

Are you over-worked or addicted to work?

There is a clear difference between enthusiastic, energetic work toward a highly valued goal and workaholicism. That difference lies primarily in the emotional quality of the hours spent. Workaholicism has a treadmill, joyless quality, not the bouncy, fun energy of a trampoline. And while working long, hard hours may help you accomplish a primary work goal, it likely will leave other areas of your life--family, friendship, intellectual stimulation, etc.--in shambles. It has also been linked to physical problems such as depression, anxiety, heart disease, high blood pressure and sleep problems.

Take the following quiz, adapted from Julia Cameron's book, *The Artist's Way* and from *Workaholic Anonymous*, to help you figure out if you have workaholic habits.

True or False

1. I work beyond normal office hours.
2. I feel more excited about work than anything else in my life.
3. I talk or think about work more than anything else.
4. I take on extra work and refuse to delegate.
5. I feel irritated when my family and/or friends complain that I always work.
6. I rarely take vacation and if I do, I take work with me.
7. I put more thought, time and energy into my work than I do my relationships with friends and the ones I love.
8. I work in the evenings during family time or time I could be reading for pleasure.
9. I rarely allow myself downtime to do nothing.
10. It is hard for me to relax when I'm not working.
11. I get impatient with people have other priorities besides work.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. *Are you over-worked or addicted to work?*
2. *How to Avoid Burnout*
3. *Public Courses*

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12. I always take calls on my cell phone; it is never off.
13. I seldom allow myself free time between projects.
14. All of my interests are about making money.
15. I don't make time for creative work/play in my day.

If you answered true more than false, you may benefit from exploring your attachment to work. For people with workaholic tendencies, work is often synonymous with worth, so the more the better. Awareness of the problem is the first step to finding a work-life balance.

A recent Harvard Business Review article titled, "How Being a Workaholic Differs from Working Long Hours – and Why That Matters for Your Health, explores the difference between working long hours (behavior) and being a workaholic (mentality). In a survey the authors conducted, they found that long work hours alone were not related to health concerns. Whereas workaholics, regardless of hours worked, experienced more health, sleep and depression issues. The authors concluded that stress from obsessing about work and not detaching from work caused the health differences between the two groups. The study also found that how engaged a workaholic was affected the severity of health issues and found, "that loving your work can mitigate some of the risk associated with obsessing over it." In my experience, workers who are driven to work because they truly enjoy it are less likely to be workaholics than workers who are driven to work by compulsion and feel that they should or ought to be working.

Those with workaholic tendencies need to take the time to understand the compulsions behind the mentality. In my experience, everyone needs to regularly evaluate their work habits, especially in the 24/7 world we live in today. Burnout has become more common as the pace of business continues to increase. One of my favorite quotes about burnout is, "My candle burns at both ends/it will not last the night" by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

Burnout resists simple definition because it affects so many aspects of an individual's life. In their book, *Beyond Burnout*, authors David Welch, Donald Medeiros and George Tate, describe burnout as a condition that affects us physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

One of the first physical symptoms of burnout is fatigue. Intellectually, there may be a loss of creativity and sharpness in problem solving; cynicism may replace enthusiasm. Emotionally, the loss of dreams and expectations can result in feelings of helplessness and depression. In the social realm, isolation overtakes feeling of involvement, and spiritually, the person experiencing burnout may feel a lack of meaning or purpose to her life.

According to a recent study, one in three Americans is expected to burn out on the job in the near future and, in the two years preceding the study, 14% of the work force quit or changed jobs due to job stress. How can you avoid becoming one of the burnout statistics?

First, recognize the warning signs:

- feelings of frustration and never being caught up
- a feeling of lack of control about how to do your job or what goes on in the workplace
- emotional outbursts
- withdrawal and isolation
- dread of going to work
- frequent sickness or health problems
- increased use of alcohol, drugs or food consumption
- a desire to quit (or run away) but a fear of doing so

Taking a few days off or a vacation to Tahiti won't contain the burnout. Neither will simply leaving one job for another. Burnout has more to do with attitudes, work styles, and behavior than it does the specific job situation. In other words, burnout may be primarily an act of self-immolation. Below are some suggestions to beat burnout.

How to Avoid Burnout

Self-management - Take the time to set goals and objectives, review them with others, make sure they're attainable and clear. An honest assessment will help you evaluate your options.

Stress management - Identify the stressors that are contributing to your burnout. Know your own responses to stress and develop a plan to manage it. Exercise, take breaks, eat healthy, leave work at work, make time for play and rest. Discover what works best for you and your body and practice good self-care habits.

Support systems – Reach out to family, friends, co-workers, professional organizations -- all these support systems can help in times of stress.

Skill building - Look for challenges and opportunities to learn new skills and participate in activities that use your natural skills, talents and abilities. Rather than becoming stagnant, you'll be able to grow.

Balance - Seek a balanced and well-structured lifestyle. Avoid boredom. Determine what's important to you and create a lifestyle that embraces and supports you. Regular exercise and a good night's sleep have been proven to restore well-being.

Think positively - Replace negativity with optimistic thinking. Helpless thinking is a major contributor to burnout. Rediscover aspects of your work that are enjoyable. Examine how you interact with others negatively and make an effort to recognize co-workers for a job well-done.

Be creative - Look for a different approach to the same problems or to unpleasant situations. Break free from your everyday routine. Let your workspace express your individuality.

Humor and playfulness – Find humor in the midst of hard work. Humor reduces stress, promotes physical healing, is essential for mental health and can add years to your life. No wonder they say humor is the best antidote. Enjoy yourself.

Developing a work-life balance will protect you from becoming burned out or turning into a workaholic. The ability to detach from work is key to reducing stress in your life. As an executive coach, I work with clients to help them become more self-aware of the motivations, thoughts, emotions and behaviors that impact how they engage in work.

For my executive coaching clients, I'm both a sounding board for new, innovative ideas and a mirror for new insights and awareness. I've also seen how coaching can re-energize clients when they're faced with adversity in reaching their goal.

Like a mentor, a coach will also share their own knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences when appropriate. And, unlike many mentoring relationships, the coach maintains objectivity and invites the client to use this input only if it's applicable.

No matter how similar the experience may seem, it's not my job to tell my clients to do things exactly the way I did them. It's my job to ask questions that uncover the client's own wisdom and insights, to help them to think through various actions, and then to serve as an

accountability partner to ensure they follow through on the actions they commit to do.

I've had many clients refer to me as their 'secret weapon.' I don't know about a 'weapon' but I do know that having someone totally focused on your success and who's only goal is to help you achieve your goals can be a huge asset in your arsenal!

If you're interested in exploring a coaching relationship contact Bill Burtch at 901-272-7390 or bburtch@harmonycc.net.



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Schedule of Public Courses

The following courses are being offered to the public by Harmony Coaching & Consulting. Click on the associated link for more information on the program or to register.

Course Title	Date(s)	Time	For More Information/Registration
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TBD Fall 2018

