

STORYLINE

From Workaholics Anonymous

April 2012



“Our primary purpose is to stop working compulsively and to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer”

News from the Workaholics Anonymous Board:

Meet the board members:

Drew D., **Facilitator**, who runs the board meetings and represents the legal aspects of WA.

Bruce D., **Secretary**, who schedules the Board meetings, prepares minutes of the proceedings and facilitates the interactions and communications between Board members and committees.

Peter S., **Treasurer**, who has been a member of WA and the Board for many years.

Terry A., **Registrar**, who keeps track of the details of meetings, their locations and times.

Michele S., **Outreach Coordinator**, who handles all media requests, publishing the eNewsletter and the developing of new means of outreach.

Susan S., **Literature**, who is in charge of development of new literature.

Sandi S., **Fulfillment Coordinator**, does all the work of inventorying and shipping purchased literature. She is not a voting member of the board, but attends the meetings.

Jerry S., **Communications Coordinator**, receives and answers telephone, letter and email requests for all kinds of information.

Daniel M., **Undesignated Trustee #1**

Laura R., **Undesignated Trustee #2**, who is serving as Webmaster with oversight of our internet presence.

Harry W., **Undesignated Trustee #3**, heads the committee that publishes the quarterly STORY LINE

Undesignated Trustee #4, open.

The following WA Committees are looking for new members:

* **Outreach:** a committee to plan new strategies to for reaching out to existing and prospective members: outreachATworkaholics-anonymous.org

* **Meeting Development:** a committee focused on providing support for new or existing meetings and to create a plan for new meetings to follow. For those interested in receiving or becoming a Meeting Group Mentor, please contact lauradawnATgmail.com

* **STORY LINE:** our new quarterly periodical, staffed by a committee with rotating tasks. If you are interested in participating in the production of STORY LINE, contact: storylineATworkaholics-anonymous.org.

* **Other committees** are constantly being created as the need arises. Please let us know of your interest in serving by emailing: wsoATworkaholics-anonymous.org.

At a recent WA Board meeting several things were discussed of interest to the fellowship, including:

* The **2012 Conference** will not be held in Los Angeles, but rather, it will take place near Portland, Oregon at the Menucha Retreat Center (please check our website: www.workaholics-anonymous.org under "NEWS" for flyer/details). The dates are Friday September 14 through Sunday lunch the 16th. A pre-conference chance to "meet up" will be Thursday evening, September 13th. Hope to see you all there!

* Plans are being made to have another **7th Tradition** contribution effort to:
- finance scholarships to the 2012 Conference
- overhaul our WA website to make it less prone to breakdown and easier to maintain
- and to create radio and TV public service announcements about WA.

* WA is into the second printing of "**The Book of Discovery**", which is being purchased at similar levels as "**The Book of Recovery.**"

* **SPOKESPERSON:** The WA Board is seeking a non-WA professional person to be on our board to help our functioning and to act as spokesperson to the wider public. If you have ideas on a candidate for this position, please contact: wso@workaholics-anonymous.org

* **A REQUEST** to each WA Group: Please confirm your meeting information (contacts, location, details, et.) by checking the Meeting section of the www.workaholics-anonymous.org website. If changes are in order, please inform: registrar@workaholics-anonymous.org

* A list of **Telephone Sponsors** has been assembled and continues to be updated. If you are willing to be a Telephone Sponsor, or are seeking a Telephone Sponsor, please contact the Communications Coordinator (Jerry): communications@workaholics-anonymous.org In the interest of privacy, the contact information of prospective sponsees will be provided only to sponsors, who will then contact them. Many people do not have a meeting or sponsors available where they live. This is a very valuable service that members with recovery can offer to "those who still suffer." Please consider offering your time and attention to this worthy cause.

* Our **WA trademark** is now officially registered with the US Patent and Trademark Office.

* **24/7 Fellowship Line for WA**

Workaholics Anonymous has secured a twenty-four hour conference call telephone number for all our members around the world to check in with each other at the "top" of every hour of the day and night. Check with your local service provider, as they may charge you for your call. You may find others on the line; or you may not. It is *not* monitored by WAWSO. It is public, unrecorded, and is there solely for the purpose of our members' check-ins, bookends, and fellowship. The number to call in the US is 1-559-546-1301 with an access code of 317307#. For numbers in other countries, check our website under "Meetings" and scroll to "24 Hour Phone Line".

