

# Revised Twenty Questions: How Do I Know If I'm A Workaholic?

1. Are you more drawn to your work or activity than close relationships, rest, etc.?
2. Are there times when you are motivated and push through tasks when you don't even want to and other times when you procrastinate and avoid them when you would prefer to get things done?
3. Do you take work with you to bed? On weekends? On vacation?
4. Are you more comfortable talking about your work than other topics?
5. Do you pull all-nighters?
6. Do you resent your work or the people at your workplace for imposing so many pressures on you?
7. Do you avoid intimacy with others and/or yourself?
8. Do you resist rest when tired and use stimulants to stay awake longer?
9. Do you take on extra work or volunteer commitments because you are concerned that things won't otherwise get done?
10. Do you regularly underestimate how long something will take and then rush to complete it?
11. Do you immerse yourself in activities to change how you feel or avoid grief, anxiety, and shame?
12. Do you get impatient with people who have other priorities besides work?
13. Are you afraid that if you don't work hard all the time, you will lose your job or be a failure?
14. Do you fear success, failure, criticism, burnout, financial insecurity, or not having enough time?
15. Do you try to multitask to get more done?
16. Do you get irritated when people ask you to stop doing what you're doing in order to do something else?
17. Have your long hours caused injury to your health or relationships?
18. Do you think about work or other tasks while driving, conversing, falling asleep, or sleeping?
19. Do you feel agitated when you are idle and/or hopeless that you'll ever find balance?
20. Do you feel like a slave to your email, texts, or other technology?

## The Problem - Characteristics of Workaholics

1. It is very difficult for us to relax. We often, if not always, feel the need to get just a few more tasks done before we can feel good about ourselves and allow ourselves to relax. When we do complete these

tasks we find just a few more that we need to complete, and then a few more.... These uncontrollable desires often result in frantic, compulsive working. We are powerless to control this pattern.

2. We are so used to doing what we are expected to do that we are often unable to know what it is that we really want to do and need to do for ourselves.
3. We often feel that we must complete certain tasks, even though we do not want to, yet we are too scared to stop.
4. We often feel resentment about having to complete tasks when we would rather relax or play. At these times we procrastinate, usually wallowing in self-pity and self-judgment. We become absorbed by our "stinking thinking," cannot concentrate on the task at hand, and yet are too scared to give up the task for a moment and allow ourselves the space we need.
5. Our sense of self-esteem is based largely on our perceptions of how others judge our performance at work and in other areas of our lives.
6. We often think of ourselves as either the most intelligent, capable people we know or the most incapable and worthless people we know.
7. It is hard for us to see ourselves honestly and accept who we really are.
8. We often betray ourselves by giving in to the demands of people whom we perceive as being in "authority."
9. We operate out of the mini-crisis mode, using this as an escape from experiencing our true emotions.
10. We do not often experience true serenity.
11. We have an obsessive desire to understand everything in our lives, including our every emotion. We cannot allow ourselves to experience emotions that we do not understand, fearing our loss of control.
12. We have an underlying fear that if we give up control and allow our emotions to surface, we will become raving lunatics for the rest of our lives.
13. We judge ourselves by our accomplishments and hence have the illusion that we must always be in the process of accomplishing something worthwhile in order to feel good about ourselves.
14. We cannot sit down and just be.
15. We often go on intense work binges with the illusion that we need to get the praise of our fellow workers and bosses in order to feel OK.
16. We have the illusion that people will like us more if we appear more competent than we actually are.
17. Often when we are praised by others we tend to discount ourselves as not worthy of their praise.
18. We tend to schedule ourselves for more than we can handle, believing people will like us more if we can do more and do it faster.
19. We are often dishonest about our past experiences and our present capabilities, tending to not mention our failures and to exaggerate our successes. We believe that people will not respect us or like us just as we are.
20. We hurt inside.

## **The Tools and Principles of Workaholics**

**Anonymous**

## **W.A. Tools of Recovery**

### **Listening**

We set aside time each day for prayer and meditation. Before accepting any commitments, we ask our Higher Power and W.A. friends for guidance.

### **Prioritizing**

We decide which are the most important things to do first. Sometimes that may mean doing nothing. We strive to stay flexible to events, reorganizing our priorities as needed. We view interruptions and accidents as opportunities for growth.

### **Substituting**

We do not add a new activity without eliminating from our schedule one that demands equivalent time and energy.

### **Underscheduling**

We allow more time than we think we need for a task or trip, allowing a comfortable margin to accommodate the unexpected.

### **Playing**

We schedule time for play, refusing to let ourselves work non-stop. We do not make our play into a work project.

### **Concentrating**

We try to do one thing at a time.

