



## *Living in Balance*

*October 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”)

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### **W.A. Financial News:**

Our expenses have increased with our outreach efforts in North Carolina and San Antonio, but book sales have also increased, putting us in a slightly better position than last year. Total 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition donations are greater than last year, thanks to generous offerings from individuals. The donations from meetings are still behind previous years’.

### **From the W.A. Tech Committee:**

Just in the last few months we have shipped our printed visual representations and literature to Iceland, Australia, Norway, Germany, France, England, Brazil, Italy, Spain, Canada, throughout the United States, and probably other places I can’t remember. At last count there are 1,721 people receiving the *eNewsletter* each month. Between the last day of our 2009 WSO Conference and our September 11, 2010 Board meeting there have been 490 orders through the shopping cart on our web site, and an increasing number of orders for our literature through Amazon.com. Our web site has run 306 consecutive days and nights, without interruption, since the switch to our new server, with untold numbers of “hits”.

Without policies and practices, the message of Workaholics Anonymous is vulnerable to being misquoted and having others use our materials in ways we cannot approve. We have formalized our policies for lending our logo, other visual representations and text materials to registered WA groups and others upon request. This information will be soon available at our website. We have also been asked to approve processes for translating our materials into German, Spanish and Portuguese and we are developing a standard approval process for this.

### **Sponsors Needed:**

We are getting requests for women telephone sponsors. There are only two women registered for this kind of sponsorship in our entire fellowship. We have requests from around the world where no meeting is available. If you would consider giving this service, contact: [outreach@workaholics-anonymous.org](mailto:outreach@workaholics-anonymous.org)

## A report from Chicago:

### Carrying the Message

As many W.A. members are already aware, W.A. hosted a hospitality suite at the International Conference of AA in San Antonio, Texas in July, 2010. To build on of this success, several W.A. members also hosted a hospitality conference room at the August 2010 Illinois State Conference of AA held near Chicago, Illinois.

This event was also a success. Approximately ninety active members of AA visited the W.A. hospitality event. For most of those who dropped in the hospitality room, this was their very first exposure to Workaholics Anonymous. The AA State Conference was from Friday at 3:00 pm until Sunday at Noon. The W.A. Hospitality Suite hours were from 5:00 pm to 9:00 on Friday, and from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday. W.A. meetings were also scheduled in the hotel conference room on Friday night at 6:00 pm, and Saturday afternoon at 2:00 pm. We arrived at noon on Friday with only a hotel room reservation. (This is not recommended – we took a risk!) We then contacted the hotel reservations department and requested to change our reservation from a hotel room to a conference room, after discovering that the cost of a conference room was equal to the cost of a hotel room.

There was only one conference room left available at the hotel, and the staff was eager to schedule it. The W.A. conference room provided by the hotel/conference center had an adjoining refreshment area that was shared by the AA Hospitality Suite. (Most AA conferences include a Hospitality Suite where food and refreshments are provided.) In addition, the W.A. conference room, being the only open conference room remaining in the hotel, was, miraculously, situated in the geometric center of the conference facility itself. Hence, AA members could not help but notice the presence of W.A. at the AA conference. This, of course, was not our intent. We requested a conference room away from the AA Conference venue, but the Higher Power had other plans. Several AA conference organizers expressed concern that the W.A. Conference room was not adequately labeled, and that AA members would inadvertently enter the W.A. conference room, thinking that it was somehow endorsed by AA. However, all of the signs and informational postings in the facility and at the concierge desk were specifically provided by the hotel, not by W.A. Therefore, any concerns they had were with the conference center staff itself, not with W.A.

On Friday, approximately 45 AA members (of the 450 who attended the AA conference) also stopped in the W.A. hospitality room. Some solely out of curiosity. Another 45 AA conference attendees stopped by on Saturday, making the total attendance to be ninety visitors. All of the AA members, however, were exposed to Workaholics Anonymous as an organization. Most AA members who wandered into the conference room had the same question: “Why have we not heard of your fellowship before now?” or “Why is this the first I’ve heard of this fellowship?” Of course, such questions only underscored why such an endeavor had merit! The W.A. hospitality conference room was the talk of the AA Conference. One AA member mentioned that comments like: “Were you aware that Workaholics Anonymous is present at the conference?” was mentioned at both AA and Al-Anon meetings in the hotel.

