

Additional **TOOLS FOR RECOVERY**

From Sexual Addiction



Guard Your Eyes.com
Maintaining Moral Purity in Today's World

Table of Contents

- INTRODUCTION..... 6
- PART 1: Improving your relation with yourself..... 7
 - EMERGENCY TOOLS 7
 - 1. Short prayer, "I'm powerless, please G-d help me!" 7
 - 2. Move somewhere else 7
 - 3. Pick up litter 8
 - 4. Sing (or hum) a favorite tune 8
 - 5. Tell another SA member NOW. Pick up your phone IMMEDIATELY 8
 - 6. As an SA tool this was presented as: Get to a meeting AS SOON AS POSSIBLE..... 9
 - 7. When you're angry: Ask yourself, "What am I ashamed of right now?" 9
 - HAVING A PROGRAM..... 9
 - 8. Participate in the fellowship of the program 9
 - 9. Take the Step Zero questionnaire..... 10
 - 10. Admit complete defeat. Realize there is nothing you can do on your own to overcome lust 11
 - 11. Answer the 20 Questions found in the White Book (pg 8) to gauge the severity of your addiction 11
 - 12. Get a sponsor 12
 - 13. Treat your sponsor's suggestions as orders..... 12
 - 14. Work the steps (all 12 of them!) 13
 - 15. Have a daily program (but not one's own) 13
 - 16. Read the "Just for Today" card every morning..... 14
 - 17. Live in the solution (and not in the problem) 15
 - MEETINGS 16
 - 18. Don't lust, and go to meetings..... 16
 - 19. Have a Home Group..... 16
 - 20. 90/90 (90 meetings in 90 days)..... 16
 - 21. Start a meeting..... 17
 - 22. Take on a commitment 17
 - 23. Attend 5 meetings a week 18
 - 24. Telephone meetings 18
 - 25. SA Net (This is an E-mail group to communicate with other SA members) 19
 - 26. Step 1 meetings 19
 - 27. Check meetings..... 20
 - BASIC SELF CARE 20
 - 28. Zero tolerance for lust 20
 - 29. Avoid all known triggers--people, places, and things 22
 - 30. Abstain from all mood-altering chemicals..... 22
 - 31. Avoid emotion-rocking activities 23
 - 32. Abstain from sugars and white flour 23
 - 33. Write a Pornography-free certificate..... 24
 - 34. Dump sexualized clothing 24
 - 35. Know clearly: What is sex with self? 24

36. Find yourself clean forms of entertainment.....	25
37. TV and Movie abstinence.....	25
38. Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?".....	25
39. Early to bed, early to rise.....	26
40. Keep phone beside bed.....	26
41. International phone numbers.....	26
42. Healthy food.....	27
43. Moderate exercise.....	27
44. Accountability or filtration software.....	27
INTENSE EGO DEFLATION.....	28
45. Get out of self.....	28
46. Practice rigorous honesty.....	28
47. Talk in detail to sponsor.....	29
48. What am I not telling my sponsor?.....	29
49. Over my dead body--what's mine?.....	30
50. Am I done with lust?.....	30
51. Am I in or out of SA (or GYE, for the forum)?.....	30
52. Openness.....	31
53. Ask for feedback.....	32
54. Ask for reality checks.....	33
55. Willingness.....	33
56. Do what I don't want to do.....	33
57. Clean the toilet.....	33
58. Pray out loud.....	33
59. Read the "Litany of Humility," (a prayer for humility).....	34
ON THE STREET.....	34
60. Take a different road to avoid triggers.....	34
61. The SA (or GYE) salute.....	35
62. Custody of the eyes.....	35
63. Paving stones and rooftops.....	35
64. Flick your eyes to the top left.....	35
65. Shake your head.....	35
66. Snap the elastic band.....	36
67. Don't breath through your nose.....	36
68. "G-d, may I find in You what I'm looking for in that woman (etc.)".....	36
69. "G-d, take away my lust. I pray for her (etc.)".....	36
70. "G-d, please take away this image (or fantasy)".....	36
71. Bookend risky situations.....	37
DECISION MAKING.....	37
72. What's my next right action?.....	37
73. Rushing is not sober.....	37
74. What would my sponsor do?.....	37
75. What would my sponsor say?.....	37
76. Take an action of love.....	38
77. If I can't reach my sponsor, the answer is "no".....	38