### **Pacing**

We work at a comfortable pace and rest before we get tired. To remind ourselves, we check our level of energy before proceeding to our next activity. We do not get "wound up" in our work, so we don't have to unwind.

### **Relaxing**

We do not yield to pressure from others or attempt to pressure others. We remain alert to the people and situations that trigger feelings of pressure in us. We become aware of our own actions, words, body sensations and feelings that tell us we are responding with pressure. When we feel energy building up, we stop; we reconnect with our Higher Power and others around us.

### **Accepting**

We accept the outcomes of our endeavors, whatever the results, whatever the timing. We know that impatience, rushing and insisting on perfect results only slow down our recovery. We are gentle with our efforts, knowing that our new way of living requires much practice.

### **Asking**

We admit our weaknesses and mistakes. We realize we don't have to do everything ourselves, and we ask our Higher Power and others for help.

### **Meetings**

We attend W.A. meetings to learn how the fellowship works and to share our experience, strength and hope with each other.

### **Telephoning**

We use the telephone to stay in contact with members of the fellowship between meetings. We communicate with our W.A. friends before and after a critical task.

### **Balancing**

We balance our involvement in work with our efforts to develop personal relationships, spiritual growth, creativity and playful attitudes.

### **Serving**

We readily extend help to other workaholics, knowing that assistance to others adds to the quality of our own recovery.

### **Living in the Now**

We realize we are where our Higher Power wants us to be - in the here and now. We try to live each moment with serenity, joy and gratitude.

## **W.A. Principles of Recovery**

### **Abstinence**

In Workaholics Anonymous, abstinence means to abstain from compulsive working, activity, worry, and work avoidance. For many workaholics, abstinence means far more than relief from compulsive working on a physical level. It also means an attitude that comes as a result of surrendering to something greater than ourselves. Abstinence means not only freedom from compulsive working but also freedom from compulsive thinking and worrying. Each of us is free to determine our own way of being abstinent according to personal needs and preferences. Bottom lines define the point where we cross over from abstinence to work addiction. The tool of abstinence includes working with a sponsor to establish and maintain personal bottom lines, top lines, and guidelines for recovery as well as seeking support around bottom line behavior.

## **Sponsorship**

Sponsors are Workaholics Anonymous members who are committed to abstinence from compulsive working. They offer guidance through the recovery process on all three levels: physical, emotional and spiritual. Specifically, they can help us with tools such as work plans, phone calls, and working the Steps. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will. Sometimes it is more practical to enter into a co-sponsoring arrangement. We become a sponsor or co-sponsor as a way of working The Twelfth Step: to carry the Workaholics Anonymous message and to put the principles of the program into practice. We ask to be sponsored or co-sponsored so we can benefit from the experience of someone who has achieved what we want. Ours is a program of attraction, so we find a sponsor who has what we want and ask how they achieved it.

## **Writing**

Often, writing clarifies our thoughts and helps us get to the root of the feelings that lie behind our compulsive working. It is an action that fosters self-reliance because we can write even when no one is available for us to talk with. Writing for ourselves may give us clarity over talking. This is partly because when we talk with other people we may find our choice of words and subjects are affected by our interaction with our audience. Writing records our expressions in a way that helps us understand what we are trying to say. Writings can be shared with others if we want to use them as a form of communication.

## **Action Plan**

We put on paper what we intend to do each day for our relationships, our activities, and ourselves. This helps us develop a healthier and more balanced lifestyle. It also helps us to overcome denial. Sharing our plan with another person gives us an opportunity to express feelings that are often at the root of our compulsive behavior.

## **Humor**

Seeing the funny side of our predicament can help free us from anxiety and worry.

## **Time Out**

We workaholics have found that having fun and relaxing are essential tools in our recovery from workaholism. By setting aside time for playfulness and for unstructured events without goals, we learn that there is more to life than our former identities around work and activity. Play and fun help heal us to live in the present moment, rather than driving ourselves for hoped-for fulfillment in some faraway future time.

## **Nurturing**

We nurture our bodies with healthy eating, exercise and rest. We nurture our minds by looking for positive aspects in every encounter. We nurture our spirits by surrounding ourselves with beauty, harmony, and tranquility. We recognize we are neither what we do nor what we feel. We foster our sense of self-worth and self-respect.

## **Literature**

Literature is a source of information, insight, experience, strength and hope. Reading on a daily basis impresses the truth on us and expands our horizons. This can be vital to our growth and reinforces our

program of recovery. Program literature is an ever-available tool that gives insight into our problems, strength to deal with them and the knowledge that there is a process of recovery for us. We also study the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve Step programs to strengthen our understanding of compulsive disease. We can identify with many of the situations described by substituting the words "compulsive working" for alcohol.