* The **Literature Committee** consists of one board member and WA members from England, Portugal, Germany and Brazil. They are currently working on a WA Daily Meditation book, which will be authored by members of the fellowship. They are looking for meditation submissions. Please note: WA must have a fully completed, signed and dated release form for each meditation submitted. Currently the Literature committee has almost 50 meditations for consideration. For more information on Literature, email literature@workaholics-anonymous.org.

Other News:

Elections: World Service Representatives (WSR's) will be receiving nomination forms very soon which are to be circulated in the meetings. All WA members can nominate someone (including themselves) for any position. All 12 Step programs consider their structure as top down, with the members at the top. The Board serves at the convenience of the membership and invites the fellowship to take an interest in Board activities.

From members of our fellowship

Procrastination and perfectionism

For me, my procrastination was rooted in perfectionism. I was reminded recently, if I didn't do things perfectly, I didn't want to do them at all.

The three P's: Perfectionism, leads to
Procrastination, which leads to the deadly
Paralysis.

So, I do things imperfectly. Awkwardly. But I do them. I have found that any action, no matter how small, helps me to overcome the procrastination. This can be applied to:

Work projects
Folding laundry
Putting away the dishes
Making the bed (which, despite my former belief, does not take 45 minutes!)

-from a member of the fellowship, Chicago



The 12 Steps as a second language

I've been thinking about the 12 Steps of Workaholics Anonymous as learning a second language. In WA, I found a vocabulary of new words and of old words with new meanings.

Underscheduling: For me, this is a totally new concept, not a way to fill time, but to create spaces within time.

Surrendering to a Higher Power: I could not conceive of a Higher Power until I could understand the word "surrender".

Listening: I had no idea that really paying attention to another human being allowed me to experience the clarity and compassion that comes with it.

A Fearless Moral Inventory: Before coming to the 12 Steps, such a thing was out of the question or else to be put off to the very distant future.

Living in the Now: When I was speeding through life, I had passed "now", before I noticed it.

Spirituality: This was only a vague thought. Meditation, surrender and the release from fears and resentments has presented broad new opportunities for me.

These are just a few examples of WA language, and is more than old words spoken with a new accent. It is softer, more patient, kinder and more accepting of who I am and the outcomes of my

endeavors. It is a language that includes self-care, play, slowing down, paying kind attention to self and others, relaxing, being of service to others. It is more than a new way of speaking; it leads to a new way of living. And like learning a new language, it takes practice, so that the behavior and thinking correspond to this new way of being. As I have grown older, the more difficult it has become to learn a new language, and the best way seems to be to live in the new country, speak the language every day, limit my choices to what is available there and allow the old automatic word choices to fade away.

-from a member of our fellowship



Keep STORY LINE going

Day after day we experience time passing, sometimes disappearing, before we have even a chance to savor it. Meanings, novelties, and breathtaking sights—these beauties surround us in abundance during our waking hours. How is it that our attention may not grasp them and “seize the day” as folk wisdom suggests we should?

There are times in my life when the world seems blurred, much like the view through a window on a quickly moving train ride. My eyes are trained to see the same things each day, all the while distorting my outlook on the bigger picture of life. I don’t exactly know how I became “blinded”. It wasn’t until writing in my journal one evening that I realized I had not much to say. In turning back to pages of my past entries, I saw an unsettling image of myself, one fixated on what I did and absent of my feelings, values and dreams. No wonder that I lost my ability to see the world. The words I used to define my life detached me from myself, so much that my story was nothing about *me*.

I am both comforted and saddened by not being alone in facing this experience. It seems to me that many of us quite literally get so caught up in our lives each day that we don’t realize the stories we tell ourselves. Do we think to question moments we unnoticeably take for granted? Have we so much as even considered creating a different story to tell and, in turn, a different way to live? What is the story we *want* to tell?

Upon asking myself these questions, I am reminded of innocent daydreams I envisioned as a child. I had an eye for colorful scenery, a taste for ice cream cones lathered with sprinkles, an appreciation for people I admired and a love for moments of play and fun. I lived in a storied world filled with passion, hope, and possibility. Have I lost these qualities or have I simply forgotten to “write” them into the story I live today?

Let us consider ourselves authors of our lives. We have the ability to choose our own words and descriptions to paint a scene for our eyes to then see. My life changed significantly when I began paying attention to and editing my story. I reflected on moments of appreciation and started looking at my surroundings differently, to search for inspiration to incorporate into my narrative. Simply put, I began rewriting my life. This process awakened me to experience myself more, reclaim my sense of appreciation, and clear my view to see the subtle yet valuable gifts that life offers each day.