The room had the W.A. “Book of Recovery” and the “W.A. Book of Discovery” for sale, and also W.A. pamphlets were available. A local Chicago area W.A. meeting list was created and handed out to those who requested it. Three “Books of Recovery” were sold. Ironically, it appeared that those members who were most in need of W.A. visited the conference room totally by accident. Surprisingly, three AA conference attendees who visited the hospitality room offered to immediately volunteer for W.A. at the conference. They offered to greet other AA’s as they showed up with questions. This offered the opportunity for the existing W.A. members to get some much needed rest.

Various board and card games (Scrabble, Risk, a Cribbage Board) were spread out in the visitors area, which comfortably seated about 30 people. This made it easier to identify the “real” workaholics from those who were  
(continued on page 3)

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just touring the various conference rooms at the facility out of curiosity. The “real” workaholics were visibly repulsed by the presence of board and card games in the room. One W.A. member quipped that it was like in the movies: like shoving a silver cross into the face of a vampire. (Ha-ha)

When addressing members of AA who visited the conference room, two comments made by W.A. members were greeted with pleased agreement:

“Anything you work the steps on gets better.”

“Possibly you know someone, a family member, sponsor or sponsee, who has a problem with work?”

Curiously, several events transpired at the AA banquet that gave rise to matters of workaholism. First, an event organizer who introduced the keynote banquet speaker at the conference laughingly apologized to the banquet audience that he was not able to fulfill his responsibilities to greet and be the local tour guide for the main banquet speakers because of his work conflicts. The out-of-town banquet speakers (one was from Kentucky) had to locate all of their own accommodations and necessities when they arrived because no one was there to greet them. As a workaholic, I remember days like that. In addition, the main banquet speaker confessed during his address that he was currently sponsoring fifty (50) sponsees. When the speaker explained this, most in the room were by then already aware that there was a Workaholics Anonymous conference room situated directly across the hall from the banquet room itself.

I believe the greatest benefit of providing the hospitality conference room at the Illinois State AA conference was how it brought all four Chicago Area W.A. meetings together behind one effort. All of the Chicago area W.A. meetings voted and agreed that the concept of a Hospitality Room at the State AA Conference had merit, and was worth pursuing. All provided either volunteers, financial assistance, or both.

The total hotel bill for the Hospitality Conference Room was \$550. The four W.A. meetings in the Chicago area together contributed a total of \$200.00. The remaining cost was covered by a generous member of W.A. The cost of the conference room itself was only \$150.00 per day. The additional costs came from the hotel catering department.

- from a Chicago member of our fellowship

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**From members of our fellowship:**

**To-Do list with a twist:**

One of my challenges as a workaholic is resisting the impulse to be driven by my to do lists. I am always writing, refining, reviewing, and trying to endlessly complete what’s on them. It’s as if the categories were “MUST DO YESTERDAY”, or “SEEMS TERRIBLY URGENT”. It is helpful to talk about this struggle occasionally in my WA meeting, and know that others also have similar issues.

I was recently in the office of my car mechanic, and noticed on his desk a notepad with printed headings. Across the top it read “TO DON’T”. Then there were 4 sections on the page: “TO AVOID”; “TO DELAY”; “TO PAWN OFF”; & “TO SABOTAGE”. I got a kick out of it and thought this guy might be my new role model. You never know when you’re going to receive a spiritual teaching – Just thought I’d pass it along!

- from Robyn Y.

**Accepting:**

“We accept the outcomes of our endeavors, whatever the results, whatever the timing. We know that impatience, rushing and insisting on perfect results only slow down our recovery. We are gentle with our efforts, knowing that our new way of living requires much practice. Asking. We admit our weaknesses and mistakes. We realize we don’t have to do everything ourselves, and we ask our Higher Power and others for help.”

