steps 1, 2, 3, 4
11:00	Meeting
12:00	Lunch (Dining Room)
1:30	Room 1: Tools Meeting Room 2: Meeting: Steps 5, 6, 7, 8
3:00	Room 1: Play and Fun Meeting Room 2: Meeting: Steps 9, 10, 11, 12
4:30	Free Time, Outdoor Pool Open
6:00	Dinner (Dining Room)
7:15	Silent Auction Ends
7:30	Meeting: Gratitude
9:00	Bedtime

Sunday, August 1, 2004

Time	Activity
7:00	Room 1: Early Bird Meeting Room 2: Quiet Time Outside: Morning Ritual (labyrinth walk, meditation)
8:00	Breakfast
AM	Room check-out
9:30	Closing Meeting
11:00	Closing Circle
12:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Conference Planning for 2005



The Benefits of Prioritizing

A few months into my W.A. recovery, I felt a pain in my hand when I clicked the mouse on my computer. I clicked again, and felt the pain again. Before W.A., I would have just kept on clicking until I couldn't use my hand anymore. Maybe I would have taken some aspirin.

I had a number of acquaintances who had repetitive strain injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, which had resulted in serious impairment of their ability to do necessary daily activities like dial a telephone. Their injuries had begun with a small pain, but they had continued to work. I already had another disability as a result of my previous compulsive working. I knew I needed to prioritize taking care of this problem. I needed to put off the immediate gratification of completing just one more task.

I called my boss and explained that I needed to find out about alternate mouse technologies, because I did not want this injury to progress. I had to tell a client that my work for them might be delayed. I spent the rest of the day investigating my options. I tried a number of solutions over the next week until I finally found one that worked for me. I also found that I could not work as fast with this new device.

I re-negotiated my deadlines with some clients and with my boss. I had to pray frequently throughout each day, asking my higher power to help me continue to use this new device. I felt the members of my W.A. were the only people who truly understood what I was going through.

I had to let go of my idea that the faster I worked, the more my higher power and others would value me. For me, working more slowly meant I had to turn my entire will and life over to my higher power. What if I get fired? What if we lose clients? What if I can never find another job because I can't work as fast as I used to? Whenever these fears came up, I reaffirmed that I was not willing to risk a permanent disability just so I could work more or faster. I had to trust that my higher power would give me the tools to deal with whatever happened.

More than two years later, I still use this alternative device. I was not fired, and we did not lose clients.

I believe that without W.A., I likely would have continued to work "through the pain" until I was disabled. Instead, every day I am grateful to have the full use of my hand.

Meeting Form to Send Support to W.A. World Service

*Self-supporting contributions nourish a vision of outreach and support
for every suffering workaholic and workaholic in recovery.*

Location and Time of Meeting: _____

Date of Donation: _____

Amount: _____

Check #: _____

Member Sending in Donation: _____

Meeting Contact Information: _____

Thanks for your generous support!

Make all checks payable to W.A.-W.S.O.- Send to PO Box 289 Menlo Park, CA 94026 USA

