



Living in Balance

July 2010 *The International Newsletter of Workaholics Anonymous*

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

(from The W.A. Preamble, page 3 “Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery”)



W.A. financial report:

We have noticed a gradual fading away of 7th Tradition donations from meetings. Last year at this time we had \$ 694. from local meetings, while this year it is only \$167. The 7th Tradition says “Every W.A. group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions.” Fortunately, W.S.’s income from sales of our literature has kept us going. These funds go to pay for our professional bookkeeper, technical web assistance, telephone answering service and other things that we cannot handle ourselves. However, this is only the beginning, according to our preamble, our goal is to carry the message of recovery to the people who need it. To do more than passively hope that people will find out about us, we want to engage in activities that attract (not promote) Workaholics Anonymous. These things cost money. For the first time, W.A. is actively doing outreach by reserving a “hospitality suite” in San Antonio during the A.A. National Conference, July 3-5th. There will be thousands of people there, most of whom have never heard of us. We want to do more. Please talk this over at your meeting.



**Announcing:
Workaholics Anonymous
World Service Conference 2010
October 29-31**

(see the next page for details)



Come Play and Recover with us in beautiful Menlo Park, California. Relax and share experience, strength, and hope with fellow W.A. members in a setting conducive to growth at the Vallombrosa retreat and conference center. Creative activities planned! The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop working compulsively.

- *Location:* Vallombrosa Retreat and Conference Center, in Menlo Park, California. See www.vallombrosa.org for a map or more information or call (650) 325-5614
- *Meals:* Special meals may be arranged but we will need the information with your reservation and cannot guarantee this without 30 days prior notice of Conference.
- *Accommodations:* 40 rooms are available for double occupancy, 12 for single. Early registration is recommended for those wishing to stay at the retreat center. Linens, towels and washcloths are provided. Double rooms have two twin beds.
- *Transportation:* The nearest airport is San Jose International however San Francisco International is almost as close with excellent public transportation available. Several companies offer shuttle service from both airports. Public trains are also available contact BART for San Francisco International and VTA Airport Flyer from San Jose International to the Cal Tran in Santa Clara on to Menlo Park.

Thursday, October 28:

Friday, October 29

Saturday, October 30

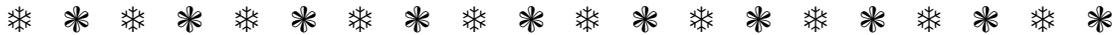
Sunday, October 31

Pre-Conference

	8:00 Breakfast (Pre Conference)	8:00am Breakfast	8:00am Breakfast
1:00 pm Registration	12 Noon – Lunch (Pre Conference)	9am-12pm Meetings	9am-12pm Meeting &
2-5 pm Meetings and activities	3-5 pm Registration & Early Bird Meeting	12:00 pm Lunch	Closing
5 pm Dinner	5:00 pm Dinner	1pm-5pm Meetings	12:00 pm Lunch
	7:30 pm Meeting	5:00pm Dinner	
		7:30pm Meeting	

<u>Occupancy</u>	<u>Main Conference Fee</u>	<u>Pre-Conference Fee</u>	<u>Main and Pre-Conference Fee</u>
Single	<u>\$450 (\$400 before July 4, 2010)</u> Includes registration, room, and six meals	<u>\$175</u> Includes room and three meals	<u>\$625 (\$575 before July 4, 2010)</u>
Double	<u>\$360 (\$310 before July 4, 2010)</u> Includes registration, room, and six meals	<u>\$130</u> Includes room and three meals	<u>\$490 (\$440 before July 4, 2010)</u>
Commuter	<u>\$50 a day plus conference fee</u> Includes registration, retreat center fee, and 1 meal per day	<u>\$50 a day plus conference fee</u> Includes registration, retreat center fee, and 1 meal per day	<u>\$250 (\$200 before July 4, 2010)</u>

Register and pay on our website: workaholics-anonymous.org



From a member of our fellowship:

(this is in three parts, the second and third parts are further on in this Newsletter)

Eighth step personal lessons, Part 1 of 3

Back when I did my fourth step there were a number of character defects that were revealed when I made my list of resentments and my list of fears. I learned from the resentment list that I had serious issues of self esteem and financial security. I also was astounded to see the extent to which my life and my addiction had been driven completely by Fear and Anger. Thanks to that step, I addressed these character defects, gaining a sense of self respect that now depends on my relationship to a benevolent higher power. I also cleaned up my finances, restoring a balance between expenses and income. I thought that once I was done with the fourth step - and I did the fourth step three times - I was done with the business of discovering character defects.

