

# STORYLINE

From Workaholics Anonymous

SEPT OCT NOV  
2016



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

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**SHARING: DOES HAPPINESS HAVE A PRICE?**

*Promise 5: We learn to play and have fun together. Learning to stop work and sit with the feelings behind over or under working, and healing from the issues around needing to hide from these feeling, has helped me have the space to learn to play and have fun with others.*

I am right now stopping from working because I am totally exhausted, physically and emotionally. I am learning to sit with the feelings behind my over and under working. The feelings are mainly anguish, anxiety, and all sorts of fears, including fear of the future, fear of being a failure, fear of displeasing others, fear of being judged, etc. The fears come from the illusion that it's me who controls the results of the decisions I am making the future, the outcome of my life, and the future. I am choosing neither work nor have another child right now, which is totally new for me. I have never had such a 'un-busy' time in all my life.

I am only 38, so there is no way I can retire, but in the physical condition I am right now, it is impossible for me to do anything 'productive,' so here I am slowing down, catching up with my years of sleepless nights, taking care of my back pain. I feel like taking time to rest and heal means for me that I am retiring, that I am useless, like a member of society throwing herself into a garbage trash, because she doesn't serve any purpose now. I am filled with dread, apprehension that something terrible is going to happen because I am slowing down.

I think this is understandable, so I'm just handling it to the best of my ability, doing whatever makes me feel good, while abstaining from work, except, of course, my responsibilities at home and with my children, which I consider being my work. That is, I am abstaining from *over-work*. Which make me realize that I do have work, and that is, my work as a parent of four children, as a housewife, albeit unpaid. My false belief: if it's paid, it has a value, if not, it's worthless. Do relationships have value? Are we paying for those? Does happiness have a price? So why am I thinking that way? Because I am a workaholic.

Of course, I could keep on pretending that it is my situation that makes me suffer and I could go on adrenalizing about not being 'recognized' by others. But the truth is that now I can see that at the root of my suffering is my own stinking thinking and I can't deny it anymore. It's up to me as to what I choose to do with my new discovery. The 'profit' I am bringing to society is not a material one, but maybe it doesn't have to be material.

Being in recovery is the best thing I can do for this world and for my family. As long as that takes for me and as much time as I need, even forever if the Universe (my HP) wants me to do so (it has always been my dream to just have a simple life, some errands from time to time, meet some people, rest, spend time alone, that's it, the 'work' I do I don't see it as work but it does take me almost as much time as a half time job would do).

This is were I am now. I am learning how to play and spend time with others, and the other day. I played Super Mario Party with my kids, and it was without permanently looking at the watch or doing two other things at the same time. This is the gift of recovery and it is the most precious of all. It doesn't need to have a price.

--Gratefully,  
--Iléana

**SHARING: RECREATING CHAOS**

*Signpost 5: Many of us grew up in chaotic homes. Stress and intensity feel normal to us. We seek out these conditions in the workplace. We create crises and get adrenaline highs by overworking to resolve them. Then we suffer withdrawals and become anxious and depressed. Such mood swings destroy our peace of mind.*

My workaholicism definitely recreates the chaos from growing up in my alcoholic home. Yes, unfortunately, the stress and intensity still feel normal to me. Just recently, I was surprised to find how easily old patterns and thoughts can creep back in and feel like the "norm."

Two weekends ago I had to work both Saturday and Sunday, as I had a rush job with a tight deadline. I had made the conscious, mindful decision to take on the project, as I needed the money. I put aside a particular day to take off from my steady job. I needed half of it to finish one of my own projects, and I kept the other half free for down time.

This past weekend I was back on my normal schedule, taking Sunday off. Saturday night, my husband and I took our friend out to celebrate her 50th birthday. (NOTE: I am super-committed to helping others have fun 50th birthdays, because my own 50th birthday was horrible: my fun celebration with my sister and her partner never happened, because that morning, her partner had died unexpectedly from natural causes.) Therefore, I had let go of any plans to do more work that night. I got home about 10:30pm. We had a lovely time.

