



Getting Unstuck
Get Out Of The Office & Get A Life



Dr. Terrie Wurzbacher

5 Reasons You're Stuck At The Office When Everyone Else Has Gone!

Presented by

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Sound Familiar?

You're pulling into your parking space, fumbling with your coffee and keys and trying to juggle your briefcase in your other arm. As you unlock the door, you feel the cold and emptiness of the office. For an instant it feels good – the silence, the emptiness – you can finally get something done without interruption!

But as that moment passes, you realize that the emptiness you feel is really your own, not that of the office. After all, the office is just a group of inanimate objects and you're a living, breathing person – or at least you used to be. Now, it seems you're just a robot, getting to work early, staying late and coming in on weekends.

“When did this start? How did it happen? How did it get so out of control? What did I do to deserve this? How can I stop feeling so suffocated? I can't believe I'm the only one suffering here. Where is everyone else? Why don't they have to work extra? What am I doing wrong? What's going to happen to me if I keep this up? Look at my weight, it just keeps creeping up and up – I am so exhausted when I get home I can't even drag myself to the gym. How can I get off this rollercoaster?”

You quickly put these thoughts aside, you stuff them back into their proper place buried deep within. For you have work to do. You have to get right on it to make the most of the time before others come in. Once the office starts to fill up, you'll constantly be interrupted and won't be able to get anything done. So then you'll have to wait until after everyone's gone to buckle down and get the rest of your duties done.

By Friday you realize that you are totally swamped and that maybe you can “catch up” by coming in on the weekend. “Maybe just this once” you say – again. You're so numb that you continue to believe that it's “just this once” even though in your heart you know that's not true.

When Sunday afternoon arrives and you've spent most of the last 7 days in the office, you once more look at yourself in the mirror and say “this has to stop. I just can't keep going on like this.” And you actually believe it. You feel good about your resolution as you climb into bed and rest your weary head on your pillow.

But then the next thing you know, the alarm goes off and you're back in the saddle again – the same saddle you rode away in last Monday. And the pattern goes on and on.

Perhaps you're depressed and desperate to change. It seems that work has become an addiction, just like food or drink. And you have no control. It's the loss of power, loss of control that really bothers you. It's not as if you make a new choice each day to go early and stay late. It just happens and you can do absolutely NOTHING about it. Where is your life going? Do you even have a life? It sure doesn't sound like it.

Why has all this happened? Let's take a look at 5 reasons this pattern has overtaken your life. It took me a long time to realize...and then admit...that these were significant factors in the quicksand I had fallen into. The more I struggled, the deeper I sunk.

Although there was a legitimate reason for me to have stepped unknowingly into the quicksand – a colleague had died and we were overwhelmed with work with no help in sight, there were many clues along the way that I just couldn't (or didn't want to) pick up on. You see, I finally felt important, almost indispensable...and ancient myth that will kill you if you don't do something NOW!

This list is not for the light hearted or for people who want to be cajoled and patted on the back for a job well done. No, it's reality and if you examine yourself closely I will bet that at least one of these reasons applies in some way to your life. So, before you get angry and just dismiss this list (and there are many more reasons where these came from), dig deep within and answer these questions honestly:

- 1) How did I get in this position?
- 2) Is everyone else going to work early, staying late and working weekends?
- 3) If not, why am I doing it?
- 4) Have I been told (or asked) to work all this extra time?
- 5) Who's making me work extra?
- 6) What if I were to just stop working extra? What would happen?
- 7) What if I told the boss I wasn't going to work extra?
- 8) What were the emotions I first felt when I started this pattern?
- 9) What are the emotions I feel now?
- 10) Have others acknowledged me for working extra?
- 11) How have I felt when they did acknowledge me?
- 12) How have I felt if they did NOT acknowledge me?
- 13) Can I just stop this overtime now?
- 14) If I can't, why not? What will happen – to me, to the business?
- 15) If I can, why haven't I?
- 16) What am I missing out on by spending so much extra time at work?
- 17) What would I really like to be doing?
- 18) What other areas of my life are affected by spending so much extra time there?
- 19) How is my physical fitness? My mental or emotional fitness?
- 20) Can I say “no” in other areas of my life? Do I have other addictions?