78. If in doubt, leave it out.....	38
79. Always have a plan, and use it	39
GOOD ATTITUDES	39
80. Abstinence from lust is the most important thing in my life without exception.	39
81. All hits are toxic; I refuse them	39
82. I won't act out--no matter what	40
83. It's none of my business.....	40
84. Who I am is none of my business	40
85. Bring reality into situations.....	41
86. No one is flirting with me.....	42
87. No one is lusting after me.....	42
88. This is not a sexual situation	42
89. Only a sick person would respond to my lustful advances.....	43
90. Sex is only a small part of any real relationship.....	43
91. Clean and Sober	43
92. Attitude of gratitude	44
93. Easy does it	44
94. One day at a time.....	44
95. Keep it simple.....	45
96. This, too, shall pass	46
97. Three thinks is the limit	47
98. Let go and let G-d.....	47
99. First things first	47
100. Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today	48
THINGS TO REMEMBER.....	49
101. The pain and the loss	49
102. My addict never sleeps	49
103. My addict lies	50
104. I am not smarter than my addict	50
105. Run the movie through to the end	51
106. The joy of recovery	52
107. If I take an action, my feelings will follow.....	53
108. Keep learning about recovery.....	53
PART 2: Improve Relation with G-d	54
SURRENDER, PRAYER, AND MEDITATION	54
109. Surrender in every moment.....	54
110. Meditate upon the "Serenity Prayer"	55
111. Select prayers from the Big Book.....	55
112. Daily quiet time.....	55
113. Invite G-d in.....	55
114. G-d's will discernment tool	56
115. Envision the presence of G-d	56
116. Examine your old ideas about G-d.....	57
117. Came... Came to... Came to believe.....	57

MAINTAIN A FIT SPIRITUAL CONDITION	58
118. Pray every morning and every evening	58
119. Read SA & AA literature	58
120. Write fear lists.....	59
121. Maintain a gratitude list.....	60
122. Restart your day anytime with the serenity prayer.....	60
123. Daily Sobriety Renewal	60
124. Contact your sponsor regularly.....	61
125. Take Good Orderly Directions.....	61
126. Make a written 10th step	62
127. Write about what's bothering you.....	62
ENLARGE ONE'S SPIRITUAL LIFE.....	63
128. Attend a religious service at least once a week.....	63
129. Move from fear to love.....	64
130. Listen to the Joe and Charlie AA workshop	64
131. Keep a diary	64
132. Read spiritual literature	65
Part 3: Improve Relations With Others.....	66
FORGIVENESS AND AMENDS	66
133. Forgive them all (step 8.5)	66
134. "I was wrong when..."	67
135. Who do I least want to meet today?	67
136. Traffic Sobriety.....	68
137. Do whatever your sponsee refuses to do.....	68
138. Rescuer, Victim, Abuser	68
139. Pray together	69
FRIENDSHIPS	70
140. Work with another SA (or GYE person)	70
141. Stick with the winners.....	70
142. Stay in the present.....	70
143. What you think and what you feel and what you do... ..	71
144. Put the welfare of others first.....	72
SERVICE	72
145. How are you?	72
146. How can I be of service?	72
147. Always say "yes" to SA (or GYE) requests	72
148. Take on a service commitment.....	73
149. Sponsor others.....	73
150. Buddy List.....	73
151. Rotate out in good time.....	73
CARRYING THE MESSAGE.....	74
152. Call two newcomers every day	74

153. Share your experience, strength, and hope	74
154. Give your sobriety date.....	74
155. Quit preaching - tell them about the illness	75
156. Find your own Dr. Bob	75
157. Laugh.....	75
Part 4: Miscellaneous.....	77
158. Twelve Steps to Insanity	77
159. The pre-recovery promises.....	77
160. Hang out with your own gender	78
161. Write yourself a letter (and a reply)	78
162. Slogans of Recovery	79
163. Short prayer: G-d, please help me have a positive sobriety	79
164. Short prayer: G-d, please help me see straight.....	79
165. Increase your awareness of your perceptions and motives	79
166. Talk, feel, trust	79
167. The Ramban's Letter	80
168. Torah	82
169. Is this good for my recovery or not?.....	83
170. Whatever I place my recovery in front of will flourish; whatever I place in front of my recovery won't	83
171. Humility, Fearlessness, Honesty	83
172. Watch out for RID	84
173. BYOB--Bring Your Own Book.....	84
174. Write your old ideas.....	84
175. SA and Recovery Audio Recordings	85
176. Back to Basics.....	85
177. Big Book on Audio.....	85
178. Al-Anon prayer	85
APPENDIX.....	87
THE STEP ZERO QUESTIONNAIRE.....	87
TWENTY QUESTIONS.....	88
A FEW RECOVERY PRAYERS	89
JUST FOR TODAY	90
LITANY OF HUMILITY.....	91
ACCEPTANCE	92
GOD'S WILL DISCERNMENT TOOL.....	92
SA DAILY SOBRIETY RENEWAL	93
TWELVE STEPS TO INSANITY	94
PRE-RECOVERY PROMISES	95
SCRIPT FOR MAKING AMENDS.....	95
AL-ANON PRAYER.....	95
HYPERLINKS.....	96