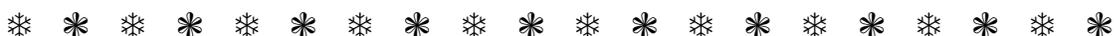
Why did I do the fourth step so many times, you ask?? Well, after the first one I got stuck at step 6, and I figured this was my clue to go back and see about unfinished business in step 4. Then I made it through steps 4,5,6, and 7 but got stuck on step 8. I could not find the willingness to actually put the pen to the paper. So again I went back and discovered more resentments, moving again through steps 4,5,6, and 7. Still I was stuck for years in the same place, telling my meetings that I was "working on my 8th step" - meaning, of course that I was intending, someday, in the future, maybe a long time in the future... that I might actually put pen to paper.

What really happened here? Simply this: It took a long time for me to become ready to see the trail of destruction I'd left behind through my work addiction. I had no trouble seeing the glaring issues - my neglected children, my two divorces, and my two angry ex-spouses - but apparently I needed a shift deep within my brain before I was able to see the path of destruction I'd left behind in my workplaces. Bosses who'd fired me, and I didn't really understand why, subordinates I'd roused from bed on their weekends to deal with my project's crises, and colleagues I'd stepped on and stepped around to ensure that I got my way... Amazingly enough I was blind to this for the 10 or 12 years during which I was "working on my 8th step." I was blind to this even though my WA sponsor had specifically told me to "list ONLY those persons I had harmed through my work addiction."

It turns out something deep within WAS actually at work here, because magically, one day the blinders were lifted and I saw clearly a list of persons I had harmed during my career. Not only did I see this list clearly, but suddenly there was the willingness and even an enthusiasm to set these names on paper. The actual writing of the list took less than an hour for the bulk of the entries.

A character defect revealed here: my utter blindness to the impact my actions have on the people around me. I was not just inconsiderate and out of control. I was completely blind - like a deaf and blind bull in a china shop. And this was a character defect that was revealed as it was lifted from me by my higher power.

- anonymous



From a member of our fellowship:

In reading about the latest discoveries as to how the brain works, I came across this concept: “neurons that fire together, wire together”. Communication within the brain occurs when neurons fire a minute electrical charge from one to another. In acquiring knowledge, forming memories, etc., neuronal pathways form which allow us to process information extremely rapidly. This also explains how habits and even addictions come about when these connections become “hard wired” to produce expected results (for example an adrenaline high). An analogy would be sledding down a newly snow-covered hill. The first trip leaves a trace, which easily becomes a pathway through repeated use.

A second notion is: “use it or lose it”, which means that when these neuronal pathways are not used, they gradually “unwire” or at the very least become less automatic. This explains why abstinence is so important in dealing with addiction. Each time we “fall off the wagon”, we reinforce the old pathway. To apply this to workaholic addiction (where total abstinence is usually not possible), we need to develop new ways of getting the satisfaction of working sanely to create new neuronal connections. An example could be quitting work at the planned time thus creating a new pathway of “I can do it!”

- Harry W. [after reading “The Brain That Changes Itself” by Norman Doidge]

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Eighth step personal lessons, Part 2 of 3

In my last article I mentioned how my long struggles with my 8th step revealed to me a character defect, namely my utter blindness to the impact my actions had had on the people around me. It turns out this was not the only character defect to be revealed as I worked my 8th step.

