

Are you a 'workaholic'?

"I think I may be a workaholic," says the middle-aged businessman. "I'd like to find more time for my personal life, but I just can't do it." And so he joins the crowded ranks of men and women who feel compelled to work long hours and unusual schedules at the expense of the rest of their lives.

What is a workaholic? Anyone who compulsively spends almost all of his waking hours in productive activities, accomplishing tasks, and performing constructive functions.

He feels like a victim of his schedule, trapped by the demands of many commitments. He sees that his marriage and his kids are suffering from his absence, but he feels helpless to break loose from the irresistible current that sweeps him toward career responsibilities and achievements.

HOW CAN YOU TELL? If you are a workaholic? Here are five danger signals that may indicate a budding or an advanced case of work-compulsion.

1—An inability to comfortably relax when not involved in task-oriented or productive activities. The only way a workaholic can relax is by throwing himself mercilessly into a job or household chore until he finally collapses from exhaustion.

For the true workaholic, unstructured leisure time is actually painful. Unless he is exhausted, the work addict feels guilty about doing nothing. He feels like he should be working on one of his many unfinished projects.

2—Feeling like a slave to a very demanding job. The workaholic feels trapped. He may feel like he has to work long hours to maintain an over-extended standard of living, or to attain eventual wealth and prestige. He may feel dedicated to a valued cause such as a religious role or a demanding professional practice.

3—A serious, task-oriented approach to leisure-time activities. Even when he is participating in playful activities, the compulsive worker acts like he is working. He attacks sports and hobbies with a concentration and drive that rules out any relaxation value these activities may have had. He only seems to enjoy himself when he is winning, since he treats failure at leisure activities with the same seriousness as he does on the job.

4—Deprivation of non-productive roles. The workaholic husband may perform the essential chores and home maintenance tasks usually assigned to husbands, but that's all. He rarely has time for the unstructured activities of marriage, parenting, and friendship, such as relaxed conversations or romantic evenings or long walks to nowhere.

5—Deriving all feelings of personal worth from work roles. In the extreme, the workaholic only feels happy when he is working. He feels that his achievements and his skills make him special and valuable, a feeling he doesn't get from his family-life.

At home he is just another husband or father, supporting his family, carrying out the functions of a role that seemingly anyone can fill. But when he leaves his job, he has a stopping point, a pause between the duties of his career.

THE KEY INGREDIENT in most of these symptoms of work addiction is that, for the workaholic, working has come to mean much more than just a creative outlet and a means of earning money.

Sometimes it is an escape, a way of avoiding frustrating marriage. In fact, the workaholic has found that concentrating on a task can enable him to escape his own painful thoughts. Guilt and worry can be pushed aside by work. It can be like an anesthetic, a numbing, emotional pain. And it can be an addictive drug.

Like the alcoholic's bottle, work can be used to chase away the pain of living. It can be a sure source of reassurance for insecure egos.

But, like drunkenness, it does not solve problems. In fact, the source of the workaholic's nagging tension often grows in severity because they continue to be neglected. In addition, almost all elements of his personal life deteriorate from his absence.

IT'S NO WONDER then that the workaholic suffers his own version of the alcoholic's DTs when he puts down his work-bottle and tries to relax. As he awakes from work thoughts he feels the pressure of unattended worries and aches trying to get his attention.

The more he tries to escape them, the more his problems grow.

So he is caught in an escalating spiral of more and more work, greater personal failure, and less of the inner peace that he so urgently needs.

The further this process has progressed, the harder it is to stop it. But for less severe cases, workaholics can often make some remarkable improvements once they recognize their problem.

THE FIRST STEP toward reversing the process is to understand that you have chosen it. You are not just a victim of unreasonable job demands, you had a large part in molding these demands. Workers who take stands for their personal lives frequently find that their job was not as tyrannical as they previously thought. The surest way to create a devastating, demanding job is to always say yes, never even asking for a compromise.

Furthermore, if you really wish to eliminate your work compulsion, you must confront and resolve the personal problems that you are avoiding. If you need it, get some help from friends or professionals, but don't put it off any longer. Personal problems just get worse with age, and harder to solve.

Finally, force yourself to relax. At first this may require that you actually scheduled

By **BOB TRENZ**, Ph.D.

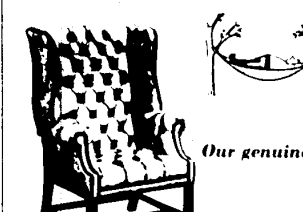
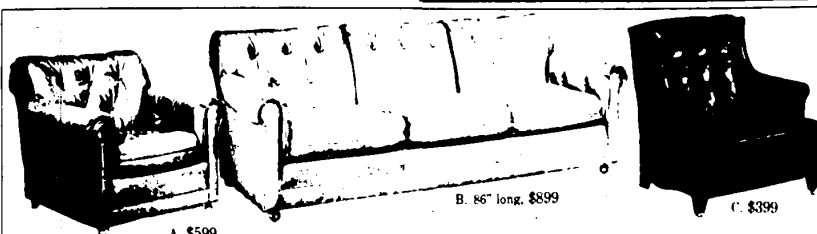


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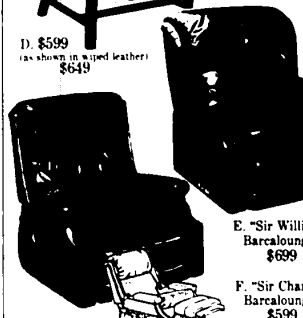
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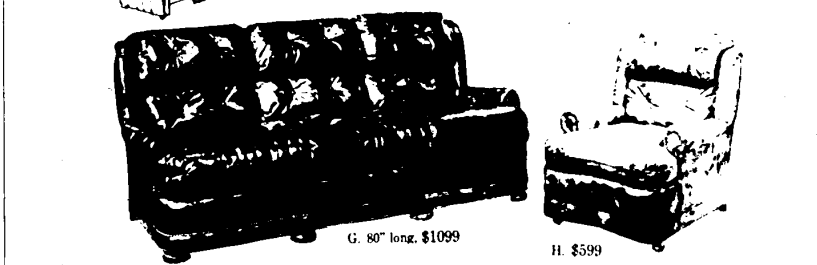
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Class Reunions

HAMTRAC HIGH SCHOOL

The classes of January and June 1966 will hold their 30th reunion at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 12 in the Polish Century Club, 2801 Holbrook, Hamtramck. For further information members of the January class may call Jeannette Spadaro at 861-3689, and members of the June class may contact Diane Berlin at 280-4144.

OAK PARK HIGH SCHOOL

The Oak Park High School class of 1966 will have its 10-year reunion July 10. For information call 944-7426.

GARDEN CITY WEST

A five-year class reunion is being planned by the 1971 class of Garden City West High School. It will be at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 14 in Roma Hall, 2777 Schoolcraft, Livonia. Tickets are \$12.50. An all-day picnic at Silver Lake is planned for Sunday, Aug. 15.

Members of the reunion committee are Donna McGuirk, Arnos, Gail Dunn, Al-bright, Kathy (Sherrill) Plesman, Debbie Griffith, Mark Gagnier, Claudia Hart, Linda (Carter) Mazzoni, Kathy (Mills) Miller, Ken Miller and Mike Pummell. For further information call 421-1800 after 4 p.m.

ST. DAVID HIGH

Members of the class of 1966 of St. David High School, Detroit, is searching for class members. If a member of the class, call 436-3678, or write 1039 Southworth, Plymouth.



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