Storytelling itself is a gift, one that not only “gives” meaning to our lives, but also creates possibilities for the lives of readers and listeners. Upon hearing others’ stories, we receive a new viewpoint for imagining possibilities that weren’t visible before in our own horizons. Stories call us to action—to create new meaning and, in response, create new stories to pass on for others to witness. As readers and writers of the *Storyline*, we have the opportunity to be co-authors of one another’s lives, giving and receiving words of wisdom, struggle, humor, and faith

-from Laura R.



The 7th Step

“Humbly asked God (as we understand God) to remove our shortcomings.”

This Step involves more than a quick read reveals. The first word “humbly” needs to be present in us before the asking. The ending words: “our shortcomings” are not a request for a laundry list of our problems and dissatisfactions. One way of looking at this is to realize that what we want to be rid of are the very things we have put in the way of our recovery. To ask a Higher Power to rid us of our problems without dealing with our role in creating them does not sound like humility.

In a recent conversation with a person who had spent several years in prison, I was told that the only way to come out whole is by learning full humility. He explained that this means to cease struggling against the system, the guards, the fellow prisoners, the food, the loneliness, and the complete loss of freedom of action. It means accepting **what is**; this definition of humility is “non-struggle”. Only by realizing that the struggle was only amplifying itself, is it possible to become entirely ready. This readiness is not passive, hoping it will happen without further effort on our part, it is the result of deep self-examination. In Step 7, we need to gain the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, which is the humble preparation for all that follows.

- from a member of our fellowship



Now visible

I often continue with thinking and behaviors that I am trying to change, but if there were an easy way to make the necessary changes, I would already have made them. There is a phenomenon that when an optician shines a bright light obliquely into my eye, I suddenly can see the capillaries that feed the retina, which I did not see before. When I asked why, it was explained that the brain filters out this scrim as it has decided that this is useless information. My brain was making this decision on its own. This allowed me to understand that I only see what I want to see and am unable to perceive the rest. This applies to looking at my problems. Merely “willing” to see does not make a difference, I

need to get a new perspective. I believe that in life new ways of seeing happen when I am not applying will and logic, but leave myself open to something else (Higher Power? Intuition? Free association? Luck? - Take your pick). When I entered WA, the Steps felt challenging but I took them on, sensing that I needed to spend time with each Step in order to make it meaningful for me. Out of these encounters, new ways of seeing appeared that I had been blind to, but now have become visible.

- from a member of our fellowship



Song of insanity

Or How am I powerless?.... Let me count the ways....

Chorus

*Oh, man, I'm so tired. Why aren't there forty-eight hours in a day?
You'd like to get together? This week, too much to do -
How about never? Is never good for you?*

Every day, meditate and pray, write in the morning and write at night,
Daily renewals and 10th steps too, can't stop now, there's more to do,
Call my sponsor and sponsees call - feel so guilty 'cause I can't do it all -

Isometric exercise to cure arthritis, strength training, walk a mile, and stretch at night,
Time with little Margot, play with the cat, rush around, do it all in 40 seconds flat,
Cooking, chopping, measuring to keep me on the beam - where, oh, where is the time to dream?

Chorus

Show up at my job, keep alert and strong,
Squeeze in emails, errands while the day goes on,
Home by 6:00 and practice harp and voice,
Plants, birds, shredding mail, where is the choice?

Chorus

Weekly chores and meetings fill my schedule to the brim.
Money records, gig rehearsals - where is there to trim?
Now they say to sleep 8 hours, take some time for fun!
Spend some time with special friends? So sorry, gotta run.

Chorus

Seven phone calls to return and L__ who wants to talk.
M__ is not at work today and wants to take a walk.
Therapy and haircuts - how can I keep it straight?
For rest and relaxation, I guess I'll have to wait.

- from Margot C.

[music not immediately available]

I wanted to share on underscheduling and don't think I have yet. I used to allow myself a 15 minute cushion. Example: Rehearsal called for 7:30 pm? My Personal Call for that rehearsal was 7:15 pm. I'd endeavor to get there ahead of time. That, surprisingly, brought me a bit more stress, as I turned into "scramble boy" yet again trying to meet it. Now, I have set my estimated time of arrival (at a play, rehearsal, work, etc.) at 30 minutes before. I cannot tell you how much more peace that has given me. I actually have some (however manufactured) down time when I arrive somewhere so I am not a frazzled wire.

- from a member of the fellowship

A prayer

Greater Wisdom, help me remember that happiness and safety can only be found in surrendering to this very moment of life, exactly as it is.