I couldn't believe it, but I was feeling guilty that I was not going to do more work that night! I realized that I had some important work correspondence that felt doable and good to do. I put my mind at ease about doing a little work and then letting go for the rest of the night. However, my old character defect of staying in the chaos would not let me just enjoy calm. I started stirring myself up because I was not going to work the next day at all. And then I started feeling guilty about that! I was so surprised that after over-working just one weekend, those old expectations of working all the time crept back in.

I have been in WA long enough to have recognized the "stinkin' thinkin'" along with its origins. I let the guilt slide right out of my mind and body. I thoroughly enjoyed my usual day off yesterday and want more days like that one: guilt free! This experience reminds me of the importance to remain ever vigilant. It is so important for me to continue to attend 12 step meetings and share with other recovering workaholics through platforms such as email meetings and STORYLINE.

--Peace and blessings,  
--Tisa

**SHARING: ADRENALIZATION**

*Signpost 5: Many of us grew up in chaotic homes. Stress and intensity feel normal to us. We seek out these conditions in the workplace. We create crises and get adrenaline highs by overworking to resolve them. Then we suffer withdrawals and become anxious and depressed. Such mood swings destroy our peace of mind.*

I relate to the phrase 'Then we suffer withdrawals and become anxious and depressed.' There hasn't been any crisis in my life lately, so I am going through an 'anxious and depressed' period. Since my body can't get its adrenaline from crisis, I realize that I am creating imaginary crises, fantasizing about disasters that might happen. I am trying to produce them in my mind, just to be sure that I can get my dose of adrenaline and stay numb with it from living in the present.

I used to think that thinking about the worst case scenarios was a good thing, helping me prepare, since I should be prepared for absolutely anything that could occur. There it is again: the idea that I am in control of my life. Now I can see this is another trick of my workaholism, to keep me in an 'alert state.'

I am practically adrenalized all the time, to the point that if I would drink a coffee, at any time of the day, I would jump to the ceiling! My sleep is suffering. I have insomnia, I wake up at night with muscular contractions in my back, and most of the time I can't get my afternoon nap, because I am too tense. I am trying to relax by meditating every day and using other tools, also, but I am realizing that in my case, the challenge is not to relax to my 'normal state' but to a new and much more deeper state of serenity, because what I think of as my normal state is not a normal state for any normal human being, I am an adrenaline addict and this adrenaline will probably need years to clear away from my body.

This is a huge task and I will need to do it all my life. I don't need to rush my recovery. There is no way I can recover quickly from this disease. That is not how the recovery process works. I have already burned myself out working other 12 step programs. This time, recovering means taking it slow. I have given up a lot of my meetings in other fellowships. For now, WA is my priority-- and I mean for it to stay that way.

*Gratefully,  
Iléana*

**SHARING: MY LIST OF M's**

Hi Friends,

I'm Anylength, workaholic, house work avoider and over-volunteerer and your topic poster for the first week of March.

Literature Quote:

*Step Eleven Story: Message from my Deeper Power M Therapy*

*In the beginning of my recovery I was trying to cope with the toxic depletion I felt after a week of work. During a meditation this wisdom popped up. It has served me well over the years. I seem to need to plan three M's in a day to recover from burnout but the results are a wonder to me even now. You M's might be different. The secret is to list things that are a transformation to your mind and body. The goal is to come back to your recovery spirit-self that desires healthy food, a balanced life and feels sane and sleeps well.*

*My list of M's is: meditation, measured meals, moments in nature, movement (like yoga or aerobic), making love, mass (or spiritual service), meetings (Twelve Step), music, and massages. (WA Book of recovery 1<sup>st</sup> ed. pp 160-161.)*

MY Share:

I love words and when I saw the list of M's. I wanted to find others that mean something to me in my recovery and make my life better if I have some of them in my day.

