

# STORYLINE

From Workaholics Anonymous  
JUNE JULY AUGUST 2018



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

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**STORY: HAS YOUR SUCCESS TURNED TO BURNOUT AND WORK ADDICTION?**

As a young female, I had everything money could buy. I was a successful national consultant, solving complicated business and employee problems for corporations. I felt proud, powerful, and in control of my life. Working 10-14 hours a day, though, I had become trapped in a seemingly necessary work addictive system. My temptation to overwork could not be rationalized against the importance of my health and relationships with loved ones. My financial obligations increased at the same pace as the rate of my success, and I didn't feel I had choices. Interestingly, I got rewarded for my work addiction; I got paid well, had titles and my lifestyle appeared to be the envy of my friends.

One day was one day too many of my stressful, demanding lifestyle. At age 37 my face became bright red with acne and boils. Fearfully, I went to a skin cancer doctor, and I didn't believe I had cancer; I just wanted a quick fix so I could get back to work. This doctor diagnosed me with rosacea, an incurable, disfiguring, disease that even could affect my eyesight. In the business world, I had never heard the word 'incurable' I was sure he made a mistake. He offered me drugs, somehow I didn't feel medication was what I was lacking – but what was the answer?

I had grown up knowing a naturopathic doctor who helped people in extreme pain and suffering to heal quickly. Unfortunately, he was long deceased. From that memory, though, I determined that my body couldn't be as complicated as my diagnoses, I decided that it was possible for me to heal. I felt shameful for knowing more about the mechanics of business than my body, and now in my emergency, I prayed it wasn't too late to learn.

My search for answers began. I went to many doctors specializing in skin conditions and far more holistic doctors. I asked the same questions year after year: How does a healthy cell become diseased and reverse? How does my immune system work? What are the building blocks that create healing? If I scratch my arm and it heals, why would my face be different?

There wasn't a day go by that I wasn't searching for holistic answers to apply, while my best efforts of nutrition, detoxing and natural products appeared not to work, and I progressively got worse.

In the seventh year, my face was deforming, and I no longer could read or drive. Feeling my life was over; I met a doctor who diagnosed me differently from all the others. The disease, he believed on my face was the 'effect' of a deeper cause. The price I was paying for the mismanagement of my corporate life now showed up in my natural biological rhythms no longer being in harmony. He noticed I had adrenal exhaustion, internalized uncomfortable quiver, a knot-like feeling in my stomach, cold hands and feet, different body temperatures, and shallow breathing from being traumatized with paralyzing fear. My body felt lifeless, numb and frail. He wasn't sure I would heal and said I suffered major burnout, and that I must find peace within at whatever the price. This request sounded easy, but I felt lost as to where to start.

I started emotional therapy, first addressing the fears that had consumed me since my diagnosis, and then going further back into my past. I began to face my work addiction. As a workaholic, who has an inability to recognize or admit a destructive behavior, denying stress and personal needs had become a way of life. My false feeling of worthiness and my internal need to always be needed had pushed this addiction forward. I had a compulsion to stay busy and numb out, even as serving out of exhaustion had caused me to feel angry and resentful at my own behavior. Work had become my drug of choice.

By learning how to release my pent-up emotions and hidden hurts, I started to heal. I willingly welcomed all types of ways to nurture myself; I was hungry to learn how to give back to my body, mind, and spirit for all the years of self-neglect. By divine design, I discovered Workaholics Anonymous, and my sponsor walked me through the steps, I learned how to place God first and eventually how to surrender my work-addictive behavior.

My illness had been a wakeup call, and I identified with how a prostitute serves, using their profession and body for money – what a price! I will always be thankful to God for WA changing my life and lifestyle into one I love.

With the love and encouragement in recovery groups, I would soon discover I had a ‘frozen memory’ from age 14 of being date raped. I thought this ugly shameful secret was behind me – never realizing my body, as my honest friend, was out picturing my internalized anger and rage. After a lifetime of not being able to cry, I now felt safe to learn how to cry, and share my story.

A miracle took place. I healed physically in one year with no scars, and my eyesight returned. I felt the shift that took place inside, and positively knew I was not in ‘remission’ as my friendly doctors told me. My miracle healing now became my gift and path. I learned that my emotional pain manifested in a physical language a ‘red stop sign on my face.’ I received the firsthand step by step experience of how my internalized story got reversed without drugs. I dedicated my life and a new passion for sharing the spiritual building blocks of self-healing. I believe what we heal becomes our gift to share with one or many. My training has taught me that our emotions manifest in physical health challenges or various devaluations and addictions, as a cry for help and the good news is ‘this story can reverse.’ I now interpret for others this language with great accuracy through mentoring, speaking, prayers and education. I've written three self-help books and encourage others to share their healing stories with others – together we can make a difference! Keep coming back to WA; it works if we ‘face’ it.

--Georgie

***SONG: LIFE IS A GIFT FOR LIVING***

Life seems like a joke somehow of how I've lived my life.  
Give me your projects, give me your words, I'll do all the work and serve.  
Pile it on baby; I can withstand, continue to give me all your demands.  
I'll ignore all the ways I get put down, year after year, feeling beat down.

