

Guard-Your-Eyes Founders Visiting London



Guard Your Eyes is an organization with which many of us in the United Kingdom are already familiar. Launched back in 2007 by a few G-d fearing Jews in Eretz Yisrael who understood the great tests facing the Jewish people with technology, it flourished worldwide under the guidance of Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski and with the strong backing and direction of Harav Aharon Feldman, *shlita*, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Yeshivas Ner Yisrael in Baltimore.

Today, this efficient and effective organization serves over 10,000 members of the Jewish community per year, who reach out to them for help in their struggles and addictions to inappropriate materials on the internet, as well as related behaviors. Over the course of several years, Guard Your Eyes has developed innovative and effective tools that are freely and anonymously available to Jews across the world, in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, French and Spanish. These tools have literally saved people's personal lives and marriages, enabling them to overcome debilitating and addictive behavior patterns. Guard Your Eyes is also heavily involved in the area of prevention, reaching hundreds of thousands of Jews worldwide to help mitigate the risks that the accessibility and anonymity of technology have created in our communities.

A few months ago, in December of 2014, the founders of the Guard Your Eyes organization were invited by Rabbi Shimon Winegarten from the Bridge Lane Beth Hamedrash and Dayan Shmuel Simons of the London Beth Din to meet with Rabbanim, *mechanchim* and therapists in London. The goal was to train and raise awareness about one of the most burning issues facing *Klal Yisrael* today, and to present the solutions that they have successfully created. These sessions were very well received, and provided our local community leaders with access to an important resource in the ongoing battle to preserve *kedushas Yisrael*.

Following the success of their previous trip, Guard Your Eyes was invited to back to London by Dayan Chanoch Ehrentreu to continue raising awareness and garnering support for the continuation of their holy work. They will be visiting our city next week, *b'ezras Hashem*,

Parashas Behaalos'cha.

Rabbi Shimon Winegarten praised the organization, saying, "I am personally aware of numerous local people and families that were saved by Guard Your Eyes. I am proud to stand behind this remarkable organization. ... Whilst they may base themselves in Eretz Yisrael, the London community directly benefits from their work. ... To the best of my knowledge, there is no other organization catering to the Jewish community that provides sophisticated programs and solutions for those who are struggling in this area."

It is common knowledge that the complete freedom, anonymity and breadth of access offered by the internet presents a major temptation and requires constant vigilance. However, most people do not realize the extent of the problem or the number of individuals who are living double lives, feeling tormented and wracked by guilt and shame because of their online activities. Most people think there is a small percentage of deeply troubled individuals who are drawn into various immoral and improper behavior. They do not think that their neighbor, their child's *rebbe*, their spouse or any other normal-looking, upstanding and apparently healthy individual could be plumbing the depths of a netherworld filled with perverse imagery or engaging in inappropriate online relationships. Unfortunately though, for a growing number of victims, this is simply not true. Many people — from all age groups, all walks of life, men and women — are being drawn deeper and deeper into the terrible world of internet addiction.

At a meeting chaired by Agudath Israel's Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, one of America's foremost addiction experts, stated flatly that no addiction can be cured without a support group. And until now, the one support group impossible to assemble was for Orthodox Jews addicted to the internet and internet-related behaviors.

Religious support groups exist for overeaters, alcoholics and gamblers. These are weaknesses, and most of us have some weakness. But internet addiction is different. It seemingly marks one as a total hypocrite, living one life in public and another that's subterranean,

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Part of Rabbanim and Rebbeim at the guard-your-eyes meeting.

hidden from everyone else, above all the person to whom one is closest: his or her spouse. No one living such a double life, especially a respected communal figure, could ever risk being exposed at a meeting of others similarly addicted.