INTRODUCTION

About half a year ago I attended an SA workshop entitled, “Tools for Recovery.” The speaker gave us a list of well over 100 tools of recovery and explained each one. I wanted to share this list with the forum, so I started a thread on GYE, “Additional Tools for Recovery.” I wrote a tool every day or so with a little explanation either from what I learned at the workshop, from my own understanding of the tool, or from my own experience with it. In this way, besides sharing the tools, I also shared a lot about my own outlook on recovery and what has worked for me—what, perhaps, might work for you, too. These efforts were appreciated, encouraged, and added to by other members of the forum along the way. I am glad to be of service and take this a step further; the “Additional Tools for Recovery” thread is now available from GYE as an E-book for your convenience.

I suggest you will have the greatest benefit by reading through these tools slowly, just one or two tools each day. Give yourself a chance to digest them, remember them, and implement them to some extent in your life. There's no hurry.

--Elyah (a.k.a. Eye.Nonymous)

P.S.: Any comments about this E-book can be posted on the GYE forum [HERE](#), or can be sent by E-mail to me [HERE](#).

PART 1: Improving your relation with yourself

The first batch of tools is more-or-less aimed at improving your relation with yourself.

EMERGENCY TOOLS

1. Short prayer, "I'm powerless, please G-d help me!"

Two reasons why this tool may not work:

- a. It wasn't said soon enough. Say this IMMEDIATELY when you start to feel tempted by lust instead of waiting 10 minutes and getting all caught up in it.
- b. It wasn't repeated enough. Saying it once or twice is likely to be ineffective. Keep saying it over and over again (even dozens or hundreds of times if necessary) until it kicks in.

Sometimes I find myself trying this little prayer and walking down the street. Meanwhile, the thought occurs to me, "Instead of trying to walk right past this lady, I can cross the street and get even further away, which would be even more helpful."

So, if there's any effort you can ALSO do, don't rely entirely on the prayer to save you.

2. Move somewhere else

This tool is self-explanatory. If you're drawn to the computer, get up and get away from the computer. If you're drawn to a lady on the street, cross the street, or take a detour.

I've sometimes thought, "What's the use of taking a detour? After all, I'm just going to see ANOTHER woman on THAT street!"

But, even so, it's worth the detour. Here is a definite trigger on THIS street, and the presence of a trigger on the side-street is still doubtful (assuming it is doubtful, and not a sidewalk in front of a woman's clothing store or seminary when school is getting out, etc). I think when we move ourselves away from definite triggers, even if we are faced with another one that was doubtful, we get Divine assistance to overcome the challenge. On the other hand, if we remain in the presence of a definite trigger while we have an alternate route available, we don't get that Divine assistance.

3. Pick up litter

We can't think our way into correct acting, but we can act our way into correct thinking. In our addiction, we are selfish and self-centered. When you stop in a public place and pick up litter, you break your ego and start to think, instead, of being of service to others. Cleaning a public rest-room is even better (wipe down a toilet seat; it won't kill you--just remember to wash your hands afterwards). With a little imagination, you can think of lots of ways to be of service. You can also find regular opportunities throughout your day to humble yourself and be of service. For example, you can take a small section of your Shul or Beis Midrash and appoint yourself in charge of putting all the books away in that section.

4. Sing (or hum) a favorite tune

This can help to change your focus and your attitude. I would add: I think we look for triggers because we don't feel pleasure and happiness with life. Singing, even if you don't feel like it at first, can give you that feeling.

Listening to music can also change your mood.

(DISCLAIMER: Even if you disagree with any of my comments and explanations, don't let that stop you from trying these tools yourself--see for yourself if you get any results; you can make up your own explanation afterwards if you feel so inclined).

