Doaholics: The Hidden Addiction Behind Modern Success

Introduction — The Moment Everything Made Sense

It was late the night it finally clicked.

The hallway lights in my building had shut off an hour earlier, and the last of the rush-hour noise outside had faded to a low hum. I was sitting with a lukewarm mug of peppermint tea in my hand, finishing my final two notes of the day: one for a severely stressed-out VP, the other for a stay-at-home mom battling alcoholism.

As I wrapped the first note, the cursor blinked beside the last sentence—one that I'd typed way too many times recently:

Client appears to be resistant to change.

I grimaced, took a final sip of metallic-tasting tea, and opened the last chart. The history was different, the struggles were different, yet the same closing line was already forming in my mind.

Client appears to be resistant to change.

The words were so familiar that I'd stopped noticing them. Seeing the two cases side by side, though, made me stop. I cocked my head as the desk lamp crackled beside me.

Something was nagging at me, though I couldn't quite place it. And then it clicked.

They were two people with two very different lives, but both were stuck in cycles that hurt them in the exact same way.

They were addicts.

I stood and paced as months of sessions ran through my mind: the compulsive behavior, the self-harm, the powerlessness, the inability to stop.

The pattern had been hiding right there in front of me. It was even there in the language. *Alcoholic*. *Workaholic*.

But calling it an addiction to work had never quite fit. Sure, work was where it showed up the most, but it wasn't the only thing they were chasing.

So, what were they addicted to? I walked back to my desk. The tea sat untouched.

Was it praise? No.

A job well done? Not quite.

Pleasing others? Sometimes—but never enough to explain everything.

Then the answer hit me.

They were addicted to output.

This was the thread that ran through both of their lives. They needed to produce, to turn everything into a task or an accomplishment. That was the only time they felt any sense of worth.

Work was simply the most convenient place for it to show up.

I grabbed my notebook and started writing. My ramblings were fast, messy, excited. One word ended up circled three times in the middle of the page:

Doaholics.

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I didn't know if I'd come up with something new or simply named something that had been there all along. I only knew it fit a huge swath of my clients: they weren't addicted to work, they were addicted to doing.

I saw it in the student who panicked at the idea of a night off, the grandmother who couldn't sit still at family dinners, the new mother still folding laundry at midnight, and the executive who spiraled the moment their workflow slowed.

People who had never learned how to rest, and in many cases, how to simply be.

I scrolled through my active client list, running my finger down the screen. When I reached the end, the number stopped me cold.

Of roughly 120 active clients, about 50 fit the emerging profile.

Almost half.

And year after year, those numbers have stayed the same. That's not peer-reviewed research, but it's way too consistent to ignore.

Doaholics aren't rare. They're *everywhere*.

That night, something shifted in me. It changed how I listened, how I worked, and eventually, how I came to understand myself.

This book is my attempt to map what I've found in the thousands of sessions since. The client stories ahead are fictional, but the forces that drive them are most certainly not.

And as you read, you may start to recognize the pattern in places you didn't expect.

Maybe even in yourself.

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