### **Anonymity**

Anonymity means that whatever we share with another member is held in respect and confidence. It helps us place principles before personalities. It offers us freedom of expression and protection against gossip. The tradition of anonymity means that we do not publicly disclose in the media our full names in connection with Workaholics Anonymous.

### **The Twelve Steps**

Recovery from compulsive work and activity can be achieved by undertaking the Twelve Steps of Workaholics Anonymous. These Steps provide a source of hope as well as a structured way to achieve progress. Moving from one Step to another may take varying amounts of effort and time. We may revisit Steps and find new meanings in them. Ultimately, we find we practice the Steps by fully integrating them into our lives. We can create a Step group at our meetings and work the Steps together.

### **Meditation**

For many of us, being still and sitting quietly are difficult and painful at first. The practice of letting go of the constant chatter in our heads can lead to a gradually evolving peace of mind. This serenity is a soothing, healing contrast to the excitement, rush, and pleasurable intensity we have sought through our over-work, compulsive activity, and constant worry. Meditation lets us experience ourselves insulated from fears, insecurities, and resentments that drive work avoidance and the compulsivity of workaholism. Renewed, we are able to move back into our daily lives in a balanced way.

Appears as pages 11-15 in the [W.A. Book of Recovery](#).

## **The Gifts of Rest**

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.

Originally appears as pages 204-205 in the [W.A. Book of Recover](#)

## **The Promises of Workaholics Anonymous**

If we are completely honest about ourselves and together we use the Twelve Steps of Workaholics Anonymous and the Tools of W.A. in our lives, we will soon begin to receive these gifts of sanity and balance:

1. We are not obsessed by work or plagued by work aversion.
2. Adrenaline seeking loses its hold on us. Excessive worry and anxiety become a thing of the past.
3. We have a daily plan of action that faces the reality of time, priorities, health, and relationships.
4. Fears that there won't be enough time, money or love leave us.
5. We learn to play and have fun together.
6. We repair broken relationships and form new ones.
7. Health and self-nurturance return.
8. Self-seeking and ego inflation do not drive our decisions.
9. We lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in and compassion for our partners, families, co-workers, and friends.
10. We experience how well the tools of the program help us handle problems which used to confuse and defeat us.
11. We ask for help and reach out to help others.
12. We find that our Higher Power helps us in a way self-reliance never could.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are already happening in the lives of many among us. For those of you who are new to our fellowship, there are no problems that you have experienced that are not common to us. We welcome you with the deepest respect. When we apply this program with honesty and compassion, a place of serenity grows in us one day at a time.

Appears as pages 15-16 in the [W.A. Book of Recovery](#).

## **Characteristics of Recovery**

1. We are able to speak with phrases such as: I don't know. I was wrong. I made a mistake. I'm sorry. I can't. I need help. I don't remember. I don't understand. So what? Who cares? Compared to what?



2. We are able to say: I hurt. I'm uncomfortable with what you said. I'm afraid. I'm sad. I'm lonely. I feel like goofing off. I feel silly.
3. We accept that others need not always be happy. We don't fight their feelings with logic or distraction.
4. We believe that many people can do all or most of what we do - as well as we can, or better.
5. We know that others have limits. We don't expect to predict the future or read minds. We know that failures and incomplete projects are part of the learning process. We realize that no matter how fast or efficiently we work, there are only 24 hours in a day.
6. We respect our body instead of fighting it. We realize that feeling ill or tired is part of the human experience. We rely on intuition and inner timing and rhythm.
7. We accept that everyone may not like us.
8. We can refuse responsibility or requests. We can say no without feeling guilty. We nurture ourselves and give from our overflow.
9. We delay, delegate, and lower performance standards, when needed.
10. We realize that it is okay to be inconsistent. We find our own mistakes a continuing source of humor.
11. While communicating, we notice people's states and respond to them rather than being solely focused on the matter at hand.
12. We value joy over efficiency. We understand the importance of rest and play. We think of work as part but not all of life.
13. We believe everyone has intrinsic value, whether they work or not.
14. We realize we are valued by how we treat others, not by what we own or produce or by how hard we work. We know that people don't care how much we know until they know how much we care.
15. We realize we can't push growth. We know we can't change, control, or rescue anyone. We have reasonable expectations for ourselves and for others.
16. We live in the present without regretting the past or fearing the future.
17. We believe that others who are part of a joint venture share responsibility for bad or good outcomes.
18. We accept change, the unexpected, and conflict as part of life.
19. We trust our developing relationship with our Higher Power, and we embrace our goodness and serenity.

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