

**Q&A Column**  
**Author: Mark Swartz**

**Email Subject Line: Am I A Workaholic?**

**workopolis.com EN home page**

**Headline : I'm Not A Workaholic, Am I?**

**Summary:**

Question: My wife is telling me I'm a workaholic. I don't know what the fuss is about. Sure I put in a lot of hours on the job and bring work home too. Who doesn't these days? Luckily my kids are young so they don't really need to see me much for now. Meanwhile I earn a good living and my boss thinks I'm irreplaceable. Why does this have to be seen as a bad thing?

Warren F, Kamloops, British Columbia

**Landing Page copy**

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**Dear Warren,**

You're right about people working longer and harder these days. Canadians are logging more hours on the job, and taking fewer days of vacation, than we did 20 years ago. Not surprisingly, a study released by Statistics Canada just last week revealed that nearly a third of us consider ourselves to be workaholics – even though this brings no improvement in our quality of life.

The thing about workaholism is that it's a powerful *compulsion*, not merely a healthy desire to work hard and improve our lot in life. It has been called society's permissible addiction. And it can creep up on us gradually, quietly.

Maybe it begins with staying at our workplace an extra hour or so to finish off the day's tasks. Coming in a half hour earlier to get a head start. Then cutting back on lunch hours and breaks. Bringing more and more work home to keep up. Going in every single weekend to "tie up loose ends."

In more advanced cases, you start schlepping your cell phone, Blackberry and laptop with you on vacation – the one you cut short because, goodness knows, your absence for any extended period will cause the utter collapse of the company you work for. Soon enough you consider your spouse, children, friends and family to be irritants. After all, they're making unreasonable demands on your precious time; time you could be spending doing even more to prove how valuable you are in your job.

Sound familiar at all? I hope not. But if it does – and if it applies to you or someone you care for – it might be intervention time. Workaholism, left unchecked, can lead to failed marriages, emotional abandonment of children and destruction of friendships. Serious health concerns can arise as well.

Like any dependence, the initial step in getting better is admitting that there's a problem. This is where friends and family members – the ones you're still on speaking terms with – come in handy. Seeking treatment is next on the agenda: talking to a doctor, counsellor, help line, psychologist, or advisor at your place of worship, as examples, are wonderful ways to begin.

The goal is to treat the condition and get it under control. No one's saying that this will lead to a 35 hour work week and at least a month's vacation, as many Europeans still enjoy (though this is quickly becoming a thing of the past). Rather, decreasing the addiction and learning to set proper boundaries is paramount.

If you'd like more info on this serious subject, visit Workaholics Anonymous([http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/about\\_workaholism.html](http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/about_workaholism.html)). Feel free to ignore the religious overtones of the site's 12 step program if this aspect has little or no appeal to you. In any event, help *is* available for those in need.