Dr. Twerski said that until very recently, he had absolutely nothing to recommend to those caught in an internet addiction or related behaviors. Now he does. The Guard Your Eyes site offers the possibility of joining a support group for internet addicts, with complete anonymity. Participants never see one another. For those in need, the required support group is now available. Support is also available for wives who struggle because of the issues that their husbands are having in these areas. Guard Your Eyes offers support groups and resources to these women as well.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski recently wrote to an upstanding newspaper about GYE: “The Talmud says that anyone who can prevent a sin from happening and does not do so, is held culpable for that sin. If we have the ability to alert the community about this spiritual cancer and we do not do so, then we share in the guilt of the lives and families that are being ruined. This plague respects no one. There is no immunity. Unfortunately, the world is becoming more dependent on internet every day. Filters are important, but they are not the answer.

“I am also personally close with the founders of the GuardYourEyes organization and can vouch for their work, which has helped hundreds of *Acheinu Bnei Yisrael* turn their lives around and is so necessary in today’s world.

“May Hashem save us from *michshol*.”

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ראש הישיבה
ישיבת נר ישראל
בס"ד
September 16, 2010
ה תשרי תשע"א

ROSH HAYESHIVA
NER ISRAEL RABBINICAL COLLEGE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

There is an international scourge attacking the Jewish People: this is the widespread addiction to viewing inappropriate material and other related behaviors. Fueled mainly by the accessibility and anonymity of the Internet, this scourge threatens to tear apart the fabric of Jewish life and undermine one of its major foundations, that of *tzenius* and *kedusha* (moral restraint).

This addiction has spared no class of Jews: from teenagers to adults, from office workers to kollel members, and from single to married men. Thousands of lives and marriages have already been ruined because of this relentless temptation.

The Guard Your Eyes organization has undertaken to stem this tide of destruction. By utilizing methods which have proved successful in treating other addictions, and by providing constant encouragement, support and strategies to victims, Guard Your Eyes has successfully helped wean hundreds, if not thousands, from these destructive addictions and has helped return them to normal life. All this has been done on a meager budget and a great deal of self-sacrifice.

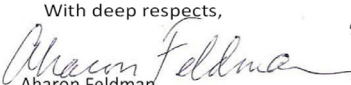
I have seen the materials and handbooks which this program distributes and have only praise for its methodology and approach to the problems of the addicts. Everything which I have seen conforms to the highest standards of Torah values. I highly recommend anyone who suffers from this problem to avail himself of this effective program.

In addition to aiding overcome these addictions, Guard Your Eyes also performs a vital function in preventing the spread of this scourge by raising public awareness of its dangers and by offering various preventive measures.

Guard Your Eyes is the only weapon we have today at our disposal in dealing with this widespread problem. Their work is critical for the protection of the sanctity of the Jewish People and is worthy of the encouragement and financial support of every Jew.

May HKBH grant the Guard Your Eyes organization the wisdom, the strength and the means to continue and expand its holy work, and may it help return the Jewish People to becoming a nation regarding whom it is written, **והייתם קדושים** (‘‘Sanctify yourselves and you shall then be holy’’).

With deep respects,


Aharon Feldman

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(ראש ישיבת פילאדלפיה)

הרב אברהם חיים לוי
(ראש ישיבת טל-סוקו)

הרב יעקב פרלוב
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הרב ישראל הלוי בעלסקי
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הרב יהושע שפירא
ראש ישיבת החסד רמת גן

הרב מנחם מנדל
בית הוראה שכם הרי
מאנסי נ"י

הרב משה פראנק

We present below a few letters and e-mails that Guard Your Eyes received from members of our community:

I will never forget it. I was 30 years old and I had just celebrated “one year clean” — the first time in my life that I had a clean slate for such a long period of time. I accomplished it through pure determination and willpower. I made myself a private celebration, just me alone. I stayed out late that night and learned an extra few *daf Gemara*, as my way of thanking Hashem. I remember so clearly my wife being upset that I came home so late that night. How I wished I could tell her my cause for celebration.

Two weeks later, out of the blue, *bang!* I was back to exactly where I had left off — and this time it progressed even further. I was not able to tell my Rav about my falls; even though he was the only one person I had ever discussed this with, I was just too embarrassed. I had told him I was fine now and to be honest, I had never told him the whole picture, just that I was struggling with *shemiras einayim*.