Here are some of mine:

1. Mother, representing good family connections. To have a calming chat, or good heart to heart I ring my sister. Our mother was absent so much, my sister often acted as my replacement mother and is still helping me lots to this day.
2. Mainstay sometimes long timers in program are called mainstays because they have been around so long and are reliably there every week. I find a talk with a mainstay who also has a couple of decades under their belt is what I need to ground myself back into program.
3. Muckheap it sounds horsey, but when I have been in my own head all day and sitting at my desk too long, it often helps me to get outside and get dirty. Much like mucking out a stable, I need to prune some trees, pull out some stubborn weeds, cut the lawns and get myself among the dirt to feel physically grounded (earthed) and connected back with my body.
4. Manifestation My creativity often doesn't get an outlet in my daily activities. In order to get in touch with this force and not let it crumple and shrivel I must manifest things. Whether that is drawing in art class, growing rhubarb in a pot, designing a birthday card for a friend or making a flier for a program event, my creativity needs to manifest itself physically.
5. Marvel Marvel is an expression of gratitude and is one of the best attitudes I can foster in my recovery. To marvel at all the things my HP has brought to me that day and how He changed so many things I first thought of as not so good into total blessings is important for me.

6. Matriculate I never was compulsive about my studies at school but have read in a little 12 step program brochure that said "I will exercise my mind each day" that when I come across something I do not know, I will look it up so I can exercise my mind. Funnily enough today I looked up "Meta" (metatarsals and metatarsals - bones in our hands and feet) which meant "coming after" right behind the "carpals".

☐. Matriculation for

☐. Matriculation for

☐. "behind" ☐. A

7. Mailbox I am a loner in this fellowship, so most of my WA connection and program work happens via the internet and "mailbox" shares which are my "meetings".

☐ stands for checking

8. Marker this one stands for my need to work the maintenance steps each day. Steps 10 and 11 especially. They are my yardstick, my "marker" connect me back to my HP. It also means I check where I am at with defects (selfishness, self-centered, dishonest, fear, etc) and do a mini-inventory and see if I owe amends.

☐ as to how I am d

9. Mates another important part of my recovery from workaholism means that I make time for my mate (partner) and my furry mates (dogs), and friends. To make time for them is important and makes me feel connected, accepted, loved and cherished. The joy of my dogs when I spend time with them, the quiet sigh when I give my partner a back scratch or a foot massage at the end of the day, says it all. And the laughter with friends revives my soul.

10. Micro-organism stands for my need to have adequate time for my bodily hygiene and ablutions. I allow time each day for a good shower and to put my face on. I also do not rush myself in the toilet and take the time to go when I need to.

11. Minding my own business, that is. The more I stick my finger into other people's business there more I start to judge and want to meddle and help when no help is required. For an over-volunteer like me minding my own business and attending to my own needs rather than giving away my whole spare time and ending up with no time for myself is vital.

*-Thank you for letting me share,  
-Anylength*

### **SHARING: ON MEDITATION AND OTHER M'S**

When I read a list of nurturing "M" activities, I find that most of the things mentioned are regular, if not daily, parts of my life. I immediately experienced a surge of hope that I will one day be able to get off my own internal treadmill permanently, not just part-time. I've already managed to slow the treadmill speed down, but I often dream of being able to enjoy being lazy, at least some of the time!

Of the WA tools, I would say that meditation is by far the most important M for me. Perhaps not surprisingly, given that I'm an "overdo-oholic", it is also the one that tends to get pushed to the bottom of my list, because it slows me down, just as it is meant to do!!! Joking aside, I am getting better at meditation.

Meditation has really helped me to work my way systematically through the steps and I am now on Step Eleven. Suddenly, after feeling that all my effort had not produced much of an improvement, things have begun to fall into place. Questions and exercises which I had not been inspired by when I first looked at them have brought surprising results. Suddenly, it became crystal clear to me - at last! - that my overdoing stops me from receiving the gifts of peace and guidance that meditation brings. I am now sure that, if I go slowly enough, and if I am really open to letting the guidance through, after heartfelt, prayerful asking, the guidance is always there.