Caution: You should also rule out the possibility that you have a real addiction – workaholism. That issue is just as debilitating as any other addiction, such as food, drink, drugs, etc. Surprisingly, though, most workaholics are inefficient and not the best workers in the office.

These 5 reasons also go deep within yourself – they are not merely “I never learned time management”. Usually there is much more to this issue than that.

So let's take a look at these 5 reasons and see if you can be honest with yourself and identify with any of them. Are you up for it? It won't be easy. You'll most likely be uncomfortable but you've come this far. Also, know this – this is not being written by a judgmental fool but by someone who's been there, done that, got the T-shirt and really wanted to return it.

By the way, this is not in any particular order, nor is this an all-inclusive list.

1) “My self-worth is completely tied to work”

This is so important for you to recognize. The trouble is that it creeps up on you. Once you start to feel like what you’re doing is important and valuable to the organization, your self-worth starts to improve – or so it appears. The reason I say it only appears to improve is that once you leave the work environment or aren’t feeling as if you’re producing the lion’s share, then your self-worth plummets right back where it was – pretty low.

Ask yourself what determines your worth? Is it based on the number of widgets, units or “things” that can be measured, that you produce in a specified time period? This is very common because it’s also a way that managers (notice I didn’t say leaders) have to measure productivity. But ask yourself this – is productivity the same as worth? If you answered ‘yes’, then ask yourself WHO determines your worth?

The answer to that question will most likely be two fold. Here’s one definition of “worth”: “Sum of valuable qualities which render anything useful and sought”. Now for “self-worth”: “the sense of one’s own value or worth as a person”, or “Self-worth is the opinion you have about yourself and the value you place on yourself.”

Notice that the primary difference in these two words is the perspective from which a determination of value is made. One is from external sources (“worth”) and the other (“self-worth”) is from inside of you.

If you go back to the questions you asked yourself in the beginning you may find that your employer or your peers think you have quite a bit of worth even if you don’t work all those extra hours. But it’s a good bet that you cannot see that at all. You only see that your worth (which is really your self-worth) is tied solely to what you produce. And guess what? Hours and minutes are measurable units and therefore can be misconstrued as evidence of productivity and therefore of self-worth.

We are a society that is so tied to results and productivity that it’s very hard to remove yourself from that mentality.

You keep thinking that if you produce more and more, you’ll be worth more and more. And if you’re like so many people, your work is something you know how to do and have an amazing amount of practice with so obviously you will be good at it. So why not latch on to something you can do easily (compared to other aspects of your life) in order to feel good about yourself. After all, if you work more hours than Joe, then you might actually be more important than Joe and people will like you and respect you – finally.

If you feel inadequate in other areas of your life such as with friends or social activities, staying at work gives you the perfect excuse to not have to show yourself your incompetence (most likely perceived, not actual) in these other areas.

And even though it may take more time to be at work so much, the ultimate effort in working is less than venturing forth into an unknown area of your life.

2) “I don’t know anything but work”

This is closely tied to reason #1. But often it happens by default. In my case all I had ever lived was Military medicine because from the time you’re in medical school you’re “on duty 24/7”. So, when I came to San Antonio in the 80s after 14 years studying and working in medicine, I didn’t know what to do with myself now that I had time off. Fortunately, this was not a job that I could put in extra hours to kill the time. So I was forced to venture out into the world. That was not a comfortable thing for me. I suppose I might have become a recluse if the Universe had not also provided me with a relationship breakup. The last thing I wanted at that time was to stay at home and think about how miserable I was. So, I got out and experienced life outside of medicine and outside of the Navy. I began to get a taste of life.

After that assignment, though, I was back into the world of work, work, work until the early 90s when I received another duty station that did not have any opportunity for me to immerse myself in work. So once again I was forced to experience the world at large. This is when I learned to love running and that became my escape. Although not as useful as social activities, it created more of a balanced life than just working.