5. Tell another SA member NOW. Pick up your phone IMMEDIATELY

If you are part of a GYE phone conference, use the phone list from that group. You can also exchange phone numbers with people from this forum (that you have gotten to know and trust. Send via PM; don't post your phone number on the open forum.)

Also, if you haven't collected any phone numbers, it is also helpful to POST immediately. Send out an SOS post. (But, if the computer is your trigger right now, it may be better to follow tool #2 above).

If you can't reach out to a fellow program member, just pick up a phone and call ANYONE! Could be a friend or relative you haven't spoken to in a while. Could be your Mom or Dad. Get out of your head. "Hi, I just called to say hello." That can work, too, and they'll be thankful--whoever it is.

It's good to keep in touch on a regular basis--to keep up a friendship. This, in itself, is important. But also, when you need to reach out in an emergency, it's easier to call someone you are already friendly with rather than to try reaching out to someone who seems like a stranger. When you most need to reach out is when that little voice in your head is going to say, "But, I don't even know this guy! I'll feel so silly calling just because I'm lusting."

Another point regarding calling people and regarding regular attendance at meetings: Sometimes we feel restless, irritable, and discontent (or just plain full of lust) and we need to speak to someone. BUT, even if we can't reach someone at the moment, it is reassuring just to know that there IS someone you CAN speak to--that you have a regular and reliable support system, and that you eventually WILL be

successful in reaching somebody.

6. As an SA tool this was presented as: Get to a meeting AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

The novelty here was, I thought the only option is SA meetings (which, as far as I know, are all closed-meetings--only for sexaholics). I have not yet done this personally, but many 12-step groups (such as AA and CA) have open-meetings, which we can also attend.

If involvement in the forum is an effective enough cure for you, perhaps this tool can work as: check in with the forum as soon as possible.

7. When you're angry: Ask yourself, "What am I ashamed of right now?"

A lot of us addicts tend to also have a problem with anger. When we get angry we lose control, and when we lose control it's usually a matter of time before we act out. Extreme emotions are unhealthy for us addicts; our goal should be to stay calm and even-keel. That's a healthy place for us to be.

The idea behind this tool is: Rage is the result of a high level of fear combined with a high level of shame. When you merely ask yourself the question, "What am I ashamed of right now?" it disarms the rage. You don't have to answer the question.

HAVING A PROGRAM

8. Participate in the fellowship of the program

The more involved you are, the safer you are from lust. (The animals in the herd that are most at risk of attack are those animals standing near the edge of the group).

For SA, this would mean: attend meetings regularly, participate at meetings and help out with service positions, exchange phone numbers and call people regularly, read through the program literature regularly (Big Book, 12/12, White book), get-together with fellow program members, etc.

For the GYE forum, this would mean: post regularly, maintain your own thread, participate in other people's threads, PM people for more personal messages (and just to give a personal "hello, how are you?"), read through the GYE handbooks regularly (the SA literature is also helpful). And attend any GYE get-togethers whenever they are planned.

* * *

I would like to add a word about the importance of "having a program." Once we are in the grips of a major lust attack, it is often too late, or at least extremely difficult, to escape it. Having a program is maintenance work--we need to make sure we are doing something **EVERY DAY** to contribute to our sobriety, whether or not we feel the need for it. Then, when a lust attack DOES come along, we will have a structure firmly in place to be able to deal with it.

Also, there are lots of factors that contribute to our lust addiction which don't seem directly related to lust--such as our tendency to isolate ourselves. Having a regular program will provide a remedy long before the problem develops into a major lust attack.

In other words: Maybe you can cram for an exam, but you can't cram for a diet and exercise program to stop a heart attack! It's the regular, and seemingly useless daily effort that keeps us healthy.

* * *

Another word about having a program [in case this wasn't already clear]... it not only makes it easier to deal with lust attacks but also, you'll find that **doing the right actions--regularly**, will often prevent an attack in the first place. You'll look back and notice you just handled a situation calmly as a result of the program, although in the past the same situation would have driven you to high levels of anxiety and resentment and would have compelled you to act out.

* * *

COMMENT BY A MEMBER OF THE GYE FORUM: This one is the big one for me. Getting out of isolation and reaching out to people. Post, PM, email, call to say hello. Anything to get me involved socially. This has probably helped me more than anything else. I am not a naturally social person. I love privacy and doing things my own way. Opening up to others has been really healthy for me.

