

Saul and Saul, LLC

CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS: TUCK T. SAUL, PhD & SUZANNE C. SAUL, PhD

CERTIFIED COACH: TUCK T. SAUL, PhD

OVERCOMING WORKAHOLISM

The first step in becoming free from workaholism is to acknowledge you are a workaholic. So often, a workaholic is the last to realize a problem exists. Ask your spouse/significant other or a close friend if they think you're a workaholic. One fundamental definition of workaholism is when one's relationship with work competes with other important relationships. Here are some warning signs of workaholism:

1. Your home becomes an extension of your office.
2. You take office equipment with you wherever you go, even on vacations.
3. Work makes you happier than anything else in your life.
4. You get restless and/or irritable on vacations (if you take one) and often cut them short.
5. Your attitude and actions make a statement that you feel sleep and playtime are a big waste.
6. You frequently find yourself "problem solving" work situations in your mind during your "off time".

The second step is to gradually cut down the number of hours you work each day or week. Avoid radical changes. Remember, withdrawal from workaholism needs to be done in a similar fashion to withdrawing from any type of addiction. A simple example of a graduated step would be to make it a rule to not work on weekends. Don't be surprised if you find yourself getting depressed, more irritable, more anxious, and less social in the beginning. What you're experiencing are psychological withdrawal symptoms. However, if you stay the course, you'll notice that these symptoms become less severe over time.

The third step is to make more time your primary relationship. Remember, most relationships require at least 20-30 minutes of "connect time" every day, not including time to discuss bills, children, phone calls, etc. Also make time for your friendships. Try to select people who can model how to have fun and enjoyment in activities not associated with the World of Work.

The fourth step is to take care of your body. Get a physical exam if you haven't had one in a while. Get some physical exercise on a regular basis. Remember the importance of taking care of the three basics: eating, sleeping, and exercise.

The fifth step is to plan time for recreation. Again, set aside time for FUN. Choose a hobby that contrasts with the kind of work you do. If you work on highly technical mental problems all day, take up a handicraft like woodworking or needlework. If you stay indoors all day, take up an outdoor activity like bicycling, golf, tennis, or gardening.

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The sixth step is to refuse to feel guilty when you're not working. This probably the most important step of all.

The seventh step is to consider getting a Personal Coach if you're feeling stuck. Someone who can give guidance support, and if needed, a kick in the pants to help you get going.

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