I was doing just fine with all of that until my colleague up and died one morning. Then the downward spiral began. As I felt a sense of obligation to him, to my job (as a civilian now but still working for the military), and to those whom we served, I worked many extra hours trying to fill in for his absence. That continued for over 4 ½ years until I finally woke up and began my way out of the quagmire.

You see, all I had ever known was “work”. And the few times I learned about the real world, I enjoyed it immensely but then immediately forgot about that experience once I was thrown back into the familiar territory of work.

It’s hard to measure your self-worth outside of work – do you look at how many movies you go to with friends, how many times you go for coffee, etc.? Or do you measure the pure number of friends you have? There we go again talking about measurable units. Where is the quality in all of this? Do we even know what that word means – quality? This is the first time I’ve mentioned it, isn’t it? What does that fact tell you? What quality is there in work? Do you get enjoyment out of interacting with the people there or are they just a means to an end? Is what you do worthwhile and serving of others? Maybe you can measure quality from that but I bet that such a definition of quality in that circumstance is tied to the number of people you help or interact with. Measurable units again.

Take a look at what you think about when you end the day and you’re determining if it was a “good” day at work or a bad day. Do you smile about how much you got done or at something that Joe said that was cute?

Ask yourself what else you know how to do in life? Even if you don’t think you can do them well, write them down and keep for reference when you decide you want to do something about this problem you have.

3) “I can’t say no”

How common is this, especially amongst women? And unfortunately it’s also related to reason number 1 – your sense of self-worth. It is ingrained in us from a young age that we must give to others and do for others when they ask. After all, it is better to give than to receive, right? That phrase didn’t mean in every single aspect and moment of your life.

What would happen if you did say “no”? Would the world end? Would you get fired? Would others think less of you or respect you less? Would you think less of yourself?

If you have kids or know anything about kids, they will ask and ask and ask until they wear you down and you give in. If you say “no”, they may say they don’t like you but that won’t last and they are just trying to make you feel guilty enough to give them what they want. Adults are just big children and will do the exact same thing.

If we don’t think much of ourselves or we feel that people will be disappointed in us if we say “no” then we will just continue to pile more and more on our workload. And that will lead to many extra hours. Once people see that you can take what they have asked you for and get it done (without knowing the toll it’s taking on you) they will ask more and more of you. You have become the “go to” gal or guy in the shop. No one has to hassle or convince you to do it so they take the path of least resistance and ask you. If you said “no” like everyone else has, they would then make the rounds of asking others to do the job. But you make it easy for them.

Ask yourself this, though – who are you really saying “no” when you keep saying “yes” to someone at work? You are saying “no” to yourself doing something you wanted to do even if it was going to the gym or to the store to just window shop or even just curl up and read. If you have a family, you’re saying “no” to them when you’re staying at work so long. You don’t have the time for them. You’re tired when you get home; you just want to go to bed because you have to get up early for work tomorrow. You’re saying “no” when you have no energy or enthusiasm or are too tired to listen to your spouse or your child’s adventures of the day.

Now this is an indirect “no” so you might be thinking that it doesn’t count but if you’re constantly telling someone “not tonight, mommy’s tired” or “I have to work late tonight, hon”, then you are essentially saying “no” to that person. Is it worth it to simply be making someone at work’s job easier by doing all they have asked you to do? I carried the load at work for almost two years. And all I did was delay our getting the help we needed because all the higher-ups saw was that the work was getting done. They didn’t see nor care at what expense. I was actually harming the organization but you couldn’t have convinced me of that at the time.

Learn to say “no” to the proper people and “yes” to those that love you and matter the most to you. That will definitely increase your quality of life. If you’re alone and don’t have others to say “yes” to, remember that you’ve been saying “no” to yourself all this time as well. Start saying “yes” to yourself and your desires for a change.

Start listing phrases you can use at work that are equivalent to “no” or “not right now” and see if they are things you can get out of your mouth. Practice them at home in front of the mirror.

