

Are You a Workaholic? Answer These 20 Questions to Find Out

My close friend Steve is a successful senior executive for a Bay Area consulting firm. He's one of the savviest professionals I know, but also has all of the workaholic symptoms. "It's how you get ahead that matters," he says. "Working late, putting in the extra time, getting things done, making a difference. It's the quickest way to the top." As Steve has climbed the career ladder, he's left other important parts of his life behind. Here are a couple examples: Back in college he was an avid skier, but he hasn't been on a mountain in years, even though his college buddies make an annual trip to a Colorado resort. "It's too hard to get away from work," he complains. His weekly pick-up basketball games are a thing of the past as well. And Steve has remained single since a brief marriage ended years ago.

To be certain, Steve has also enjoyed plenty of highlights in his life thanks to his career successes. But at what cost? I believe sacrificing a vital emotional, physical and personal life is not the only pathway to success—and it's definitely not a healthy one. Striking a balance between your work and your personal life is a very important way to define success. It's important to keep a life outside of work. Are you at risk of being a workaholic? Here's how to know and what to do about it.

Is the Answer Yes?

If you're feeling consumed by work, ask yourself a few questions. According to Workaholics Anonymous, you show signs of being a workaholic if you answer yes to any of the following questions.

- Do you get more excited about your work than about family or anything else?
- Are there times when you can charge through your work and other times when you can't?
- Do you take work with you to bed? On weekends? On vacation?
- Is work the activity you like to do best and talk about most?
- Do you work more than 40 hours a week?
- Do you turn your hobbies into moneymaking ventures?
- Do you take complete responsibility for the outcome of your work efforts?
- Have your family or friends given up expecting you on time?
- Do you take on extra work because you are concerned that it won't otherwise get done?
- Do you underestimate how long a project will take and then rush to complete it?
- Do you believe that it is OK to work long hours if you love what you are doing?
- Do you get impatient with people who have other priorities besides work?
- Are you afraid that if you don't work hard you will lose your job or be a failure?
- Is the future a constant worry for you even when things are going very well?
- Do you do things energetically and competitively, including play?
- Do you get irritated when people ask you to stop doing your work in order to do something else?
- Have your long hours hurt your family or other relationships?
- Do you think about your work while driving, falling asleep or when others are talking?
- Do you work or read during meals?
- Do you believe that more money will solve the other problems in your life?

If you find yourself answering yes to these questions, remember that you are not alone. In a 2004 survey conducted by Harris Interactive for the travel website , nearly 40 percent of workers had either canceled or postponed vacations because of work. And, startlingly, 10 percent said they believed using all of their vacation time would make them look bad in their boss' eyes.

Working Right

If you find yourself slipping into workaholism, there are simple steps you can take to remedy the situation. Make time away from work with your friends and family doing activities you enjoy or just relaxing. If you're regularly working more than five days a week, schedule a long weekend. You can take a vacation or even just do things around your own city that you like to do. Just make sure you don't turn on your laptop or answer work-related phone calls. Several other steps would be to find a hobby, keep a regular sleep schedule, keep a standing dinner or play "date" with your family. Stay active outside of work. Exercise and eat right.

In Recovery

Workaholics Anonymous offers a 12-step recovery program similar to programs often recommended for other addictions. But, like any addiction, you first have to admit that you have a problem, and then seek help. If you don't, however, the work cycle can be never-ending.

Though he is admittedly a workaholic, Steve has never sought help for his addiction. "I'm happy," he says, "This is what I've always wanted."

How do you balance work with family life? {eo}

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