9. Take the Step Zero questionnaire

(From "Essay" Issue 4 published in 2003)

The following is the Step Zero questionnaire:

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Compulsion: Having started the process with one fix, one drink, one look, one thought, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our sensitivity to lust, we are completely in the grip of a destructive power greater than ourselves.

Have I stopped compulsion in all its forms?

Have I stopped feeding lust? – through my eyes? – my fantasies? – my memories?

Have I stopped living only and always inside my own head? This means, do I keep my thoughts, battles, and struggles a secret? How do I deal with those [people] outside of myself?

List and identify my forms of compulsion.

What are my methods of acting out?

What are my biggest triggers?

What do I try to stop the compulsions?

Do I have an accountability partner? If yes, explain the relationship. If now, why not?

What am I willing to do to achieve sexual sobriety?

Am I getting involved in the program of SA [or in the forum of GYE]? How? What do I do daily?

Do I have a sponsor?

Obsession: The fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

What do I obsess over?

Do I talk about the overwhelming impact that the temptations have on me to my sponsor, accountability partner, or group [for the forum: Do I post about it or PM to anyone]?

=====

10. Admit complete defeat. Realize there is nothing you can do on your own to overcome lust

Do this regularly--at least daily; keep fresh in your mind that you need help--a program of recovery. Don't wait until after a fall to remember and then, after a few days, to forget about it again until another fall.

11. Answer the 20 Questions found in the White Book (pg 8) to gauge the severity of your addiction

The questions are as follows (count how many times you answer "yes"):

=====

Twenty Questions

1. Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thinking or behavior?
2. ...That you'd be better off if you didn't keep "giving in"?
3. ...That sex or stimuli are controlling you?
4. Have you ever tried to stop or limit doing what you felt was wrong in your sexual behavior?
5. Do you resort to sex to escape, relieve anxiety, or because you can't cope?
6. Do you feel guilt, remorse, afterward?
7. Has your pursuit of sex become more compulsive?
8. Does it interfere with relations with your spouse?
9. Do you have to resort to images or memories during sex?
10. Does an irresistible impulse arise when the other party makes the overtures or sex is offered?
11. Do you keep going from one relationship or lover to another?
12. Do you feel the right relationship would help you stop lusting, masturbating, or being so promiscuous?
13. Do you have a destructive need-a desperate sexual or emotional need for someone?
14. Does pursuit of sex make you careless for your self or the welfare of your family or others?
15. Has your effectiveness or concentration decreased as sex has become more compulsive?

16. Do you lose time from work for it?
17. Do you turn to a lower environment when pursuing sex?
18. Do you want to get away from the sex partner as soon as possible after the act?
19. Although your spouse is sexually compatible, do you still masturbate or have sex with others?
20. Have you ever been arrested for a sex-related offense?

If you answered "yes"...

1-5 times, Lust may be causing a few problems in your life and you probably have more of it than most people. You may or may not be a lust addict.

5-10 times, You may well be a lust addict. Attend SA meetings and see if you identify [see if you identify with "Daily Dose of Dov"].

More than 10 times, Good indication you are a lust addict.

12. Get a sponsor

Choose someone who has got something that you want to have, too--he should have quantity clean time, and also quality clean time. A sponsor is someone who has found the road to recovery, and will happily share that road with you--IF YOU ARE WILLING TO TAKE DIRECTIONS (and if you are willing to put in the effort). A sponsor is not a free psychotherapist and he is also not a professional debating team to convince you that his program of recovery works, that you need to follow his program, or that his program of recovery is certified kosher to your satisfaction. If that is what you are interested in, don't waste your time or his.

In SA a sponsor is someone whom you speak to regularly and guides you through the 12 steps.

On the forum, I'm sure you can also find members with long-term sobriety who are willing to guide you along the road to recovery--either through private messages, E-mail, and even by phone. It is advantageous to pick one person as your main source of guidance; this will prevent you from being blown aimlessly in every which way from all the differences of opinion you are likely to encounter here. I don't mean to discredit any particular method, but no matter what you are doing, in order to have progress you need persistence and consistency. Pick one way--whichever way you see has produced the results you are interested in having for yourself--and give it a fair chance.

Once you have found a sponsor...

13. Treat your sponsor's suggestions as orders

G-d is the pilot, your sponsor is the co-pilot, and you're in the back seat.

14. Work the steps (all 12 of them!)

Otherwise, it's sort of like taking half a dose of penicillin; it doesn't help.

To quote the Sandy B recordings, "The goal is to stay sober AND HAPPY."