4) “I was taught that you have to work hard to succeed”

This reason is tied to the many limiting beliefs you had embedded in you as you were growing up. Beliefs such as

- “Time is money”,
- “So much to do, so little time”
- “Money doesn’t grow on trees”
- “Women have to work harder than men”
- “I’ll never catch up”
- “I can only earn more when I put in more hours at work”
- “I don’t deserve a pay raise”
- “Life is meant to be a struggle”
- “Hard work pays off”
- “I don’t have time to take a break”
- “You have to work hard to get anywhere”

And there are many more where these come from – buried deep within you. Where did they come from? From day one on this earth you’ve been told different things by different people – parents, siblings, teachers, friends, clergy, media and any other source you can think you’re your brain has been bombarded with various thoughts and beliefs. Who’s right? Who’s wrong? Usually it comes down to the thoughts that you have been most frequently exposed to coupled with the source being what you consider an authority. A belief is just a thought you keep thinking. You can change your beliefs if you have a good reason to want to change them.

But this belief that you have to work hard to succeed has somehow gotten out of hand so that you’re working way beyond what others would define as “hard”. In fact, you may not even know how you got to this point and if you looked at it from a logical perspective (hard to do when you’re in the middle of the quagmire), even you would realize that this is beyond “hard”.

Another belief that fits right in here is that “to take care of myself is selfish”. So if this vicious circle got started with a legitimate need – perhaps what you thought would be a temporary problem that you were more than willing to try to fix – but then has continued way beyond that temporary situation, ask yourself if this is a belief you have. You really do have to take care of yourself or you won’t be able to do an effective job at anything you attempt. This should be a part of the Golden Rule in many ways (as blasphemous as that sounds) because it is the true foundation of health – physical, mental and spiritual health. If you don’t take care of yourself, you will not produce at your best, nor will you be able to help others as well as you normally could. Are you getting enough sleep? If not, why not? Probably because you’re getting up early to go to work or staying up late because you’ve stayed at the office late.

Do you have a feeling that others will think you’re not carrying your share of the load if you only work the required number of hours? This goes back to that self-worth issue we discussed above. Why on earth would someone think that?

5) “I am fulfilling some other need by working excessively”

This is tied closely to fears that we have. For most people, these fears are accepted as part of their normal life and they are dealt with. For us, though, those fears are things that are meant to be avoided. What better way to avoid them than to run away from them? What more acceptable way to run away from them than to run toward work? That makes you look so much more of a knight in shining armor. “Of course I’d be happy to sacrifice my life (which I’m very afraid of anyway) to help you out at work. And why shouldn’t I be the one to suffer? You deserve the time off more than I do because _____ (you fill in the blanks)”.

You have to ask yourself what other need this excessive work is fulfilling. Are you trying to please your parents still? Are you trying to distract yourself from feeling emotions such as emptiness or loneliness? Are you trying to numb some pain? Do you feel that working so hard is a better addiction than eating too much, drinking too much, smoking, doing drugs or any other addictive behavior? Are you afraid of something outside of work? If you stopped your excessive working today, what would you be doing? Do you even have options? Have you worked yourself out of a life? That can be pretty scary.

Perhaps you’re insecure and afraid to stand up for yourself. You’ve always had the characteristics of a doormat and have allowed others to walk all over you. You probably feel you don’t deserve to be taken care of – that others are much more deserving than you.

“If I am not working so much then I won’t really have a reason not to do something about my weight – I will have time go to the gym or go for a walk but I’ve never been successful at that before so why bother if I’ll just fail again?”

“If I’m not at work, I’ll have to face my significant other and we just aren’t getting along. I’d much rather stay at work than to have another fight”.

“If I’m not at work, then I’ll have to face the fact that I don’t have any friends and I really have nothing else to do when I’m alone. I hate that loneliness and emptiness I feel when I’m not at work”.

“I’m really afraid to leave my comfort zone by trying new and different things. You want me to do what? No, sorry, I have to work”. How often have you used that - “sorry, I have to work”? What are you really saying to yourself? You’re most likely afraid to step into that unknown territory. Take a chance for once and step outside that zone.