- When I'm caught in obsessive worry, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I'm gripped by perfectionism, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I'm building a case in my head that I'm not good enough, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I feel judging, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I want to control, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I'm driven to know things and be right, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I want to outdo or fix someone else, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I'm tempted to withhold myself from life and others, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I'm feeling defensive, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- When I'm tempted to complain, help me let go and choose peace instead.
- Remind me always that I have enough, I do enough, I am enough; and that this moment contains all I will ever need for absolute happiness.

- from a member of our fellowship



The trials of a lawyer

In my years in D.C., I worked twelve-hour days. Litigation ruled my life like nothing had before. My conscience told me timeouts longer than a weekend were just self-indulgent luxuries compared to what my clients faced. Even weekends at our cottage in Virginia's countryside saw my concentration leap-frog from the problems of one client to another. *Am I prepared for all appearances in court next week? Should I dig deeper for more facts? What new legal research might I do? Have I filed every useful motion? Have I found the most effective strategy? Is there a novel theory I can wrap around this case?* My wife, Drusilla joked about my "file-folder mind," the way I focused totally on one case, then jumped to another with the same intensity. What we both realized—but couldn't yet discuss— was my inability to walk up to my mental file-cabinet and slam shut its drawers.

One day I felt doubts about the trial-lawyer life rattling in my consciousness. Fidelity to freedom law had not slackened one iota but my soul began to feel frayed. Had I been whumped by litigation burnout? This happened long before I'd learned about the subtleties of workaholism. Since I wasn't ready to acknowledge this disease, a short-term tonic would have been a little rest and relaxation. But I brushed aside this simple remedy. Refusing to accept fatigue and stress, I treated them as threats to my self-image and career. As I look back upon this time, it's clear I'd let my loyalty to freedom law completely justify my workaholic life. Learning how to make things happen in a courthouse made me feel powerful and needed. Moreover these preoccupations served to stiff-arm existential fears and risks of real intimacy— even with my wife. With the fervor I employed to argue for defendants, I had rationalized my duty-bounded life: *Sorry, can't take time for other things— clients must come first.* Only later would I realize I'd trapped myself inside a toxic paradox: Pursuing freedom for my clients, I had given up my own.

Years later I decided I must probe the politics of my subconscious, ferret out the silent deals it had made that let large chunks of me be run by forces hidden from my sight. That led me to unearth addiction in my life. From adolescence onward I had always wanted to achieve and to excel— in everything from music, sports, and scholarships to winning courtroom trials. These traits weren't evil in themselves but in me they took a toxic twist: I *needed* to achieve; I was *driven* to excel. I couldn't *live* except in constant motion, fearing silence, shunning immobility. I couldn't fall asleep unless I first checked off a list of my accomplishments. Every project must be done on time and perfectly. If competing with another— I'd invent a rival if there wasn't one – my work must be superior.

As I began to shoulder more self-honesty, I realized my endless search for conquests didn't come from my free will. I seemed powerless to keep from taking on new tasks and finishing them obsessively. I was addicted to activity. How to grapple with this baffling malady? I sought support from others like myself. Starting San Diego's chapter of Workaholics Anonymous, I later helped launch W.A.'s World Service Organization. Meeting every week with fellow addicts gave me fortitude and insight. Together, we began to realize we had been running to a phantom that held out promises of status and self-worth, if only we engaged in ceaseless work. Our culture worships this chimera. It slathers guarantees of money, power, and prestige as it devours true believers' lives, alchemizing human beings to human Doings. Tragically, practitioners display their workaholic yokes with pride or treat this life-devouring syndrome as a joke.

I was finally led to discover that fear was feeding my addiction. Of course, hard-wired inside every human's DNA is prehistoric dread of yawning saber-teeth. But my Scottish Highland genes and a dysfunctional childhood nurtured mine beyond the norm. In the courtroom my warrior self had been constantly on guard for any fact or witness that could leap out, botch my evidence, stunt my strategy, foil my argument, lock my client in a cage, or make me look the fool. It wasn't hard for me to see how fear kept me vigilant in court. But outside court denial cloaked the subtle ways fear ran my life, while machismo tried to hide my apprehension from the world. Eventually I found the guts to see how large a role it played. Since my self-image and beliefs staked out the familiar, anything that menaced them could kick my fear awake.

Fueled by rushes of adrenalin, the fighter in me always focused on external foes and never peered inside. Every conquest temporarily eased my need for managing – until another threat arose. After years of shooting daily fixes of adrenalin – with my workaholic's rationale to justify

it all – I’d become a full-fledged junkie. Compared to substance-addicts in recovery, I was double taxed: I had to cope with my addiction to the workaholic process plus my drug of choice.