The next few weeks were like living in *Gehinnom*. Here I was — learning, giving public Torah talks and *shiurim*, being a great husband and father — while in private I felt disgusting, guilty and bad. My reputation, my family and my job were all at stake, but I couldn’t stop. What was wrong with me?

By the way, I am your “standard guy.” I had a stable upbringing, a loving family, did well in school, went to mainstream yeshivahs in Gateshead and Eretz Yisrael, and stayed in *kollel* for many years after my *chasunah*.

Out of sheer and utter desperation, I called up some *Rabbanim* in town, saying I had an important matter to discuss. When one of them said to come over straightaway, I went and just broke down and cried and cried. He looked at me so calmly and said, “Relax, we have Guard Your Eyes.”

That night I discovered the most beautiful website ever. For the first time in 30 years I was able to connect with people who related to me, who were not judgmental, and who gave sound advice from their own experiences. The options on the website are endless and available any time of day and night. The *chizuk* emails are powerful, the forums are so informative, the 90-day chart, phone conferences ... it goes on and on. From Guard Your Eyes (GYE) I went on to discover what the best route for me was in recovery. I started chatting with people anonymously, in the GYE chat rooms and when I once arranged to speak to someone on the phone, I could not believe my ears: *It was my morning chavrusa!* He had been struggling, I had been struggling, but we had both carried on our lives putting on a great show. Boy, was that a shock!

I can’t find the right words to thank GYE, who do this *avodas hakodesh*. GYE gave me hope and a new lease on life.

From the depths of my heart, *thank you very much!*

From your biggest fan in Golders Green, Y.S.

Moshe wrote:
I live in Stamford Hill, London. I am considered a very *ehrliche yungerman*. I was always the top boy in *cheder* and yeshivah. But unfortunately, I had a dark side inside myself; I was struggling with *kedushah* and morality issues, especially related to the internet. I tried so much to stop but could not.

One day, I found a GYE poster in shul. I went to the site, where I studied the GYE attitude handbook and other materials. I installed filters and I got some ideas on how to stay clean, but it didn’t help me much at first. Eventually, I discovered (on the GYE forum) that I have an addiction.

I emailed one of the GYE moderators who runs a 12-Step call once a day. We made some time to talk and, *baruch Hashem*, it helped me loads. After a *tekufah*, he hooked me up with someone from the United Kingdom who I speak to almost every day. And with the encouragement of GYE, I started to go to 12-Step meetings in Stamford Hill a few times a week.

If not for GYE, I would’ve continued with my addiction, which by now would have for sure progressed to even worse things. This addiction is so powerful, I can’t fight it alone!

I am so grateful to Hashem for giving us GYE to help us in this crazy world.

Chaim (21 years old) writes:
I’m filled with gratitude as I write this, because without Guard Your Eyes there would be nothing to fill these lines with, just an empty space — because that was the direction my life was heading.

Two years ago Hashem somehow directed me to Guard your eyes; little did I know what an impact it would have on my life.

When I first logged on I thought there was no hope, having engaged in addictive/destructive behaviours for the majority of my life. Why should this time be different? At the time I was at such a low point. I had been found out by my friends, and the police had even gotten involved — that is the extent to which I would chase pleasure at all costs. All of a sudden there were people on GYE who *cared*. They felt the same feelings as me, they understood and were willing to talk.

On the forum each person has their own special story. I’ve learnt so much from each and every one of them. Getting in touch, opening up and asking my questions gave me space to explore myself and what I was doing to my life. Along with the *chizuk* emails, the 90-day goal and one member of GYE in particular, I felt like I had been given another chance at life.

This September I will be attending Yeshiva in Israel. I have huge dreams, aspirations, and a real goal in mind this year. If you’d have asked me two years ago if this would have been possible, I would have said, “Never!” GYE made this dream a reality. I’ve made so many friends — real friends — with people on the forum, helping each other along the way.

I’ve still got a way to go. But the path no longer seems so daunting, knowing that I’ve got a GYE moderators cheering me on! Thank you, Guard Your Eyes, for *saving my life*.