Lately, I've been asking God in my morning prayers to help me see the situations in my day as neutral, instead of assigning them "good" or "bad". Instead of looking at them as "problems", I'm trying to accept them as testing grounds for my newfound skills. I can either confront such situations trying to show up as a sober person and one who others see as an example to emulate ("how can I be useful here?"), or I can practice my character defects ("what's in it for me?"). Of course, this is more challenging the more I'm triggered. I'm having an interesting time of it on a two week driving vacation with my family, and in particular with my husband whose controlling personality and fears are exacerbated by driving in unknown areas. Many opportunities for me to practice patience, acceptance and not escalate as I have in the past. Many times to say to myself, "would I rather be right or happy?"

"Asking: We admit our weaknesses and mistakes. We realize we don’t have to do everything ourselves, and we ask our Higher Power and others for help."

I had an interesting experience with this. Asking for help is something I never did. Never wanted to take up space or put anyone to any trouble on my behalf. Didn't feel like I deserved it, and felt other people did. Also my ego didn't want to admit I needed help or didn't have everything figured out. Then, in 10/08, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 Hodgkins lymphoma and needed significant surgery, with a two month recovery. One of my sponsees came to my rescue and whenever anyone asked "what can I do?" I sent them to Annette. Annette scheduled people to bring dinner for 5 to my house every day for a month. It was amazing, not only from the perspective of nutritional nourishment, but also spiritual and emotional. I was delighted to have the visitors! I never felt so loved and supported in my entire life.

When one of my grand sponsees mentioned at a meeting this spring the she was having surgery on both feet, lived alone in a third floor walk up and wouldn't be able to drive for a month, I knew just what to do. We arranged two visitors a day for her while she was confined for the first 10 days, rides to meetings, someone to do grocery shopping, rides to and from work, doctor and therapy, even someone to clean her cat box. It gave many people at our meetings an opportunity to be of service instead of acting out. She has been so grateful to see that she could get thru this challenging time without acting out, and she has felt so loved. Now she has seen the process close up and is poised to spring into action when someone else needs help. What an amazing group of people 12 Step has! I'm so grateful I found it!

- from Angela W.



**Practicing Abstinence**

I had been practicing abstinence in the WA program for 3 years--right up to around February when I succumbed to pressure at work and slipped back. But, even before, this abstinence had only been in not working more than 45-50 hours a week. I was not abstinent in activity, anxiety or worry. I was in fact consumed by working and hating it at the same time. I was driving with my one foot flat on the accelerator and the other flat on the brake. I started working more because I was desperate to save my job...my way. (continued on page 5)

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A friend suggested I seek professional counseling...she'd been in my shoes 2 years earlier (lagging, under pressure from the bosses, etc) and was helped by psychological and psychiatric counseling. As usual I felt I HAD to figure it out myself (a friend says: "figuring it out is NOT a 12 step slogan"). But the principle of abstinence also suggests seeking support through a sponsor or someone else.

Then re-reading for the umpteenth time the piece about work aversion I was reminded that it too recommends seeking professional help if necessary "to help us face the new emotional and physical workload involved in spiritual abuse and rigid perfectionism...". So I called my company's assistance program early in May was assigned a therapist who suggested a psychiatrist. I am now, as of 2 1/2 weeks ago, on a 3 to 6 month medical leave from my job with the probability of a not so warm welcome when I return. It was a risk my HP guided me to. To remain stuck would eventually have killed me. I'm using this time to rest, to recover and learn about what I've been hiding from myself most of my life.

- from Ruth W.



**My earliest memories**

I remember being very little and feeling afraid of monsters in my room, in the corner, under my crib, in my bedroom closet. I would wake my parents up at night saying there was "something in my room." They would tell me there was nothing to be afraid of. Now that I look back, it seems these "alleged" monsters were my future addictions waiting for me to grow up and be their puppet. And these monsters dined on the feelings like anxiety, loneliness, sadness and shame that I didn't know what to do with or weren't welcome.

