

## **The WA Tools and Principles of Recovery**

(From the first edition of the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 2005)\*

### **The Tools**

#### **Listening**

We set aside time each day for prayer and meditation. Before accepting any commitments, we ask our Higher Power and WA friends for guidance.

#### **Prioritizing**

We decide which are the most important things to do first. Sometimes that may mean doing nothing. We strive to stay flexible to events, reorganizing our priorities as needed. We view interruptions and accidents as opportunities for growth.

#### **Substituting**

We do not add a new activity without eliminating from our schedule one that demands equivalent time and energy.

#### **Under-Scheduling**

We allow more time than we think we need for a task or trip, allowing a comfortable margin to accommodate the unexpected.

#### **Playing**

We schedule time for play, refusing to let ourselves work nonstop. We do not make our play into a work project.

#### **Concentrating**

We try to do one thing at a time.

#### **Pacing**

We work at a comfortable pace and rest *before* we get tired. To remind ourselves, we check our level of energy before proceeding to our next activity. We do not get "wound up" in our work, so we don't have to unwind.

#### **Relaxing**

We do not yield to pressure from others or attempt to pressure others. We remain alert to the people and situations that trigger feelings of pressure in us. We become aware of our own actions, words, body sensations and feelings that tell us we are responding with pressure. When we feel energy building up, we stop; we reconnect with our Higher Power and others around us.

### **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.

### **Meetings**

We attend WA meetings to learn how the fellowship works and to share our experience, strength and hope with each other.

### **Telephoning**

We use the telephone to stay in contact with members of the Fellowship between meetings. We communicate with our WA friends before and after a critical task.

### **Balancing**

We balance our involvement in work with our efforts to develop personal relationships, spiritual growth, creativity, and playful attitudes.

### **Serving**

We readily extend help to other workaholics, knowing that assistance to others adds to the quality of our own recovery.

### **Living in the Now**

We realize we are where our Higher Power wants us to be—in the here and now. We try to live each moment with serenity, joy and gratitude.

*(Adapted from the Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery, 1st ed., 2005, pp. 11-12; 2nd ed., 2015, p. 220)*

## **The Principles**

### **Abstinence**

In Workaholics Anonymous, abstinence means to abstain from compulsive working, activity, worry, and work avoidance. For many workaholics, abstinence means far more than relief from compulsive working on a physical level. It also means an attitude that comes as a result of surrendering to something greater than ourselves. Abstinence means not only freedom from compulsive working but also freedom from compulsive thinking and worrying. Each of us is free to determine our own way of being abstinent according to personal needs and preferences. Bottom lines define the point where

we cross over from abstinence to work addiction. The Tool of Abstinence includes working with a sponsor to establish and maintain personal bottom lines, top lines, and guidelines for recovery as well as seeking support around bottom line behavior.

### **Sponsorship**

Sponsors are Workaholics Anonymous members who are committed to abstinence from compulsive working. They offer guidance through the recovery process on all three levels: physical, emotional and spiritual. Specifically, they can help us with Tools such as work plans, phone calls, and working the Steps. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will. Sometimes it is more practical to enter into a co-sponsoring arrangement. We become a sponsor or cosponsor as a way of working The Twelfth Step: to carry the Workaholics Anonymous message and to put the Principles of the Program into practice. We ask to be sponsored or co-sponsored so we can benefit from the experience of someone who has achieved what we want. Ours is a program of attraction, so we find a sponsor who has what we want and ask how they achieved it.

### **Writing**

Often, writing clarifies our thoughts and helps us get to the root of the feelings that lie behind our compulsive working. It is an action that fosters self-reliance because we can write even when no one is available for us to talk with. Writing for ourselves may give us clarity over talking. This is partly because when we talk with other people we may find our choice of words and subjects are affected by our interaction with our audience. Writing records our expressions in a way that helps us understand what we are trying to say. Writings can be shared with others if we want to use them as a form of communication.

### **Action Plan**

We put on paper what we intend to do each day for our relationships, our activities, and ourselves. This helps us develop a healthier and more balanced lifestyle. It also helps us to overcome denial. Sharing our plan with another person gives us an opportunity to express feelings that are often at the root of our compulsive behavior.

### **Humor**

Seeing the funny side of our predicament can help free us from anxiety and worry.

### **Time Out**

We workaholics have found that having fun and relaxing are essential tools in our recovery from workaholism. By setting aside time for playfulness and for unstructured events without goals, we

learn that there is more to life than our former identities around work and activity. Play and fun help heal us to live in the present moment, rather than driving ourselves for hoped-for fulfillment in some faraway future time.

### **Nurturing**

We nurture our bodies with healthy eating, exercise and rest. We nurture our minds by looking for positive aspects in every encounter. We nurture our spirits by surrounding ourselves with beauty, harmony, and tranquility. We recognize we are neither what we do nor what we feel. We foster our sense of self-worth and self-respect.

### **Literature**

Literature is a source of information, insight, experience, strength and hope. Reading on a daily basis impresses the truth on us and expands our horizons. This can be vital to our growth and reinforces our program of recovery. Program literature is an ever-available tool that gives insight into our problems, strength to deal with them and the knowledge that there is a process of recovery for us. We also study the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve Step programs to strengthen our understanding of compulsive disease. We can identify with many of the situations described by substituting the words “compulsive working” for alcohol.

### **Anonymity**

Anonymity means that whatever we share with another member is held in respect and confidence. It helps us place Principles before personalities. It offers us freedom of expression and protection against gossip. The tradition of anonymity means that we do not publicly disclose in the media our full names in connection with Workaholics Anonymous.

### **The Twelve Steps**

Recovery from compulsive work and activity can be achieved by undertaking the Twelve Steps of Workaholics Anonymous. These Steps provide a source of hope as well as a structured way to achieve progress. Moving from one Step to another may take varying amounts of effort and time. We may revisit Steps and find new meanings in them. Ultimately, we find we practice the Steps by fully integrating them into our lives. We can create a Step group at our meetings and work the Steps together.

### **Meditation**

For many of us, being still and sitting quietly are difficult and painful at first. The practice of letting go of the constant chatter in our heads can lead to a gradually evolving peace of mind. This serenity is a soothing, healing contrast to the excitement, rush, and pleasurable intensity we have sought

through our over-work, compulsive activity, and constant worry. Meditation lets us experience ourselves insulated from fears, insecurities, and resentments that drive work avoidance and the compulsivity of workaholism. Renewed, we are able to move back into our daily lives in a balanced way.

(Adapted from the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 1st ed., 2005, pp. 12-15)

\*The list of Tools from the first edition of the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery* (2005, pp. 11-12) was reprinted in the second edition of the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery* (2015, p. 220). [The second edition of the Book of Recovery offers an additional, more consolidated exploration of these same WA Tools, as well as of the WA Principles \(pp. 27-31\).](#)