



Are You a Workaholic?

Is your family, social and leisure time becoming indistinguishable from your work time? Do you find inactivity intolerable? These are characteristics of a workaholic lifestyle. Recognizing these behavior patterns and attitudes can be an important first step. Understanding why they occur can help free you from the narrow focus on work and lead you to a broader, deeper focus on a balanced, healthy life.

WORKAHOLIC DEFINED

Workaholics are people who find themselves irresistibly attracted to work. They're addicted to the activity, not necessarily the products, of work. Inactivity, even the idea of not working, is discomfiting—in some cases, agonizing—to them.

Workaholics work continuous, excessive hours as a way of escaping from a problem or as a means of enhancing their sense of control over their lives. Many become reliant upon work as a source of personal identity and worth.

TYPES OF WORKAHOLICS

While workaholics share similar qualities and traits, the reasons for their addiction vary. Three of the more common types of workaholics are: hostile, competitive and defensive work addicts. Hostile types characteristically find work a socially acceptable means of discharging aggressive energy. Competitive types perceive work to be a means of proving themselves, both to themselves and to others. Defensive types use work as an escape—a means of avoiding guilt, grief, frustration or other disturbing thoughts or feelings.

RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM

If you've been receiving friendly hints from your coworkers that maybe you should lighten up or slow down a bit, or if your family has been expressing concern about your appar-

ent devotion to your job, then it may be time you paid some friendly, concerned attention to the possibility that you're developing an addiction to work. Consider the following:

- Do you feel guilty when not working?
- Are you uneasy when on vacation?
- Do you read only work-related literature?
- Do you communicate better with coworkers than with family and friends?
- Do you constantly work under a great deal of tension?
- Do you equate success with hard work?
- Do you have difficulty getting involved in activities other than work?
- Do you take pleasure in telling others how hard and how long you work?
- Do you work when you could be relaxing?
- Do you prefer being at work to being anywhere else?

Answering "yes" to several of these questions does not make you a workaholic, but may indicate a tendency or movement in that direction.

DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM

Once you've recognized that you work compulsively or have other attributes of a workaholic personality, you can begin to work on changing the "why" and "how" of your work.

Workaholics need to reorganize their priorities regarding family and work. Ask yourself, "Is work truly more important than my family and loved ones?" Undoubtedly, it's not. By limiting your time at work and devoting that time and energy to your family, you'll not only give them assurance of your love, but also give them a chance to love and help you. This doesn't mean that you can't work hard, but balance is the key. A happy, healthy person has a life of many facets and many types of successes.