The big dank workaholic monster with a racing clock for a heart and sharpened #2 pencils for teeth showed up around age 6. About the time I started suffering frequent clumps of fever blisters on my lip. Mom tried everything to help me because they hurt and looked horrible. Sometimes she couldn't buy my school photos because it looked like I had been socked in the mouth. Now I understand that I get them when I am under stress. Or when my body's unhealthy.

One of my earliest "workaholic" memories is learning to read. There was a reading contest in class. I became obsessed with winning. I read so many little golden books and Dr. Seuss books, my tiny first-grade eyeballs were spinning. And I won! 2nd place. My parents were pleased enough but I wasn't. I wanted to win 1st place. What was my prize for all this performance? "Good job kid" and another book: Cinderella. A very clear message: it'll never be enough. Keep going. I don't know what I would've rather won at age 6. Maybe just a hoola hoop or a Barbie. No, I got a story about a girl who was a good little workaholic for her stepmom and stepsisters but it was never enough. Later I wouldn't need a prince to save me....just a new prestigious job and some booze.

I remember being 7 and watching my Dad wash the car with great delight. I wanted to help, and he let me! My heart leapt cause I loved to be close to my Dad. He held us when we learned to swim. We fell asleep in his lap at night. His big strong military hands showing my small hands how to move the giant sponge, how to scrub the hubcaps. I reveled in the cool water from the spraying hose and cool wet feet on hot cement and shimmery suds decorating the whole event. He showed me how to properly wash a car. I was in heaven. The next time it got dirty, I asked my Dad if I could wash the car for him...all by myself while he was at work. He greenlighted the mission and left the right tools and soap for me. Here I was, just a little over 3 feet tall struggling to wash this big car. I couldn't reach the roof and didn't realized until midway through what a huge job it was but I did the best I could.

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When my Dad got home, always intimidating in his officer's uniform, he went with me to inspect the car. His face became stormy. He pointed out the spots I missed, disappointed. He told me quietly and darkly, "If you're going to do something, do it right. I guess I have to do everything myself" and walked off. I was devastated. Getting my Dad's recognition and approval was love for me. I felt guilty, worthless and afraid. That is the earliest memory I have of the low-grade anxiety that I would feel for most of my life...afraid I would do a bad job, get in trouble, and might never get enough love unless I did better.

Now I am beginning to understand that staying busy in our family really means avoiding painful feelings. Distracting us from our troublesome needs. The adrenalin rush is worthiness fuel. And can get you through the exhaustion. Approval is appreciation and love. Achievement is how we matter. It's survival when you don't know how to be fully human. This monster is a dear friend when you're lonely, confused... big fangs and all. It's been handed down through the generations. And despite all this, I am grateful for every bit of my experience, no matter what. I love all of us no matter what.

- from Dallas I.



**A daily prayer:**

I'd like to share my daily prayer, which I wrote at my sponsor's suggestion based on the AA big book third-step prayer, and continue to revise periodically when it feels helpful. I say it every morning during my commute. One thing I particularly notice is that whenever I get to the forgiveness part, my shoulders drop and I feel a bodily release of tension.

My daily prayer:

Greater Wisdom, please fill me with your perspective today.

Help me to release the bondage of my self-will and ego: the source of anxiety, anger, jealousy and judgement, that gets in the way of my true connections to others and to life.

Help me to reach out to you and to others when I am gripped by anxiety or depression, and to listen to what you say with an open heart.

Help me to forgive myself and others; we are only human.

Realizing I don't have complete control over any outcome, help me to surrender to this journey with humility and the joy of facing into the wind.

- from Sue A.



## **A workaholic's progress, Chapter one:**

I came from a family where I felt safe. I somehow knew I was planned and wanted. Although there was little open expression of love, I knew it was there. So what was my problem?