A person might be able to stay sober on the first 3 steps. But, the dramatic improvements, the personality change, the lasting happiness and serenity that are the promises of the 12-steps, are mainly the results of steps 4-12.

And, not everyone can endure a life without happiness and serenity. It may be just a matter of time until they act out again, or they might even switch to other addictive behaviors to fill the need that lust had been filling, and they might yet feel content for having "conquered" lust.

I'll add: Quite a few of our disappointments and failures are, in fact, the result of our own self-destructive behavior; a lot of our difficulties actually will get better as we progress in recovery. To be realistic, however, the steps don't promise to turn all of one's life experiences into happy and successful ones. But when we face such challenges, we will have the tools to keep calm despite them.

Another point about doing all 12 steps: It is better to get through the steps fairly quickly (the Duvid Chaim phone groups take you through the 12 steps in about 4 months, which is pretty good), than to wait forever on one step until doing it perfectly before moving on to the next one.

The steps are a work in progress, a new game-plan for living. In time, you'll learn how to incorporate the steps into your life more thoroughly and more deeply. Step 1, admitting powerlessness, is really the only step that can be done 100%. And even then, we need to keep reminding ourselves about it. (And even regarding step 1, little by little, you'll find it is more far-reaching than you thought at first).

Another point about a sponsor--why it is important to seek guidance from someone who has already traveled along the road to recovery and can show you how to do it:

The practical applications of the Big Book might not be readily apparent to you on your own. There's an oral tradition, of sorts, which goes along with the Big Book, and you're likely to miss it. (Before I joined the Duvid Chaim phone conferences, I read the Big Book a number of times on my own and it didn't make such a big difference. I didn't understand what the big deal was about the 12-steps).

15. Have a daily program (but not one's own)

Your daily routine should include specific and regular recovery-related activities: Certain AA/SA prayers to say at certain times of the day (immediately after waking up, or right after *shacharis*. I have a few such prayers tucked into my siddur--see bottom of post), certain things to remind yourself of, calling

one's sponsor, perhaps making a certain number of calls to fellow program members, gratitude lists, reading a bit from AA/SA literature, and attending meetings (if not daily, at least once or twice a week). Also, if a person is on step 4 for example, his daily routine can include spending some time doing the work necessary for this step. All this should be worked out with a sponsor, and not figured out on one's own.

Also, a person should have a general plan set out for the whole day (but don't go crazy, and accept that G-d may have different plans in mind for your day). Addicts, in particular, don't do well with unstructured time; if left to our own devices, we would spend all day lying around in bed (or surfing around the internet).

Make a plan the day before, and review it at the start of the day.

=====

A FEW RECOVERY PRAYERS

Beginning of Day Prayer (BB 86-87)

O G-d, please direct my thinking, so that it may be divorced from self-pity and from dishonest and self-seeking motives. Let me make every decision and begin every action in You and continue it only through Your Inspiration. Throughout this day, show me the next step to take and to trust in Your care of me and my problems. Free me from all self-will and self-sufficiency. Help me to neither seek nor pray for selfish ends.

3rd Step Prayer:

"G-d, I offer myself to You - to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of life. May I do Your will always!". (BB p 63)

7th Step Prayer:

"My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding. Amen." (BB pg 76)

16. Read the "Just for Today" card every morning

In case you don't have one already, print this out:

=====

Just for today: I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle all my problems at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today: I will be happy. Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Just for today: I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my "luck" as it comes, and fit myself into it.

Just for today: I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today: I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anybody know of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do—just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt: they may be hurt but today I will not show it.

Just for today: I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, keep my voice low, be courteous, criticize not one bit. I won't find fault with anything, nor try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

Just for today: I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for today: I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

Just for today: I will be un-afraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and will believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give back to me.

17. Live in the solution (and not in the problem)

Be aware of your thoughts. We don't have to be focused (and certainly not obsessed) with negativity and hopelessness. We can focus, instead, on the positive aspects of our lives and on hope for the future. It is within our power to choose what we think, and by doing so, we can choose our own reality.

I had a realization recently about Alisha and the woman who had the little flask of oil. From that flask of oil, a miracle happened, and it filled up barrels and barrels of oil. G-d did a miracle, but there had to be a little something to start with. I think the same thing happens with our thoughts. If we can find a little something positive to focus on, blessing will take hold of it and expand it. I can find one thing I did right today and focus on that, though the rest of the day may have seemed like a total mess. I can make one little effort towards finding a job and be successful at that; though I am not likely to instantly find my dream job and get hired for it, I can at least be satisfied that I have taken one step closer towards that goal, though far away it may still be.