There were several names on my list that were problematic - my Dad, for one, and my high school best friend, for another. This friend, in particular, was a challenge since I'd severed ties years ago was fearful of restoring contact. The friend and I had met in 8th grade and we had been buddies and roommates through high school. He lived close, and during the summers he was also my only friend. We were misfits, not unlike the Columbine bombers, but not as driven by rage and hatred. We were just socially immature misfits - he very tall and me very short. I was only 5'2" at graduation, and known as the "Miserable Green Midget" because I always wore green and I had no self esteem. We set off bombs around the school, not destructive, just "cherry bombs" and large firecrackers placed in the woods with time fuses designed to wake up the dean of girls with 11 pm detonations. The commotion was always followed by a hasty dorm check by the proctors, and thanks to the time fuses we were in bed right where we were supposed to be... Another day, another era. We weren't the only "misfits" in the school, but we were definitely social outcasts.

So here is the guy who was my best friend through high school. My only friend, and to this day the mention of his name stirs deeply mixed emotions. After graduation I went on to college, marriage, graduate school, and a career in high tech industry. He suffered a mental collapse, and ended up living in a cardboard box in an unheated garage in Philadelphia. He lost an eye, and was a wary, almost paranoid resident of the seediest part of a rough city.

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For me there is incredible sadness here. When I went off to college we stayed in touch, and I remained his friend throughout the worst of his mental health collapse. After college, though, I moved 3000 miles away, and this is where I feel guilt about the fact that our lives took such different directions. So there's a sense that I may owe him an amends for the fact that I moved on - that I no longer placed my relationship with him at the center of my life. Also a sense of guilt that I had a path so much easier than the one he trod. Grad school. Marriage. Employment. Was it right to leave my friend so far behind and so far away? I sought him out whenever I was back East, but the fact remains that after having been at the center of my life for so many years, he was displaced after I went off the graduate school.

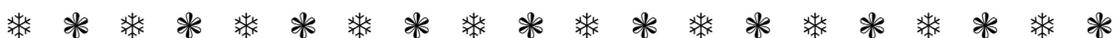
There's a twist here that complicates the issue. Looking back on the relationship I had with him, it was not a healthy relationship. There had been a sadistic/masochistic element to it from the start. He was always testing me, tormenting me in various ways "to see how I'd react". I didn't know how to make him stop. In eighth grade we were ALWAYS assigned to sit together at the dining tables and he spent those meals tormenting me with the threat of a poke in the ribs from his finger. I had PTSD from early childhood abuse and this was a considerable torment. I had nightmares of his finger dancing slowly back and forth, waiting for the moment to strike, and in these nightmares I would sever his hand, seal it in a box, and it would still somehow emerge to threaten me. In later years the "testing" continued. At one point senior year he pulled out a gun, aimed it at me, and slowly pulled the trigger. It was loaded with a "blank", but I didn't know that. I heard the noise and thought I was going to die. He just wanted to "know how I would react". Frankly I didn't know how to react, so I said nothing.

He threatened my mother with a 9 inch butcher knife, to see how she'd react, and she severed her relationship with him. She'd been supportive of him since he was my friend, but that was too much. Eventually he had an affair with my wife and for me that was over the line. In anger I smashed a piece of artwork he'd made that I'd had as a memento of our friendship, and I mailed it to him in an unmarked box. Later I visited him in person to try to make amends and to try to understand how my best friend could have betrayed me in this way, but it was a strange and stressed visit. We sat in an isolated country park late at night, talking around the issues but never getting to the core of things, and always with me unarmed and him wielding his 9 inch butcher knife. Afterward I wrote one final letter, telling him I considered our friendship ended.

So here I am, conflicted about making amends. The man is sick, with a history of violence, and an apparent capacity for envy and aggression. I fear that reestablishing contact might spark a desire for him to attack my children, to "see how I would react." I do not want to do this experiment. I do not ever want to make contact with this individual again. This I am discussing with my sponsor and with my therapist. But there is something else here that has only just now been revealed: I have a character defect in that I have been a participant in unhealthy relationships - not unlike the battered spouse who stays. And this has been a pattern in many of the relationships of my life, that they have been unhealthy, abusive, and I have not known how to leave.

This has been the most revealing surprise of my 8th step, something about MY life I'd never seen clearly before. I am thankful for the program and for the lessons I am learning even after 17 years in 12 step recovery.

