

Saul and Saul, LLC

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FOUR MAJOR STYLES OF WORKAHOLISM

Excerpts from “Chained to the Desk” by Bryan Robinson

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BULIMIC WORKAHOLIC STYLE

The motto of this style is, “Either I do it perfectly or not at all”. Just as some people with eating disorders alternate between self-starvation and bingeing, the bulimic workaholic style involves cycling among procrastination, work binges and exhaustion. Bulimic workaholics often can’t get started, and then scramble to complete the project by the deadline, staying up for three nights straight before collapsing in exhaustion. Beneath the procrastination phase of the bulimic workaholic style is the fear that they will not do the job perfectly and intolerance for the emotions connected with making mistakes. They are worrying obsessively about work – and kicking themselves for not doing it.

RELENTLESS WORKAHOLIC STYLE

This style is characterized by the motto, “It has to be finished yesterday.” People in this group get an adrenaline kick from tight deadlines and start things too soon rather than too late. This style also is characterized by impulsivity; its participants tend to take on too much. They do not say no, set priorities, delegate or consciously decide to put anything on the back burner. They work too fast for careful thought, reflection and attention to details. They often suffer distortions in self-image; underlying their relentless volunteering is often a grandiose sense of their unique competence and a sense of self-worth dependent on others’ approval.

ATTENTION-DEFICIT WORKAHOLIC STYLE

This style uses the adrenaline of overwhelming work pressure as a focusing drive. People involved in attention-deficit workaholic style live on the brink of chaos and get high from the rush of new ideas. They start a plethora of exciting projects that they never finish. Easily bored with follow through, they are the revved-up workaholics who click their nails on tabletops, twiddle their thumbs in meetings, and fidget or pace about erratically. They live on the edge at work and play and gravitate toward high-risk jobs or activities. Unlike bulimic workaholics who can’t start a project and want to do everything perfectly, attention-deficit workaholics start lots of projects, do them carelessly and get too bored to follow through.

SAVORING WORKAHOLIC STYLE

This style is slow, methodical and overly scrupulous. Participants have trouble letting go of work; they get hooked, savoring a project the same way some alcoholics might savor a fine wine. This is a style of consummate perfectionism: those employing it can’t tell when the job is

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done; deep down they fear the project is never good enough. They inadvertently prolong and create additional work then they realize they are close to completion. Because a project feels incomplete to them even when others feel it is finished, savoring workaholics have difficulty with completing old tasks and starting new ones.

Some workaholic people employ only one style; others mix and match, blending styles or alternating among them. Whatever the style of overworking, it often leads to problems in a person's life.

If you are interested in finding out how much of a workaholic you might be, check out the Work Addiction Risk Test (WART). If you want further assistance with your workaholic tendencies, please contact us by e-mail or telephone.

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