MEETINGS

18. Don't lust, and go to meetings

There are benefits of going to meetings that can't be described in words. I'll at least say this: Isolation is a big part of our addiction. Even when we talk with people throughout the day, we can't really talk to them about what's REALLY going on with us. Going to meetings breaks that isolation in a way that nothing else can (including anonymous SA phone groups). You get to meet real live people who are suffering from a similar malady as you, and you can actually talk with these people--face-to-face, about these things that you always hide from everyone else in the world. That fear that we have, "What will people think of me to find out I'm a sexaholic--that I masturbate and look at porn?", and also, "What does it mean that I am associating with such people?", I think, is just a higher dose of the same feelings we have which keeps us disconnected from people in general, "What will people think of me if I...", and that judgemental voice, "What does it mean that I am associating with such people?" As we throw off these shackles, free ourselves from our worst fears and start to connect with others on this deep level, in time we enjoy a side-effect that ALL of our relationships begin to heal. We start to feel safe with people, no matter who they are (and no matter who WE are). As long as we keep our secrets to ourselves, we are keeping miles of distance between ourselves and other human beings. (You don't have to tell EVERYBODY--that would even be unwise; but you need to tell SOMEBODY).

19. Have a Home Group

When we join a fellowship of recovery, we begin to feel a part OF instead of apart FROM. If we pop into random meetings every once in a while, we will still feel mostly apart FROM. A home group is one particular group that you attend regularly--for example, your Wednesday evening Big Book reading group group. You might also attend a Friday afternoon group, and an open AA meeting (out of convenience), but you should have one group which you feel especially dedicated to and most connected with, and at which you take part in the responsibilities of the meeting--a group you feel a certain accountability towards, and a part OF.

Also, our involvement with the fellowship becomes a substitute--a healthy and healing alternative, for our involvement with lust. Have a stable connection with a home group gives you a stable basis for recovery.

20. 90/90 (90 meetings in 90 days)

This could very well be as effective, if not more so, than a treatment center (and much cheaper, too).

Adapted for the forum: Post every day in your thread for 90 days--even if you just write, "I'm just posting to say 'hi'; nothing much to say." I had started out that way many times and then realized I had quite a bit on my mind to share.

We should be as enthusiastic about recovery as we were about our addiction.

21. Start a meeting

If you already have well-established meetings available to you, see how it's done before starting your own meeting. (And, even after starting your own meeting, it's very advantageous to be connected with the larger SA organization).

The back of the White Book contains suggested meeting formats which provide guidelines and structure for the meetings; this helps things run smoothly and keeps the group focused on recovery. I think most meetings follow these guidelines (you will feel at home wherever you go).

All you need for a meeting is 2 people and a regular safe meeting place. I think you can be in touch with the SA headquarters to locate meetings in your area, and to get help starting up your own group.

In order to start your own group, it is highly recommended that you reach at least step 5 (working with a sponsor), and that you have some significant clean time behind you--at least 6 months (this is what the SA head office told me when I spoke to them). You need to have something to offer before you can start giving something away. And, as the founder of a group, people (who you disclose yourself to when warranted) will look to you as an example of SA; if you are falling every-other day and have not yet experienced much of the serenity and peace-of-mind which the program promises you will experience, you may be doing more harm than good; you may be turning off people who might otherwise have joined a program of recovery. SA does not recruit new members through promotion; it works by attraction.

I know of someone who could not find an SA group in his area, so he started his own meeting, reading the Big Book and following the Joe And Charlie AA workshop as an example ([HERE](#) is the link to download from Silkworth.net).

Besides starting an official meeting, you could also have a recovery buddy; someone you meet with (or speak with) once a week, or more often, to work the program together. I have also heard of people who have worked the program together via E-mail. But, the more direct your relationship is with people in recovery, the more effective your recovery will be. The buddy-system should not be used as a substitute for attending meetings if they are available in your area. There's power in numbers.

22. Take on a commitment

At meetings, there are official positions such as secretary, treasurer, being in charge of literature, clean-up, and refreshments. There are also inter-group representatives, to be in touch with the larger organization of SA. These positions usually require a person to have a certain level of sobriety to qualify. Besides these regular positions, you can find plenty of opportunities to be of service--arrange the chairs before the meetings, tidy up the lobby, or even just help the guy who is officially in charge of something else. When you take on a commitment, you start to feel more a part of the group, and the more a part of the group you feel, the stronger your recovery is.

