

# New research reveals meditation can help cure workaholics

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Meditation sessions can help cure people who are addicted to work, according to a new study by the University of Derby.

William Van Gordon, Lecturer in Psychology at University of Derby Online Learning, has carried out the first ever controlled study evaluating using [meditation](#) for treating workaholism.

Workaholism is a form of behavioural addiction that can lead to reduced life and [job satisfaction](#), anxiety, depression, burnout, conflict and problems in the family, and low levels of [work](#) productivity.

Someone who is identified as a workaholic is compulsively obsessed with work and, in the UK, 8-10 percent of adults meet the criteria.

The research involved 73 workaholics from across the East Midlands undergoing an eight-week mindfulness programme and found that by the end of the intervention, symptoms of workaholism had reduced by 26 percent, along with a 28 percent reduction in weekend, evening, and out-of-hours working.

William, who was a Buddhist monk for 10 years and was the principal investigator for the study, said: "Modern working styles that often involve a greater use of remote-working technology can make it difficult for people to switch off from work. Some people become so obsessed with work that they start to neglect their wellbeing and other important areas of their life.

"This study shows just how important meditation can be in helping people de-stress from work, giving them more quality time to do what they enjoy."

A mix of men and women in full-time employment across the East Midlands took part in the research study, carried out by researchers at the University of Derby and Nottingham Trent University, and received a mindfulness intervention known as Meditation Awareness Training (MAT).

Mindfulness is a form of meditation that derives from Buddhist practice. It involves focusing attention on the present moment on the basis that this is the only place where we can truly experience life because the past is history and the future is fantasy.

The participants of the study underwent an eight-week group programme including guided sitting meditation, walking meditation and working meditation. Participants attended weekly two-hour sessions that included lectures, guided mindfulness exercises, discussion and small group sessions.

They also received a CD of guided meditations to help with practising mindfulness at home and attended two one-to-one support sessions with the programme facilitator.

Participants completed psychological assessments immediately before and after undergoing the intervention and findings demonstrated that the programme was an effective treatment for workaholism.

More specifically, individuals that received the training showed, on average, a 26 percent reduction in workaholism symptoms. In most cases, after receiving the intervention, participants no longer met the diagnostic criteria for workaholism.

The study also revealed that mindfulness improved [work productivity](#), as demonstrated by an average reduction in working time of four hours per week but without a decline in job performance. In addition to improved levels of psychological distress and job satisfaction, the MAT intervention also led to a 28 percent reduction in weekend, evening, and out-of-hours working.

William added: "An assessment was carried out three months after the training programme and showed that all of the beneficial effects were

long-lasting. Given there is a risk that workaholism rates could increase, it is important that employers and employees have access to evidence-based interventions that are specifically tailored to address this problem."

Previous research has shown MAT to be an effective treatment for stress, depression, anxiety, sex addiction, problem gambling, fibromyalgia and schizophrenia. However, this is the first multi-participant study examining the use of meditation to treat workaholism.

Following the research, William has suggested that structured meditation training could be a win-win solution for employers because, in addition to improving work-related wellbeing, the study findings demonstrate that it can also improve work effectiveness.

He added: "Some people are not aware they are addicted to work or don't know who to turn to. Given the number of people affected, there is a need for greater awareness of [workaholism](#) along with preventative strategies."

**More information:** William Van Gordon et al. Meditation awareness training for the treatment of workaholism: A controlled trial, *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* (2017). [DOI: 10.1556/2006.6.2017.021](https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.6.2017.021)

Provided by University of Derby

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