One obstacle I had been struggling with has shifted since I have been working Step Eleven in WA. This is the idea that meditation absolutely has to be a formal practice leading to great transcendence of some kind. What I think now is that it CAN be that, but ordinary, everyday meditation, where prayer is followed by openness to guidance from whatever source, is not an inferior form of practice, it is just a different kind of practice. I had been beating myself up for not being able to do something more advanced with any kind of regularity and with what I thought was the necessary concentration. Worry about this had made me underestimate something I already knew worked. What I really needed to do, it seems, is to consolidate the first practice before attempting to learn and perfect another. This has perhaps been the next level of spiritual awakening for me. I DO believe and now I really know what to DO!

It is a nice exercise to think about more recovery "M"'s in my life, as well as their acting-out equivalents, like masochism, misery and madness, which I want to avoid if I possibly can. Further reflection on the topic has produced the more "M"'s which I think work for me in addition to the practical, physical things like music, movement, and making it to meetings.

#### *Moderation*

Here I am talking more about attitude-changing "M"'s. My WA work has shown me that a lot, if not most, of what I do is actually quite positive in itself but the problem I have is with limiting how much I do on any given day or in any given session. I have a problem with balance, so the attribute I am really looking for is *moderation*. When I take care of myself properly, I know when to stop but I really need to be vigilant and listen to body cues to do that. Over time, I had got used to ignoring body cues until the ignoring became a conditioned reflex, so I have been doing what I can to regain the ability to notice. The more I notice, the more moderate I can be.

#### *Maturity*

The second "M" which came to me is maturity. I regret to say that, before getting into recovery, I

hardly ever gave maturity a thought. If I had been forced at gunpoint to say what I thought it was at that stage, I'm afraid I would have said that it was simply having reached the chronological age of legal majority and all that went with it. Thanks to my primary fellowship and various other sources of support, I now have a very different view. I'm not going to pretend that I know everything or am always mature in my thoughts and actions, but I have a basis to build on. I think, in general terms, *maturity* means something like, "seeing and taking the bigger picture into consideration before taking action." In other words, I need to be aware of the fact that a course of action or a choice which may seem good to me or good for me, may not appear the same way to others in my life, and that all my actions and choices have consequences for all concerned. I need to know the difference between reactivity and responsibility. I know that if I try to go through my day according to principles I now have and believe in, then things generally go well and I don't usually go too far in the wrong direction.

### *Mirror*

The third "M" for me is mirror. I don't know how many of you are familiar with this as a recovery tool but, in my opinion, it is perhaps one of the most powerful. I'd say my first spiritual awakening took place when I "got" what it meant and some of my worst defects of character, like criticism and judgment just seemed to shrivel up until they could easily be swept aside. Using the mirror means that, whenever I catch myself in negative thinking or reaction to something someone else does, I metaphorically turn the *mirror* around and look for examples of the same kind of defect in myself, in the past or present or both. To illustrate this, suppose I hear you wallowing in what I identify as self-pity and am tempted to think, "Here we go again ..." with an internal sneer. Using the mirror means that I stop myself before the judgmental thought takes root, and then spend a moment or two reflecting on the fact that, in the bad old days, I would obsessively chant a silly song I once heard which went, "Nobody loves me, everybody hates me, think I'll go and eat worms" - yes, I REALLY did that! It started as a joke but I couldn't let go of it and I actually did feel sorry for myself a lot of the time.

The fact that I no longer do that doesn't give me the right to judge. What it does is give me an opportunity to see the common ground between us and it encourages me to find compassion for you in your self-pitying state. I don't have to like it but a life free of constant criticism and judgment, which I would not have believed possible before I began to work on myself, is so much more comfortable. What's more, seeing other people through the mirror as my teachers and not my enemies helps promote more peaceful and caring relationships. Now, if I say, "Here we go again...", what I mean is, "I'm getting another lesson." It used to make me flinch a bit, but now I welcome the opportunity to learn and grow.

