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Information & Support

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SICK BECAUSE OF WORK – WORKAHOLISM

Work is an important part of our lives, it gives them meaning and allows us to support ourselves financially. The ability to find a balance between work and rest, or work-life balance, is extremely important. However, for some, work becomes a compulsion, they can't get away from it and stop thinking about it, they are literally sick because of work....

WHAT IS WORKAHOLISM?

„Workaholism” is a term that refers to the compulsive performance of professional duties, which interferes with other areas of life such as relationships, relaxation or sleep. It is the **inability to stop undertaking excessive work** and feeling compelled to do so.

According to Psychology Today, „Workaholism is a soul-destroying addiction that changes people's personalities and the values they live by. It distorts the reality of each family member, threatens family security and often leads to family break-up. Tragically, workaholics eventually suffer the loss of personal and professional integrity” [1].

Workaholism is not the same as productivity and dutifulness. Hard work is not synonymous with addiction to it. As long as someone has a balanced life, ensures that they get enough relaxation and rest, spends time with family and friends and engages in hobbies of all kinds, hard work does not make that person a workaholic. Working overtime from time to time is also fine, as long as you maintain a work-life balance and do not become obsessed.

SYMPTOMS OF WORKAHOLISM

Workaholism is an insidious addiction that seems positive at first. However, in the long term it has very negative consequences for the employee and the organisation. This is why it is so important to recognise it quickly.

Most workaholics show several of these signs:

- They come to work first and leave last
- They can come to work even on their days off
- They continue to work during their free time or when they are on holiday
- They constantly check work email and phone for work-related messages
- They feel guilty when they are not working, even during their lunch break
- They sacrifice their health, relationships and other responsibilities for work
- They do not feel comfortable sharing or delegating tasks
- They have problems saying „no” to superiors and take on more responsibilities than they can handle.

Workaholism can have many negative effects, including job burnout, relationship break-up and physical and mental health problems.



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Learn more about the nature and consequences of workaholism from the SWPS University lecture by Dr Jacek Buczny

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE BECOME WORKAHOLICS?

According to Dr Malissa Clark, an expert in this type of addiction, there are **4 main causes** of workaholism:

- **Motivational** – workaholics do not actually enjoy their work, they feel an internal pressure to work as much as they do.
- **Cognitive** – they can't stop thinking about work even at home.
- **Emotional** – lack of work makes workaholics feel guilty or anxious.
- **Behavioural** – such individuals tend to work more than their employer expects of them.

Workaholics may have **low self-esteem** that they try to cope with by working hard to get praise. They may also have problems with control and delegating tasks to others. They always need to be involved in every aspect of their work, hence their inability to leave professional matters behind even for a short time. Sometimes they use work to avoid other problematic areas of their life, such as the relationship with their partner.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Workaholism is an addiction and should be treated as such. The next step after diagnosing it is to find resources and decide on treatment.

One option is to join an organisation that works similarly to Alcoholics Anonymous. It provides support for people who want to break their addiction to work. The organisation's website offers information on conferences, meetings, as well as many valuable resources. There is also a support group in Poland [in an online format](#).

If you feel that support from others may not be enough, consider seeking the help of a certified addiction therapist. A therapist will help you through the process of taking small steps towards coping with workaholism. They involve:

- Organising the day so as to have time for other areas of life and for relaxation
- Focusing on completing only the important and urgent tasks at work
- Relaxation exercises to relieve stress and anxiety
- Setting realistic expectations of yourself
- Sticking to a set number of working hours each day
- Daily breaks from email and telephone for a set period of time
- Finding activities that you can engage in so that you don't think about work, which are fulfilling and pleasurable.

Workaholism is an addiction that you can overcome with the right resources and the right help. Understanding what is behind addiction is key, and dealing with it can bring you great relief and help in all areas of your life.

*Don't wait, call now! If you are not coping with workaholism, contact a specialist.
We are here to support you!*