I showed up early as an ADHD child, so I was a handful and stretched my parents' patience. In addition, my "filters" were inadequate to protect me from overload. I felt overwhelmed with feelings of anger, frustration, self-pity, jealousy and injustice, which I was unable to modify. My mother later said I was "sensitive", which is to say that my responses seemed exaggerated. I feel a great empathy with autistic people as having a similar inability to filter or dial down the volume of what is coming their way. I hated feeling controlled. One of my earliest memories is being made to take a nap (age 3 or 4) and being placed in a crib with the door on the other side of the room securely closed. I was weeping and angry. I discovered that if I shook the bed a certain way, I could get it to slide on the floor a half-inch toward the door. I wouldn't allow myself to stop crying, as that would have been a complete surrender to this injustice. With each sob, I managed to nudge the crib toward the door. I don't remember what happened, but I am left with the recollection of being powerless, abandoned and exhausted.

My parents must have been at wit's end. Where did this monster come from? Looking back, I believe that my mother was not really interested in children until they were old enough to play cards. This is not a criticism, but merely a statement of fact. My mother knew how to play, just not child's play. My father seemed to have had no childhood of his own and did not know how to relate to an emotional child. My outbursts bewildered and repelled him. My older brother and my father seemed to have a lot in common and I was jealous. I now see that at a very early age, I gave up on my father and transferred my need for a male figure to my brother, Bob, who was three years older. In the beginning, he wasn't too keen on this, but I didn't give up trying to get him to be my pal. Along with my younger brother, of whom I was intensely jealous, we made an unstable triangle that often left me out in the cold.

I received very little punishment, but instead was introduced to shame very early, and I took it to heart. Soon, my parents did not need to shame me, I did it to myself. With this mechanism operating, at the age of nine, I was primed for a childhood trauma when a fire in our house resulted in the death of my younger brother. I became convinced that I could have saved him, and was ashamed of my jealousy and stricken with guilt. I was completely distraught and was all alone. I had isolated myself from my parents and older brother was incapable of talking about it. The effect of this tragedy was so great that my parents could not deal with it in the open. I can't fully understand what kept us together. In all my time at home, no words were spoken about what we had experienced. The rest of the family seemed to keep on functioning, but I was a mess. I wet the bed, I was failing the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, had no friends and had no adult that I could talk to. I still wonder that I did not despair, but something in my makeup gave me a belief that I could make it. I knew it would be not be easy, but I would survive. I was unable to use the controlling "help" my parents offered, feeling sure that it would not help me. My own inability to communicate my inner turmoil made me a mystery to my parents, so it was a small wonder that they did not understand me. This led me to turn inward, sensing that the only person who could help me was ME. This may be the truth, but at that age I had little experience and confidence to draw on. I knew that I was intensely lonely and needed to find friends, but I had always relied on my older brother to break trail for me.

It has taken me many years to understand that a parent's love alone cannot fix these problems. It may add patience, provide stability, even optimism, but it can't fix things that are broken. I was plagued with guilt and loneliness and the confusion of an attention deficit brain. The truth is that no one outside could fix this. I learned very early to get some focus by doing "art" projects, closely observing nature and reading whatever came my way. Intense concentration or activity gave me distraction from what was an almost intolerable inner anxiety. So, I was a budding workaholic at the tender age of ten.

- from a member of our fellowship

## The 2010 National Conference of Workaholics Anonymous



### Carrying the Message: “Hurting, Healing and Helping”

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

**Register and pay on our website: [workaholics-anonymous.org](http://workaholics-anonymous.org)**



□ 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 another workaholic to abstain from compulsive working one more day. Please send you submittals by email to: [newsletter@workaholics-anonymous.org](mailto: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 December 20<sup>th</sup>, 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.*



“How do you promote world peace? Go home and love your family.”

- Mother Theresa



When President Clinton met with Nelson Mandela for the first time, he asked: “How can you forgive the people who imprisoned you for 27 years?” Nelson Mandela replied: “If I did not forgive, I would still be in a kind of prison.”



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