--*Love in Fellowship,*

--*Jane*



**SHARING: I CAN HAVE SHORTCOMINGS AND STILL BE LOVABLE**

*Promise 1: We are not obsessed by work or plagued by work aversion.*

This sounds like a great promise and I'm looking forward to it coming true! I'm not there yet. I seem to become addicted to everything I start, and one of my current obsessions is the WA program. I'm pretty sure I'm obsessing about even that. These days I have colitis, which I know it's a manifestation of my WA addiction. I am telling to myself "just work the program harder and it will pass." It's like I am trying to control my body through working the program, but it doesn't work.

I somehow believed that once I am working the steps, especially the 4th Step, all my problems would immediately disappear and I would have no more WA issues anymore. I have this idea that I should be already recovered by now, and I have been beating myself over the head. Whenever there is a sign of something I want HP to remove from me, it seems that it's up to *me* to do so. I see it every day, and every day I become more and more aware of how this pattern spoils my life. When something comes, up I become resentful towards myself. I see myself as a failure, as if all my program work so far has been a failure, because I couldn't prevent that thing from happening, like my damn colitis that eats at me from time to time, especially at specific times of the year.

My substance of addiction—adrenalin—is provided when I'm actively doing something. It can be absolutely anything, as long as I can get praise from it. If I work harder on my 12 steps programs, people will praise me for being calm and serene, my husband will appreciate me and think I am a good wife, and my kids will believe that I am a good mom. My ego is so thrilled with the prospect! My ego tries to tell me that I can recover AND I can please everyone AND I can make them love me and appreciate me-- and not abandon me. This is an illusion. I am emotionally dependent on my family and I don't believe I could live without them, so I am trying hard to *make* them appreciate me.

This may be a sign that I need to work the first three steps again, or perhaps I am "becoming entirely ready to have God remove my defects of character," as step six suggests. I am powerless over my work obsession, but not helpless. I can set boundaries and listen for the signals when I begin to adrenalize, and reach out to others before it's too late.

I am a workaholic and I will remain one. I am an addict. As long as I am working out of fear, I am in my addiction. For now, I am doing the best I can. I need to accept myself as I am today. This is who I have been for a long time. I am learning that I can have shortcomings and limitations, and still be lovable and worthy.

*--For this I am forever grateful,  
--In fellowship, Iléana*

**SHARING: PERMISSION TO HAVE SATISFACTION IN MY LIFE**

My mom was sick these past two months, and she died one week ago. During the time she was sick, thanks to my WA program, I tried as much as possible to keep a balanced day. It wasn't easy. I was very tired, and I slept a lot. Thanks to WA for the fact I am not working for money, and I took time to be with her. For the first time I was thankful for the fact I was not working.

In the past, my father was working all the time outside (workaholicly) and my mother felt obliged to work for the family. She would have liked to work outside, also, but she was working inside. And she was doing too much, and she never took pleasure for herself. Nor did my father. My father told us: "take care of your mother," and "help you mother." It seemed to me life was supposed to be hard.

My life has been hard and I thought that was normal. I think I have taken the life of my mom onto myself for so long, leading me to procrastinate all the time. I have to pay attention because I feel that I need adrenaline. I do things quickly, and I eat quickly. I feel tired. Sometimes I go to sleep early, but sometimes I go beyond my limits. I feel this is not good for me. I may be a "procrastinator," and yet I'm always doing!

WA gives me permission to introduce satisfaction and pleasure in my life. I sometimes actually feel satisfaction, when I feel like my job is done and that I can turn to do things for myself. I feel strange about that. I have been taking WA suggestions and practicing the program for several 24 hours. I have become accustomed to having some gratification and pleasure in my life, for the first time in my life, even if fear is also still there. It is thanks to WA, I have some experiences of satisfaction, and a good life is feeling a little bit more natural. I feel like some of my new habits are very slowly, and inconsistently, becoming mine. For this, I thank WA.

--Love,  
--Helene

**SHARING: PRAYER**

Good Morning, my name is Christy and I am a workaholic, new to WA and thirsty for the experience, strength, and hope from others who have suffered from the consequences of living a life consumed with this addiction.