I won't stand up for myself, don't know how –  
Struggling seems to be a way of life somehow.  
Life was never bad enough to make a move;  
Surely it will get better and improve.

I'll give you my body, money, my time, now my spirit –  
I just gave you my life. Now sweet suffering has to go!  
Life is a gift – a gift for living, give me passion and a JOY for living.  
Life is a gift – a gift for living, reach for your Joy while living.

----Georgie

**SHARING: LIVING WITH MY HIGHER POWER**

Today I live with my higher power as a friend, and an ally. I am alone no longer. I am living with my higher power. "It" knows so many things better than I do. I have had a lack of "support," "help," and encouragement for so long (53 years ...!) now I have authorized myself to go and seek help when need it, along with support and encouragement. And my higher power helps me also. I feel so much better when I live, work, play with others; I am no longer alone. I feel lighter, I feel less frustrated, less angry, less tired.

*--Helen*

**SHARING: FINDING BALANCE**

Here are my thoughts on balance. When I am in workaholic mode, keeping busy is my default mode. The other mode is not doing anything and feeling guilty about that. As such, creating balance in my life entails making intentional choices each day, every day.

For my spiritual well being, I do a meditation every morning. It grounds and centers me. When I don't do it, I really can feel the difference. I participate in my weekly face to face 12 step meeting. That's a huge part of my recovery right now. When I struggle like I did today, I pick up an online or phone mtg. I share as much as I can in our email meetings. I read all the shares here.

For relationships, I see my husband daily. We try to have our evening meal together and some activity, usually watching one of our programs or going on a drive. I talk to my elderly aunt every night. I meet with friends 1-3 times per month. I correspond with several recovery and non-recovery friends.

With work, I go by priorities each day. When my client load is low, I am trying to do my foot work and let go of outcome. If possible, I have been taking extra half days off. Otherwise, I have a pile up of professional, non-paid work that needs to be done.

I struggle with having fun. I don't do enough of it. I am glad for my friends and family who keep asking me to do things. Last Sunday, I had lovely visits with two neighbors as we celebrated one of their birthdays. On Friday, my husband and I took my aunt out for her 94th birthday. I see a WA friend this coming Monday. On Wednesday, my aunt is treating me to lunch. I like to go on walks with my dog. Once in awhile, I enjoy going to a movie on my own. It is a joy to be on my own schedule and not having to worry about anyone!

*--Tisa*

**SHARING: FILLING THE VOID**

I have been using work and activities in order to fill the void I had in myself, a void full of terror of living. Of course, I have been neglecting my health, my relationships, recreation and spirituality, and of course, I was thinking only about each task, to do or not do. Most of my activities were work-related, with no balanced life for me. It was a compulsion and I could not operate in any other way, it was my life.

Now, since I have accepted the fact that I have been using work and activities to fill my poor and terrorized life, I have also been learning to express my anger, and begun to develop some recovery from this compulsion, and I have experienced a more balanced life for many 24 hours.

--Thank you so much WA,  
--Helen

**SHARING: PEACE AND SURRENDER**

*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.*

Peace and surrender are qualities I am not used to, but I must say that slowly they are becoming new habits. I also feel good in drama and adrenaline, but I see the consequences on my body and these consequences are helping me prefer pacing myself and developing rhythm.

I would like to share also that since I started practicing the WA suggestions as best as I can, I realized I have a second addiction: drinking alcohol. Drinking has helped me to feel "joy" with all the dramas and chaos around me and also within myself. Playing and other fun activities were only possible for me if I was drinking. And one day, alcohol did not help me anymore. So I tried to stop and it was not possible for me. I started feeling bad and sick, exactly like when work and helping others stopped feeling good (my burnout). One day, I went to AA, and now AA has restored my serenity, the same serenity that WA has helped me achieve.

--Friendly,  
--Helen

**SHARING: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?**

*Signpost 4: We use work as a way to deal with the uncertainties of life. We lie awake worrying; we over-plan and over-organize. By being unwilling to surrender control, we lose our spontaneity, creativity, and flexibility.*

I have seen this trait of over-planning and over-organizing in some of my activities. When folks do not cooperate with my plan, I feel frustrated. "What's wrong with them!" I feel like screaming. I think the phrase: "How important is it?" is appropriate and has helped me to let go.

--Helen

**SHARING: WORKING MY FOURTH AND TENTH STEPS**

*Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

I am working the steps with other WA friends and it is helping me. I don't really know exactly how it works, but being honest and sharing my weaknesses seems to help me, perhaps because it helps me to accept myself, I see myself more clearly, I understand myself a lot better. It is easier to live with myself, and when my defects start to come to life, I may more quickly choose another behavior.