“I’m afraid to try something else. The only thing I’ve ever been good at is work”. You haven’t allowed yourself the time and practice required to get “good at” other things. You don’t have to be perfect in everything in order to do it or enjoy it. Life is about trying new things and enjoying the journey.

Think of it this way – what will you do when you no longer have this work to do? What will your life be like then?

Bonus Reason: “I have a martyr complex”

I saved this for last because it will probably be the one that gets you the most upset. So what is a martyr complex? This complex describes a behavior that is selfless to the point of consistently denying one’s own needs and desires to put others’ needs first, or to acquiesce to someone in a situation where both of you desire the same thing.

You usually feel that you’re doing the right thing – you feel noble and self-sacrificing even if what you’re doing is rather trivial in the grand scheme of things.

What’s more – you don’t let others forget your sacrifice. You continually remind them of “all that you’re doing” for them or for the organization.

The primary key here is that you’re dependent on others for the constant validation and appreciation for what you’ve done. It is not wrong to be generous of your time and effort unless you require that validation.

You often perceive even constructive criticism as a personal attack and feel victimized if there’s any indication that perhaps your efforts are not as well thought of by others as you think they should be. This, then leads to ensuring that the person who provided that criticism is continually reminded of how much that hurt you and how you were “only doing it for them” or “only trying to help”.

This is definitely related to a long term need to please others and low self-esteem and self-worth. If your self-esteem is where it should be, then you won’t need the validation of others to make sure you feel ok about yourself every minute of every day. Because that’s another area where your internal workings are all haywire – you have this sense of numbness which makes long term feeling good almost impossible. You feel great for the few minutes that someone praises you or your work but as soon as that is over, you go back to feeling numb and empty. This is where the need for the constant validation comes from. You’re repeatedly trying to feel something. As with most addictions, the feeling that you receive is extremely transient and as such, you repeat the behavior over and over until so that you can feel again. Unfortunately, it never feels as good as you think it should so you keep doing more and more hoping to regain that feeling and emotion that has you way up there. But it never comes....

Conclusion:

Here you have just a few of the reasons most likely responsible for your working those extra hours and days. There are many more but they are, as you can see, all intertwined in some form or another.

If you’ve realized this life is not for you and you really want out, take some baby steps to get there. Figure out what your goals really are in this regard. Then gather a team to help you and get a coach who’s there for you and who will tell you what you need to hear even if it’s not what you WANT to hear. Even ask yourself if you need more than a coach – perhaps you need therapy? I don’t know for sure. I do know that coaching will help you get on the right track but you have to do the work – work of a different kind this time, though.

About The Author: Terrie Wurzbacher, D.O.



Dr. Terrie Wurzbacher is the owner of Getting Unstuck, LLC and author of “Your Doctor Said What? Exposing The Communication Gap”. She has practiced metaphysics and the Law of Attraction long before “The Secret” brought these Universal Laws to the attention of the world. She has presented multiple teleseminars on practical metaphysics from 2006-2011 with Dr. Anne Kunath and since Dr. Kunath’s retirement she has continued to guide and coach people in the application of the Universal Laws to ensure that they achieve their dreams and desires.

She retired from the Navy after 30 years of service and then worked in the Army Disability System since 2004. As a salaried employee since entering the Government Service system (GS) and after the death of one of her colleagues, she quickly became mired in the tremendous burden that continued to escalate as the war in Iraq and Afghanistan continued and then wound down. In 2011 she realized that spending all her time at work was preventing her from enjoying life – or from even finding out what life really was. So she set about to change that. With a team at her side and well defined goals, she has conquered the majority of the demons causing her to arrive at the office long before others and leave long afterwards (as well as spending most of her weekends there as well).

It is her passion to help others drag themselves from the quicksand so that they, too, can get a life and then actually experience life to its fullest.

Dr. Wurzbacher graduated from Des Moines College of Osteopathic Medicine & Surgery and served in the military systems for nearly 40 years. Her book, “Your Doctor Said What? Exposing The Communication Gap”, exemplifies the fact that she is very forward and will not let you get away with anything. If you want a transformation, you’ll achieve that with her as your coach!