

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

(From the second edition of the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 2015)\*

### **The Tools**

#### **Meetings**

We attend WA meetings to learn how the Fellowship works, to remind ourselves of how far we have come in recovery, and to share our experience, strength, and hope with other WA members.

#### **Telephone and Internet**

We reach out to stay in contact with other WA members between meetings for mutual support, especially before and after critical recovery tasks.

#### **Sponsors**

We find a WA member who is committed to abstinence from compulsive working to help us work the Steps, Traditions, and Tools. Sponsors offer guidance through the Recovery process on all three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will. We become a sponsor as a way of working Step Twelve, carrying the WA message and putting the principles of the program into practice. We ask to be sponsored so that we can benefit from the experience of someone who has achieved what we want. WA is a program of attraction, so we find a sponsor whose recovery inspires us and follow his or her lead. A co-sponsoring arrangement is sometimes the most practical or desirable approach; many workaholics having found or deepened their recovery in this manner.

#### **Literature**

Reading WA publications on a daily basis impresses the truth upon us and expands our horizons. Such writings can provide information, insight, inspiration, and hope. They are available at times when other WA members are not. Further, they provide a comprehensive chronicle of the knowledge of Recovery from a multitude of sources. We also study the literature of AA and other Twelve-Step programs to strengthen our understanding of compulsive disease. We can identify with many of the situations described by substituting terms like “compulsive working” in place of the named substances and processes.

## **Prayer and Meditation**

A daily contemplative practice is something we might formally adopt even prior to reaching Step Eleven. Before accepting any new commitments, we ask a Higher Power for guidance. 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, however, lead to a gradually evolving peace of mind. This serenity is a soothing, healing contrast to the intensity sought through our compulsive busyness and constant worry. Meditation lets us experience ourselves insulated from the resentments and fears that drive workaholism and work avoidance. Renewed, we are able to move back into our daily lives in a balanced way.

## **Writing**

Journaling is helpful to clarify our thoughts and helps us to get to the root of feelings that lie behind our compulsive working. As with reading and meditating, getting our ideas on paper is an option at times when other WA members are not around to listen—with the added benefit that we are able to express ourselves more freely when we need have no regard for the audience. Sometimes just making notes of seemingly important memories or ideas can help quiet the mind as we assure ourselves that they will not be forgotten and can be revisited anytime in the future. Writings can ultimately be shared with others if we so desire.

## **Top and Bottom Lines**

For many workaholics, abstinence means far more than relief from compulsive working and activity on a physical level. It also means an attitude that comes as a result of surrendering to something greater than the self. We do not merely avoid work, mistaking a lack of activity for recovery. We aspire to 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. Top Lines represent our goals and visions, and Bottom Lines define the point where we cross over from abstinence to work addiction. We work with a sponsor to establish such boundaries, as well as to seek support around Bottom Line behavior. For more information on setting top and bottom lines, see the *Abstinence in Workaholics Anonymous: Top Lines & Bottom Lines* pamphlet that is reprinted in the Supplemental Resources section of the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*.

## **Action Plan**

We put on paper what we intend to do each day. We are conscious of the way we spend our time to ensure that we are able to properly care for our bodies with healthy food, appropriate exercise, and an adequate amount of sleep. We carve out places in our schedule for recovery, recreation, and relationships, in addition to work and other activities. This helps us develop a healthier, more balanced lifestyle, so long as we also commit to concentrating on one thing at a time and setting a reasonable pace for ourselves. Our increased awareness will help us to overcome any lingering denial.

Sharing our plans with another WA member gives us an opportunity to express feelings that are often at the root of our compulsive behavior if we find that we have trouble adhering to our stated intentions. We get feedback as needed to determine which things need to happen first—which may mean doing nothing. We strive to stay flexible to events, reorganizing our priorities as needed. We do not cram new tasks into our schedules; rather, we substitute by eliminating activities that demand equivalent time and energy. We under-schedule to allow more time than we think we need, providing a comfortable margin to accommodate the unexpected. We view interruptions and accidents as opportunities for growth. We realize that we are where our Higher Power has intended—in the here and now.

### **Rest and Relaxation**

We work at a comfortable pace and rest before we get tired. We check our level of energy before proceeding to our next activity. We do not get “wound up,” so we do not have to unwind. We do not yield to pressure from others or attempt to pressure others. We remain alert to the people and situations that trigger stressful feelings. We become aware of our own actions, words, and body sensations. When we feel energy building up, we stop and reconnect with a Higher Power. Setting aside time for breaks and unstructured events without goals, we learn that there is more to life than we had been experiencing as active workaholics. We allow ourselves to have fun and play without making it into a work project. We exercise our sense of humor and laugh at the funny side of our predicament. We allow ourselves to enjoy the present moment rather than driving ourselves for hoped-for fulfillment in some faraway future time.

### **Service**

As part of Step Twelve, we readily extend help to other workaholics, knowing that assistance to others adds to the quality of our own recovery by fostering a sense of gratitude for what we have learned and how far we have already come. While it may be useful to take a brief hiatus from any new or substantial volunteer commitments in early recovery if such activity was part of our compulsion, we find that we can still contribute to WA in many ways. For example, we do service by listening undistracted to other WA members as they share, volunteering to read or time the shares at WA meetings, and offering contributions pursuant to Tradition Seven.

## **The Principles**

We accept the outcomes of our endeavors—whatever the results, whatever the timing. We know that impatience, rushing, and insisting on a perfect result will only slow any progress. We are gentle with our efforts, knowing that our new way of living requires much practice and that our best is good enough for now. We freely admit our weaknesses and mistakes. We realize we do not have to do

everything ourselves. We pray and ask for help, delegating when we need to. We forgive ourselves and others for failing to live up to conceptual ideals.

We hold what other WA members share with us in confidence. We respect each other's anonymity in order to foster freedom of expression and protection against the negative impact of gossip. We provide a safe place for workaholics to recover. We treat others as we wish to be treated.

(Adapted from the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery*, 2nd ed., 2015, pp. 27-31)

\*This text, from the second edition of the *Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery* (2015, pp. 27-31), is a thematic exploration of the WA Tools and Principles, based on the [lists in the first edition of the book](#) (2005, pp. 11-15). The useful list of Tools from the first edition is also reprinted at the back of the second edition of the *Book of Recovery* (2015, p. 220).