Are You a Hard Worker or a Workaholic?

Some Signs You Might Need to Pull Back on Work

Technology is a profession full of many hard-working professionals. A dedication to delivering results may keep you at your desk well into the night cranking out code or perfecting the presentation that's due the next morning.

But it may be more than a commitment to excellence. When the work becomes all-consuming, it may, in fact, be a problem.

Are You a Workaholic?

Unlike people who simply work very hard, workaholics never punch out. They always feel like they are on the clock, 24/7, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

They are more genuinely enthusiastic about work than anything else in their lives, even family and friends. And there's nothing that person would rather be doing than working.

What Are the Trouble Signs?

You might be a workaholic if:

- You can't stop thinking about work. Work issues distract you from relationships and you routinely cancel personal activities in favor of work. Nothing – not eating, socializing, or sleeping – is as satisfying.
- You are a perfectionist. You don't accept mistakes as part of being human and you find it hard to ask for help.
- You have trouble delegating. Because you believe no one can meet your standards, you have difficulty delegating work, no matter how routine the task.
- You find it hard to relax. You feel guilty and restless when not working.
- You grew up in chaotic households. Stress and intensity therefore feel normal to you

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and you seek these conditions out in the workplace.

- Home is not a haven – it is an extension of the workplace.
- You tend to over-schedule your life. You put undue pressure and unrealistic deadlines on yourself. You are constantly racing to beat the clock and are ever fearful of getting behind.

Break the habit

Workaholism can be conquered. But, like any addiction, it requires a commitment on the part of the addict. The first step is acknowledging that there is a problem. So often, a workaholic is the last to realize a problem exists. Ask your spouse, significant other, or a close friend if they think you're a workaholic.

Since workaholism is a deeply ingrained habit, change takes time. Here are three steps you can take to overcome workaholism include:

1. Schedule down time.

Commit to activities that are energizing and fulfill needs that are not related to work. Try a new hobby, spend time with family, or go on a vacation. Take small steps, at first. For instance, don't eat lunch at your desk every day.

Take a lunch break to recharge your batteries and refocus your energies for the afternoon ahead.

2. Set boundaries.

While technology has given many workers more freedom, it has also blurred the lines between work and home. Constant interruptions about issues related to work diminish your ability to recharge during time off. By setting boundaries, you will actually enhance your work performance. Be sure that co-workers understand the characteristics of a true work emergency and limit office communication outside work hours to legitimate emergencies.

3. Learn to delegate.

Recognize that none of us can be successful or productive at work on our own. This is hard for perfectionists, so start small, such as sharing routine tasks with co-workers. In the long run, you'll have more time and energy to focus on what you do best.

If workaholism is a problem for you or someone you know, visit www.workaholics-anonymous.org for more strategies on how to break the habit.

How do you know if you're a workaholic? Take the quiz at www.workaholics-anonymous.org/knowing.html

References:

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Hi, I'm Joan, and I'm a workaholic. USA Today. www.usatoday.com/money/workplace/2007-05-22-workaholics_N.htm