

Do you need a 12-step program to change your work habits? If so, chances are you're the last to know. As work spills out of the office and into our homes and relationships, it's not always easy to distinguish between being a hard worker and a work addict. But there are telltale signs that you've crossed the line - and even some remedies for how to reclaim your life.

How did we get here?

Once upon a time, people worked seven hours a day and had an actual lunch *hour*. Then came technology, a hyper-competitive workplace, an uncertain economy and growing job insecurity. Now, Blackberrys are everywhere, from children's soccer games to the bedroom.

It's not hard to get immersed in work. The business world is global, necessitating 24 hour accessibility. Entrepreneurs and small business owners have multiple, unrelenting responsibilities. In some workplaces, layoffs have meant more work for fewer people.

How to know when enough is enough

We are a nation of hard workers. We skimp on vacations, work on weekends and pursue that next promotion. Not all of us are workaholics, however.

Mental health professionals (and common sense) tell us that we go from hard work to obsession when we lose balance and perspective, our relationships suffer and we work long hours - but accomplish surprisingly little. In fact, the problem is common enough that there is Workaholics Anonymous, which offers a 12-step program, meetings and other resources. WA even offers a 20-question quiz to determine if you're a workaholic.

Questions include: Do you take work with you to bed? On weekends? On vacation? Do you get impatient with people who have other priorities besides work? Have your long hours hurt your family or other relationships? Do you work or read during meals?

Answer "yes" to just three of the questions and you have a problem.

Collateral damage

Workaholics, who may suffer from depression and other stress-related physical and mental illnesses, don't just harm themselves. They are also toxic to the people around them, neglecting spouses and children. Forget about vacations to reconnect and unwind. They just work from afar.

They are also a destructive force at work. Many mistake "busy" for productive. They expect colleagues and subordinates to also work around the clock, with no regard for their needs. They are notoriously hard to please, crave control and have trouble delegating and prioritizing. As a result, they create havoc and no one wants to work with them.

Can a workaholic change?

Like other addictions, the workaholic may need a crisis to begin to turn around his or her life. Maybe it's a threatened divorce or a harsh assessment from a boss. Whatever the case, the workaholic must accept that giving 100 percent during the regular workday isn't failure. Instead, it's having the sense to realize that work has taken over and they are running a race where the finish line remains just out of reach, no matter how hard they run.

