

# How much of a workaholic are you?

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Norwegian researchers have developed a new tool enabling you to find out how hard it is for you to leave your work behind. Test yourself here.

Do you stay at your workplace even though you know your husband and kids are waiting for you at home with the spaghetti already long past al dente?

Then you could be a workaholic – you might have an addiction to work.

Cecilie Schou Andreassen, a psychologist affiliated with the University of Bergen, published a study on the subject this month in the *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*.

Together with researchers in Bergen and Nottingham, England, she has developed seven basic questions you can respond to and check for work addiction.

## **When work always comes first**

Andreassen received her doctorate through a study of work addiction in 2009. She stressed then that work addiction isn't the same thing as just working a lot.

“The workaholic always gives priority to the job, whatever the task or line of work. Of course it's possible to work long hours, maintain a mortgage, and make payments on two cars without being a workaholic,” she says.

The new list, compiled on the basis of Andreassen's earlier study, has been named The Bergen Work Addiction Scale. It uses seven well-known factors used in diagnostics of all kinds of dependencies, whether they be on alcohol, exercise or work.

These are salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, relapses and problems.

These seven criteria were incorporated in a series of questions where all answers are scored on the following scale: 1 “Never”, 2 “Rarely”, 3 “Sometimes”, 4 “Often” and 5 “Always”.

Test yourself – how do you answer these questions?

- You think of how you can free up more time to work.
- You spend much more time working than initially intended.
- You work in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression.
- You have been told by others to cut down on work without listening to them.
- You become stressed if you are prohibited from working.
- You deprioritise hobbies, leisure activities and exercise because of your work.
- You work so much that it has influenced your health negatively.

According to the study, if your response to at least four of the seven questions is “often” or “always”, you are likely to be a workaholic.

#### Can be activated by your boss

Whatever turns you into a workaholic can link to issues from earlier in life or what kind of person you are.


"Some of us are extreme perfectionists," says Andreassen. "Some seek recognition through their work. Our personalities are formed at an early age."

Organisational factors can also reinforce or activate a person's inherent workaholic tendencies, for instance in jobs where the boss is seen to put in a lot of overtime.


The scale on work addiction was developed through a study of over 12,000 employees from 25 different Norwegian firms.

It reveals whether you are non-addicted, mildly addicted, or are a complete workaholic. The scale will be helpful in estimating the prevalence of work addiction in the general population.

The researchers think it will also be a boon to efforts in finding the best treatments for those of us who just can't switch off the computer ? even though rush traffic is over and a janitor or a night watchman are the only other persons around.

 [Do you struggle with a guilty conscience when you're not working? Do you skip paid sessions at the gym because you think your boss needs your output straight away? If so, you could be a workaholic.](#)  
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[C.S. Andreassen, M.D. Griffiths, J. Hetland, and S. Pallesen \(2012\) Development of a work addiction scale. Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, published online, 10 April 2012 \(abstract\).](#) [13]

[Hanne Jakobsen](#) [14]

Glenn Ostling

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