

## **Bitter Work: Part 2**

by Mohammad Khan

Dealing with pain is an odd way to look at addiction for most people because of the harsh brush with which society has painted about addicts. Most think it's about getting the next fix. That we should stigmatize them, shame them, and cut them off from the drugs they're using.

If we wanted to make a society where addictions are made worse, that'd be the way to do it. Instead of asking where the addiction originates or asking why, we throw them to the wolves. Detach them even more from society.

My experience with workaholism is my own and I cannot speak for anyone else with workaholism or addiction. I do feel a euphoria of working on schoolwork or projects or helping others. Being there for others, but hardly for myself.

I'm not sure if I have a complete workaholic addiction, but I know have workaholic tendencies. Often times I fell ill after long hours of working and to fix that, but I continued working. In hindsight, that probably wasn't the best idea but circumstances forced me to keep working, or so I thought.

One thing I've realized through my introspection and reading books on addiction and social psychology is that what actually happens is completely different than how I perceive it. An argument with a family member can be a fiery battle with sharp words and hurtful comments in my head when in reality it was a mild discussion. You don't react to what happens to you to react to what you perceive what happens to you.

When you can't handle what happens to you, you turn to someone with whom you have a healthy relationship for support. And if you don't have one or feel like you don't have one, you turn to something else. To something like alcohol, social media, shopping, food, gambling, or you bury yourself in work.

I didn't think it was a problem for a long time. I got more done, got good grades in school, and felt amazingly productive. But I started noticing how I prioritized my work over my own health, over my family, friends, and the older I got, the more I realized how unsustainable it is. I'd probably work myself to death.

The reason I bury myself in work because I feel valued there. I feel that I belong, that I matter., that I am wanted. And even if things aren't going well in my personal life, I can rest easy knowing that I can do some good through my work at the expense of my own health. At least, that's how I've rationalized it. The work fills a void inside of me, trying to fix something inside of me. I keep working hoping the next completed assignment, project or accolade will fix what's wrong with me. Just maybe the next one will fill the void.

Why did I grow workaholic tendencies? I'm not sure but from my own introspection I realized that I wasn't able to feel valued or loved when I was younger. I know my family loved and cared for me, I owe them everything for making who I am today, but when I was younger I didn't feel their love. The love felt implied. So as young kid, I rationalized the implied love as 'I am not wanted or loved here', so I bury myself in work which can be many things for me: school work, extra curricular, or volunteering, anything where I felt that I feel need. Because if I wasn't wanted earlier, they're going to need me later. What better way to be wanted than to be an engineer? People will ask you to fix a lot of things and you'll be wanted everywhere.

It's not that I don't know that working 24/7 isn't harmful for my health, it's the bond that I've formed with working that's hard to break. I feel wanted when working all the time. And what's wrong with feeling wanted and loved?

An addiction is a bond formed with something other than another human. And because we are social creatures, once you've got a bond that you perceive as vital, you'll do anything to keep hold of it.

It's more than just a matter of will power. This is a matter of human nature and diving into the voids we have within ourselves.