- anonymous



From a member of our fellowship:

I have been having an interesting morning. I live in Phoenix where June temperatures are in the 100's, sometimes as high as 110. Right now its 94 and it feels like Hawaii to us. So I'm on the back patio on my laptop, yet I've been full of anger and resentment. I mean, how rough is my life? I am so spoiled! I can attend meetings by phone. I am free to make many of my own choices. And I think the crux of my problem with workaholism is faulty thinking about my freedom.

The 12 steps teach that I am here to do my Higher Power's will, not mine. I forget that everyday. No wonder I am full of resentment and loathing toward my life instead of gratitude for being given another day. I WANT a different day. I want to be by the seaside, not the desert. I WANT a smaller house, more flowers, a fulfilling career where I influence others (power) and MUCH better health.

Instead, my higher power has given me 364 days of sunshine and 300 of heat, a beautiful kitten who follows me everywhere, a fabulous husband who loves me despite my ugliness, a mint patch, rosemary, and roses that bloom a couple days a year. (The rest of the year they turn into something resembling baked potato chips!) And I have the opportunity to improve my physical and emotional health through W.A.

I grieve the loss of my role as goddess. I want my life to look a certain way and it doesn't. I can't control much. I am powerless over very much. And even when I could control more using my workaholic behaviors (making the house look the way I want for example) I wasn't happy. Happiness eluded me because I abandoned my soul (feelings, thoughts and physical needs). Today, I believe happiness lies in getting in touch with that soul because that is where my higher power dwells...and that's where the real me dwells.

I came up with an acronym for it:

D.A.Y.= don't abandon yourself

So...have a good "d.a.y." everyone!

- Colleen V.



Thank you, members of our fellowship, for your lively contributions to this issue! WSR's please bring this to your meeting and urge members to tell us about their struggles, successes and reflections.

Living in Balance invites WA members to share your experience, strength and hope, as well as JOKES with the WA fellowship around the world. Each of us has something to share that can help nother workaholic to abstain from compulsive working one more day. Please send you submittals by email to: newsletter@workaholics-anonymous.org. Please 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 newsletter more alive and improve your recovery by helping others. Please submit your materials before October 20th, 2010.

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

From a member of our fellowship:

Step two – Help Wanted:

Our small WA fellowship in Wellington has been using the WA Book of Discovery workbook in our meetings since the beginning of this year. We are finding it really helpful as we identify and explore our own workaholic patterns, share our experience, strength and hope with each other, and put into practice some of the tools and processes suggested. Our recent experience with the step two exercise of creating an advertisement for the newspaper describing the kind of new Higher Power we each require proved to be fun. We decided to share three of our ads here with you.

HELP WANTED: HIGHER POWER

I am seeking an infinite source of power and pure love who will guide, protect and support me in achieving my fullest potential. A qualified Higher Power is versatile, adapts quickly to change, delegates decision making by free will, and allows me to learn from the consequences of my decisions. Organisational roles may include Creator, Spiritual Guide, Healer, Therapist, Teacher, Motivator, Financial Advisor, Employer, Loving Parent, Partner and Friend. Good communication skills are essential. The desired Higher Power will take whatever happens and make it work for the greatest good. This is an everlasting career opportunity. C.

Are you an experienced HP with a sense of humour?

Do you love a challenge?

Are you known for your compassion?

Looking for a firm but fair HP with at least 10,000 years experience, willing to work for peanuts with a difficult client. Send your CV to: wowwhatachallenge@wa.org.nz by 1 April. H.

If you have a strengths-based approach to life, have a positive, compassionate and loving approach and regard for people and all things; have a good sense of humour and like working with challenging, sometimes nutty, stressed and fearful people who don't ask for help although clearly need it, this could be the job for you. You need to be able to graciously provide support and guidance in empowering, creative, and often subtle ways, including through unexpected and spontaneous collaborations with others. If you don't rely on remuneration, but thrive on gratitude and acknowledgement, even when irregular or random, and you are still reading this and nodding, please apply to:.....

- Vicki W.



Eighth step personal lessons, Part 3 of 3

In my last article I mentioned how my long struggles with my 8th step revealed to me several character defects, including my utter blindness to the impact my actions had had on the people around me and also my susceptibility to becoming entrapped in abusive unhealthy relationships. Mine was a "fear-based" life, not only in the workplace but also in my personal life.