The big question stalked me through my adolescence and four troubled Harvard years, until I placed all my chips upon a trial-law career. Then I could boldly wave at any passing mirror, “Hi, there – I’m a freedom lawyer.” When I settled into academe as a law professor, the dimmer this self-image grew. Attending law-school graduations, watching students march down roads of destiny, freedom lawyer offered muffled maybes to my edgy soul: *Maybe next year you’ll return to court; maybe then you’ll regain your identity.*

The leisure available as a law professor carried further hazards to my former sense of self. Other roles grew brighter: teacher, counselor, ex-musician, husband, father, friend. One day I paused before two facing mirrors at a gym. Suddenly I heard a mocking voice: *Will the real Campbell please step forth?* Fear stuck me with its hypodermic. With mirrors on both sides, I was sandwiched by an endless row of opposites: freedom lawyer versus warrior; litigator versus teacher; poet versus academic; feeler versus reasoner; dreamer versus doer; jock v. scholar; polemicist v. ponderer. No longer could I duck these warring contradictions; for years they had been feuding in my gut. Fear made me try to conquer all inconsistencies. Some days I boosted this adrenalin with alcohol and other drugs. But no matter what I tried, the fighter never vanquished either one of an opposing pair.

Each time the warrior dropped his sword, I felt a surge of peace and energy. Finally right-side up in life, I began investigating how conditioned thoughts had nurtured fear, intensified my restlessness, blurred my eyesight, and consumed my energy. Looking back, I saw I’d blended workaholicism, fear, and conquest into a compelling trinity. From their throne in my unconscious they had ruled me with the power of an unexamined god. Returning to the gym, I stepped again between the two-faced looking glass, then glanced left and right. Eureka! Suddenly I saw my images and their mirrored opposites were totally self-made! I had pasted polar labels on each one and dressed them in contrasting clothes. From early childhood my subconscious had included and excluded certain traits, then joined them with selected actions to create “the story of me.” Conveniently revised from time to time, that story had become my “self” and, when acting in the world, was my self-image, my identity. Freed from cultural conventions that would split the world and me into arrays of dueling pairs, I could tango down grand corridors of life that used to look like hopeless hostile labyrinths. I still saluted flags of freedom law. They remained my guide in legal matters but no longer blanketed my world. Freedom lawyer was a part of me, but not my totality.

Do you know an occupational hazard of law profs? We “solve problems” by writing unread articles that re-arrange or re-form legal categories. So I finally realized my fears of non-control or contradiction needn’t block my genuine response to life or cripple my relationships. With old courage but new insight I began to greet the real world – embracing both its pains and ecstasies.

- from Art C.



From your Editor

Dear WA members,

In the January WA newsletter, I announced that this would be my last newsletter. Since that time, three people have stepped up, one to assume proofreading, another to report on WA Board developments and a third person in line to become Editor. This is encouraging, and we intend to keep STORY LINE alive. WA should be setting an example of balance in all its affairs, and this publication should not be an exception. Part of me was inclined to just let go and see what happens, but at the same time, I believed our organization and fellowship needs what STORY LINE offers.

Asking is an underutilized tool for me, but once again, I am asking for volunteers to help this venture to survive. Ideally, we should not saddle any one person with a heavy load, we have enough of that in our outside lives. If you have interest in serving according to your interests, talents and recovery, please contact: storylineATworkaholics-anonymous.org



STORY LINE invites WA members to share your experience, strength and hope with the WA fellowship around the world. Each of us has something to share that can help another workaholic to abstain from compulsive working one more day. Please send your submittals by email to: storyline AT workaholics-anonymous.org. Include your contact information and let us know if you would like your first name and initial included as author. Your contribution will make this publication more alive and improve your recovery by helping others. Please submit your materials before the 20th of June.

Note that materials submitted are assumed to be intended for publication, are subject to editing and become the property of WAWSO, which may publish them in any format in any Workaholics Anonymous literature.

STORY LINE, our mission:

- To produce a quarterly publication of news about W.A. in a way that serves as an example of balance between service and our program.
- To provide real stories from real people to those in our fellowship who do not have access to a local meeting.
- To provide a space for people of the fellowship to share their experience, strength and hope with the broader membership.
- To bridge the gap between the fellowship and the WA Board, to aid in replenishing the Board with new members as the trustees' terms rotate out.

Workaholics Anonymous World Service Organization

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