I also love also the 10th step in the yellow book, because I see how much I can be fearful, proud, dishonest, selfish and resentful. I see all this slowly abating, and when I do feel fear I see that it usually goes away once I take right action. When I see my pride coming, I switch into humility for being myself; this is so healing. When I see that I hide myself, and I am being dishonest, I try to see myself clearly and be honest with myself and others. I have been so used to hiding myself and to searching for what would please other people (that was what I was thinking!), and then I became resentful! Now I try to trust my life, my hp. Working my 4th and 10<sup>th</sup> step every day helps me so much,

*--Helen*

**SHARING: TAKING RISKS**

Taking risks is what I am doing in my WA program. Yesterday in the meeting someone told us "our thoughts are lying." I resonate with that, because when I think I am doing something okay, it may be merely comfortable. I have read in WA literature "The bigger risk is to take no risk," and I love this sentence.

I was not taking any risk before WA because I "knew", because "I was controlling everything," "I always knew what would happen," and, of course, I was "imagining" the worst. Everything had to be "perfect" before doing anything. And, of course, today I see that I need to begin something sometimes before being sure of everything, and this new approach is working. I find the solution on the way...and I discover so many nice things I did not know existed in the past, when I was staying in the comfort zone of that which was "well-known."

Staying "safe" was is also a way for me to "please" myself, to prove to myself I was "capable." Everything had it to be "perfect" and if not, I felt like the "bad person" I thought I was. Now these beliefs are still there in my head but I can tell them "Stop!" I need to change my thoughts in my recovery, or otherwise, I will go back into my sickness.

*--Helen*

**SHARING: JERRY'S TWELVE STEPS**

*We must remember that AA's Steps are suggestions only. A Belief in them as they stand is not at all a requirement for membership among us. This liberty has made AA available to thousands who never would have tried at all, had we insisted on the Twelve Steps just as written.*

*--Bill W. in Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*

From this statement many versions of the 12-Steps have been written for AAs as well as other recovery groups patterned on AA. Since our recovery programs need to be personalized, I have chosen to write my own 12-Steps as defining my program to celebrate anniversaries in my interrelated programs.

1. Accepting the awareness that I continually need to take actions to bring more balance in my life because of addictions.
2. I am one small part within the universe and inseparable from it; thus, it will provide the means for the determination and execution of changing actions.
3. Tapped into the universal consciousness as expressed by my fellow travelers in this plane for ideas of appropriate actions.
4. Having to learn to navigate in this plane with my innate, unique set of talents and dispositions; thus, this journey will have constant evolvment and change in the interaction with others for the mutual benefit of us in our journeys. The journey is never about achieving perfection as imposed by others, especially through religious/political systems developed by man.
5. Share insights from my innate, unique set of talents and dispositions with whom I interact.
6. Adjust thoughts and mind sets for further evolvment to handle new situations as they arrive in the journey.
7. Need the interaction with others for the evolvment in my journey.
8. Having recognized that human's behaviors have remained unchanged for eons in this plane of polarities, the interactions with others will at times result in conflicts because of control tendencies within human nature as well as the religious/political systems. Thus, harms done is a matter of perspective from one's worldview. I am responsible only for my actions and reactions from others behavior toward me.
9. Having learned that resentments only harm myself, I work at changing my attitudes towards others and recognize that I am not in control of their behavior. If there will be no further interactions with that person on any level of friendship, then there is no further action to be taken outside of my own internal change. However, for all other relationships reconciliation is necessary which means each person is responsible for making changes in themselves.
10. Continue in my resolution to make changes by not ingesting detrimental substances or acting out in other psychologically harmful ways, I use the tools of the various programs for evolving serenity. I welcome the need for both times of calm and times of trials to be fully alive in this plane.
11. Having experienced the universe's provision throughout my life as I cooperate with it, I journey doing my part.
12. Continue to share my journey and offer insights from it, when appropriate, that may benefit others in their journey as well as I may benefit from their insights during their journey.

*--Jerry*

## **EDITOR'S COMMENTARY**

In this issue, our sharing draws from the steps and signposts; meanwhile, Georgie's extraordinary story and song describes the miracle of a spiritual solution. As always, we thank the email group Finding Balance, and in particular, Helen, for keeping STORYLINE alive.

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 send your submittals by email to: [storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org](mailto:storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org), with **STORYLINE** in capital letters in the SUBJECT LINE. Before publishing anyone's contributions, we ask for explicit consent. Some members seem to want editing for spelling and grammar, and others want their shares published exactly as they are written; we will do our best to honor the preference of the author. If our policy needs further revising, STORYLINE will be happy to work with the WA membership to upgrade our practices.

*--shelley, chicago*

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**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.

STORYLINE invites WA members to share your contributions with the WA community 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](mailto:storyline@workaholics-anonymous.org), with **STORYLINE** in capital letters in the SUBJECT LINE. Include your contact information. Your contribution will keep this publication alive, while improving your recovery by your own sharing your experience, strength and hope with others.

*Note that materials submitted are assumed to be intended for publication, and are subject to editing to provide clarity and conformity for the newsletter. They become the property of WAWSO, which reserves the right to publish them in any format in any Workaholics Anonymous literature. The tentative deadline for submissions for our SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER issue is: August 15, 2018.*

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