So now I struggle with the most difficult name of all upon my list, my father. If you are squeamish about childhood trauma, stop reading now. If you do read on, please know that these writings reflect strictly my own personal experience strength and hope, and not any kind of official position of the fellowship at large.

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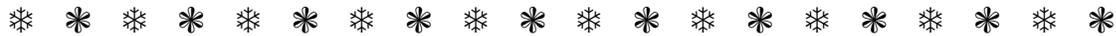
Prior to the making of my 8th step list, I thought I was done healing from the traumas of my childhood. My first 12 step program was an incest survivor program, and I'd spent 18 years in therapy working through my childhood issues. None-the-less, more was to be revealed.

I have never had a comfortable relationship with my father. Here I feel a tug to somehow make amends. I also carry a lot of guilt from my early childhood years when he used to come to my bedroom seeking sexual pleasure. Here too, I feel guilty and ashamed because at the time I did not know how to make him stop. Thus I feel guilty because there is a dark stain on the "white robes" of his karma, and I was a participant in the episodes that led to that blot. An unwilling participant, age 3 to 7, but old enough to feel humiliation for not knowing how to make him stop.

Long ago I reached the conclusion that I didn't cause these episodes, and that therefore I was not responsible for fixing them. I thought I'd moved on. But here, in the process of making the 8th step list, I feel sadness and other deep emotions that make me wish I could somehow make amends for what happened. I'm not done with this one. I clearly have more to discuss with my therapist and with my sponsor. And to pray that my higher power will help me let go of the desire to make amends for this one.

So, a word to the wise. Be forewarned. The 12 steps are an amazing process. They are a revealing process, but strong emotions can surface, unexpectedly, at many points along the path. This is the first time I have gone through an 8th step, and I am grateful to have a sponsor to help with this process. It is very much a growth experience, to do all 12 steps. For me, it has been the process of learning how to live.

- anonymous



From a member of our fellowship:

I discovered my real value. I'm Christiane in Paris. I am 43 years old and have been attending the Paris meeting for two years or so. I really had no other choice than joining WA since my body was giving signs of disapproval. I'm working in a state department where files are checked before granting money to help people in a context of economic crisis. There's a lot of pressure in that kind of job. As a workaholic, I was unable to say "stop", especially when some older colleagues were about to experience heart attacks in front of me. So I worked and worked and worked and one day my fingernail burst like nobody would imagine. My body couldn't stand the pressure. This was a fact. I had to change.

I was ready to join WA. Two members gave me a private meeting to see what could be done. We decided that my new job was to stop checking all the files alone and leave the office knowing that there would be work left uncompleted. I had to start the day reading the tools before I went to the office, and to spend some time with my private project (writing) at least one hour a day. The writing would be considered a game, not a job. I clearly saw that my work addiction had nothing to do with my job: I was unable to leave the files for others – doing always more than could be done – as well as offering time from my own project. So I decided to look for a new position in my department and found it. But things were not getting better...

A few months ago, I decided I had cried enough about my poor past and started to see if something could happen. I had enough of charging my alcoholic father and drug-addicted mother with my work addiction and started to think they may have done the best they could. I started to look at my own case. I had to face the situation and learn that I was not as strong as I thought. In the Fourth Step, I discovered that I had a very low idea of my value and always gave more importance to others. Most of the time, this left me unsatisfied and resentful. I shared the Fifth Step and received new suggestions: I had to take breaks in the day in order to practice some spiritual exercises and to try again to give some time to my project. Leaving my colleagues and focusing on my new "top priority" project for ten minutes made me very uncomfortable, but after a while I saw this was the safe way. I'm now experiencing the Ninth Step and I feel more quiet and peaceful.

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I don't see my recovery as a miracle because it has not been sudden. It has been more like the development of situations that changed a little by little, each time they occurred. But there are some wonderful results. For example, the idea I had about my father has deeply changed. There is now a place inside me for the good things I received from him, the child can grow up. Also, during my last holiday I wrote quite a lot. I wish all the newcomers to find their way through the steps.

- Christiane



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