

# news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

southwestern medical school - graduate school of biomedical sciences - school of allied health sciences

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*\*\*\*\*\*UTHSCD scientist comments on the  
pursuit of leisure.*

DALLAS--Many Americans do not enjoy their leisure time because they are afraid to stop working, says Dr. Charles White, director of gerontology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas.

"Leisure is a very difficult thing in our society because we don't teach people what it is or how to achieve it," he says. "Instead, we spend 19 years or more preparing them for a job."

Dr. White estimates that fifty per cent of those with white collar jobs are "workaholics"--that is, they are unable to leave their work behind and enjoy their leisure time.

"Many Americans just don't know what to do with themselves when they are not working," he says.

As a gerontologist, Dr. White sees this problem all the time in people who are not able to adjust to retirement.

"Workaholics do very poorly in retirement," he says. "Many of them say 'What if I just love my work, what if I just enjoy what I am doing? Why shouldn't I go on working?'

"Of course, this is the same kind of rationale that is used by people who can not quit smoking cigarettes but insist 'I can quit smoking any time, I just enjoy cigarettes.'"

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first add leisure

Despite what they say, workaholics actually are enjoying the rewards of work, not the work itself, Dr. White continues.

"If you took away the rewards of work--the status, the money, the possessions-- I don't think the workaholic would be very motivated in his work."

As a result, the individual who has become obsessed by the rewards of work is often distressed when it comes to enjoying leisure time, because leisure, by definition, must be pursued as an end in itself.

"The workaholic finds it hard to get pleasure from weekends, holidays and vacations because the rewards are not there," he says.

What is leisure? According to Dr. White, leisure is not laziness or idleness; it may in fact involve work.

"For example, a golfer may 'work' at improving his golf game, but it is still leisure because he is doing it for his own satisfaction and for the sake of the sport," Dr. White explains. "His reputation and salary are not in jeopardy so he can still relax and have a good time."

With the coming of the four-day work week, people should begin to pursue leisure more intelligently, Dr. White adds.

"People must learn that leisure is not the kind of thing you can buy. Televisions and recreational vehicles are not leisure. Leisure is a state of being."

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