

Healthy Service in Workaholics Anonymous

What is Service?

Service means carrying our message to those who still suffer and passing on to others the gifts of recovery that were freely given to us. Service may include volunteering our time to sponsor others, leading meetings, taking on positions in the Workaholics Anonymous (WA) service structure, talking to others on the phone, or taking any other actions to share our experience, strength and hope with others.

Service is Sobering

Workaholics often arrive at our first meeting either over-committed and over-scheduled or burned out, exhausted and with health consequences from workaholism. So the statement “service is sobering,” which is a mantra of all other Twelve-Step fellowships, may ring hollow.

The truth is that service *is* sobering. The trick is our approach to service. (Our approach to work is similarly tricky.) How can we give service in a way that is consistent with our recovery? How can we honor ourselves, our bodies, our family and our program at the same time?

Our Approach to Service

Like all aspects of Recovery, what works for one WA member might be harmful to another member. Each of us is invited to take an approach to service that we are learning in Step Twelve to apply to all aspects of our life. We pray, we write, we talk to our sponsor, and then we proceed as guided.

The Value of Healthy Service

Below is some of the experience, strength and hope that workaholics have collected about the importance and value of healthy service:

- “My recovery has to come first. If it is not first, it is last. Service commitments are a way of ensuring that my recovery comes first.”
- “Service in WA has saved my life at least three times. If I did not have to be here, there were so many times I would have drifted away. Because I had to be here, when I encountered crises, I used the Tools of the Program to deal with them.”
- “In service I get to practice all the new recovery skills I need to actually be able to work in a healthy way. I pray at the beginning and end of service, bringing my Higher Power into my actions. When I begin to resent my WA fellows or to overdo it in service, I know I need to write an inventory and give it away to someone in the Program (who does not know the

people). I can make amends for my behaviors so that I do not stay in 'victimhood.' If I am overdoing, I can pull back, and everyone understands."

- "I can really practice 'progress not perfection.' Nobody is able to do WA service perfectly."
- "Service pulls me out of isolation and into connection. It was hard for me as a workaholic to form a new habit of calling people. But I knew how to call colleagues. My service buddies became my new colleagues and I had new friends and shoulders to cry on."
- "In order to recover I had to be willing to go to any lengths. To get a project completed as a workaholic, I was willing to pull all-nighters, edit seventy-five versions of something, and assemble hundreds of binders. Now that I am in Recovery, can I really say that I cannot make time for a group conscience meeting, an outreach call, or getting myself to a meeting fifteen minutes early to set up chairs? Where are my priorities? I use the Tool of Prioritizing."
- "In service, the WA Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts provide guidance. In service, I learn how to be in unity, surrender to a Higher Power's authority, include everyone, let go, stick to our primary purpose to carry the message, be fully self-supporting, remain non-professional (except when we need special workers), be completely unorganized, stay out of controversy, attract rather than promote and put principles over personalities. These skills make the rest of life at work, with family and in service outside WA much more manageable, and even possible."
- "So much of my disease was about control and being in charge. Tradition Two says that there is only one authority, a Higher Power that is revealed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. This means that I have an opportunity to surrender to the group conscience."
- "I work multiple Twelve-Step programs. I decided to put my service energy and focus into WA because I needed WA to be here for me. For example, I show up to be the meeting secretary so that I get a meeting."
- "There are so many ways to do service. I do not have to be on the WA Board of Trustees to be of service. Service can be as simple as returning a fellow's outreach call, showing up to a meeting so that there are two people there, setting up chairs, or listing myself as a meeting 'catalyst' on the WA website to start a meeting in my city or region."
- "Our fellowship in our city is only five years old but it has two strong meetings a week and several people who attend regularly. The key to our growth is service. Every person in the Fellowship is in service and this keeps us connected and growing."

Service in WA: A Summary

“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.”

(Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery, 2d ed., 2015, p.30)

Workaholics Anonymous

Workaholics Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from workaholism. Recovering workaholics have found that working a Twelve-Step Program of Recovery can bring complete relief from workaholism and allow them to live full and productive lives.

Workaholics Anonymous offers face-to-face meetings in many cities around the world. In addition, there are meetings on the telephone, via Skype, Zoom, and online every day of the week. You can find a full list of WA meetings at <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/>.

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