I woke up this morning and TRIED to force myself to abstain from working. But my home office that I have worked very hard (hahahaha, of course!) to make a happy sunny space calls me to do what I do every Sunday - prepare for work on Monday. And now, here I am on my computer.

But sitting here, I feel frozen. I am both fearful of work and fearful I will not be able to work again, both at the same time. I have been taking a lot of time off, which shifts undue burdens onto my staff, some of which they cannot cover because of my workaholic tendency to do too many things myself and not make sure there are written procedures. I mean, of course no one else can do it nearly as perfectly as I do, right? And who has time to write things down when they can be saving the world instead?!

The reality is that I have heaped so much on myself that I haven't been doing anything right and now everyone around me is suffering because of that, professionally and personally. And since I now see myself as a failure here, I just want to be somewhere else, where I can do some good and regain my superhero status.

Today I ask the group and my Higher Power to help me begin to understand how to be present in the moment, in order to complete the everyday tasks at hand thoroughly and accurately, in order to be able to share those tasks and experiences with others, and in order to savor the experiences for the accomplishments and personal interactions. I ask for help to be able to evaluate the past without being consumed by the guilt of it. I ask for help to find ways not to worry about what the future may or may not have in store for me, my family, and my community. *Thank you for allowing me to share on this glorious day.*

*--from Christy*

### **EDITOR'S COMMENTARY**

Storyline is the quarterly newsletter of Workaholics Anonymous, published in order to share our experience, strength and hope with each other, and to announce information about our fellowship. We welcome shares, stories, commentaries, quotes, and poems: anything original that we can reproduce. Please submit what you have to share and encourage others to do so as well. Send us your own work, and if you see something you like in your email group written by someone else, please secure permission from the author and send it in or include their email address. Send contributions for to: [storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org](mailto:storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org), with STORYLINE in the subject line.

We are grateful to have several shares from the email community for most of our recent issues. Many shares are around a promise, signpost or step. One member introduced a list of tools that begin with the letter "M," and another member added to it. We appreciate the honesty, vulnerability, and courage it takes for members to address their disease and apply the program to their lives. Whatever the topic, members share their experience of their struggles and the miraculous progress made from working their recovery program.

Please know that STORYLINE always can use your service. We invite not only stories, shares, and other written contributions, but also administrative help editing, assistant editing, proof-reading, and outreach to get more contributions. Let us know if you are available to help with any of these or with other tasks of your choosing. We truly support any abstinence that is part of your sobriety, but we also note that reading the submissions and collaborating with others enhances recovery. I find working on STORYLINE to be interesting, creative, and gratifying.

*-Shelley, Chicago*

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***ANNOUNCEMENT AND INVITATION: NEW MEDITATION BOOK***

The W.A.W.S.O. Literature Committee is creating a meditations book. We would like all the meditations to come from the fellowship, so . . . **We need your help!**

All members are welcome to write and submit meditations for publication. These can be submitted individually, or as a group. Consider having a writing play day for your home group. Not only would this activity provide opportunities for reflection and meditation, but it would also allow group members to make contributions to a book that will serve the needs of the whole fellowship.

A suggested meeting format for writing meditations is available at the WA website. For more details about submitting meditations, please visit: <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/page.php?page=bookofmeditations>

Also, a suggested meeting format for writing meditations is available at the WA website at: <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/pdf/MeetingTypes.pdf>

We look forward to receiving your meditations!!  
Have fun with us!!

Your trusted servants,  
W.A.W.S.O. Literature Committee

**STORYLINE: OUR MISSION**

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

STORY LINE invites WA members to share their 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. Please send your submittals by email to: **storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org**, with **SL** in the SUBJECT LINE. Include your contact information and please also let us know if we can include your first name as author. Your contribution will make this publication more alive, while improving your recovery by helping others.

*Note that materials submitted are assumed to be intended for publication, are subject to editing to provide conformity for the newsletter. They become the property of WAWSO, which may publish them in any format in any Workaholics Anonymous literature. The tentative deadline for submissions for our next issue is: November 15, 2016.*

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