On the forum, with some creativity, you can also think of a commitment to take on. Reb Guard, at one point, was recruiting people to become expert in the GYE Handbook (lots of the questions people ask on

this forum are already addressed in the handbook; there just needs to be someone to direct people to the right information). At one point he needed people to organize the database of Chizzuk E-mails. Perhaps send him a PM and ask if there is any way you can be of service. Also, you can make a point to greet newcomers and provide the official welcome package message. You can undertake a certain project, such as giving over information from a "Tools for Recovery" workshop, etc.

23. Attend 5 meetings a week

The motto is: Many meetings, many chances; Few meetings, few chances.

I don't go to that many meetings. I attend 2 meetings a week, spread throughout the week. Also, if I'm feeling particularly weak, I try to go to an extra meeting (or call in to a phone group).

The Duvud Chaim phone group is 4 days/week, which is great.

I definitely feel that the meetings are crucial for my recovery. If, for any reason, I have to miss a meeting, I do my best to compensate for it--either making more phone calls to people in the program, or doing some step-related writing exercises, or doing some extra reading of the program literature. Usually it takes me all 3 together to get comparable (but not equal) results.

Five meetings a week is meant as a regular program, as opposed to the 90 meetings in 90 days which is meant more as a temporary, emergency measure.

I have mentioned SA headquarters as a resource, and I think I am about to do it again. So, to save you the trouble of searching on your browser, here is info about SA (just cut and pasted from the SA.ORG website):

SA.org

Sexaholics Anonymous International Central Office
PO Box 3565
Brentwood, TN 37024

E-mail: saico@sa.org

Phone: (615) 370-6062

Toll-free: (866) 424-8777

Fax: (615) 370-0882

For event listings or meeting list updates, contact the E-mail address above.

24. Telephone meetings

This is a useful and a powerful tool, though not a substitute for live groups or a home group.

I haven't looked into it, but you can get info about SA telephone meetings through the SA headquarters

(let me know if you find out details).

And, of course, there are the phone conferences offered through GYE, such as the DC phone conferences.

I will admit that many people have gained quantity and quality sobriety through the phone groups and without attending live meetings. On the other hand, a lot of people got involved with the phone groups and found they needed something more intense, so they joined a live group; I think the phone group was a good stepping stone--it took away a lot of the fear which made it possible to join a live group afterwards.

25. SA Net (This is an E-mail group to communicate with other SA members)

Contact SA headquarters, saico@sa.org, for more information.

26. Step 1 meetings

What is a step 1 meeting?

Step 1 is: We admitted that we were powerless over lust--that our lives had become unmanageable.

A step 1 meeting is when a person in recovery admits his powerless over lust. He takes the floor for the majority of the meeting, and tells his story. If I understand correctly, this is an innovation of the SA program.

The point is to tell it like it is (probably for the first time ever) and send it away. To quote the White Book: "Mere catharsis or even honest self-disclosure misses the mark if that's all it is. The aim is to bring our diseased attitudes and misdeeds to the light of others and G-d to be done with them."

Through telling one's story, the destructive and progressive nature of one's illness should become apparent. The general outline should be, "How it used to be [and how things got progressively worse], what happened [to bring a person into recovery], and hope for the future." One should not be too explicit, or too vague either.

For me, this was a powerful experience. My sponsor recommended that I not read from a written 1st-step (as many people do). Rather, I should speak as best as I can from the heart. In the course of my story, I mentioned the line which brought me into recovery which I heard from Duvid Chaim at a GYE get-together, from something I have seen written as "The SA welcome statement." It said, through our addiction we have learned, "Don't talk, don't trust, don't feel." At that point, to my own surprise, I broke down crying. This is how the disease of sexaholism has destroyed me. I have spent my whole life in isolation. I have spent my whole life thinking I just lacked self-confidence, or I just needed to take a public-speaking course, but nothing ever helped. I have always felt apart-FROM the rest of humanity. And, THIS was the reason. And, HERE is a solution. Finally!

If I ever start wondering if I REALLY have a problem with sex-addiction, I just remind myself of this moment. Yes, I am powerless over lust, and my life has become unmanageable.

27. Check meetings

What are these?

A check meeting can be called at any time by a group member in difficulty, or by the group if they see a member in difficulty. It is a special meeting to help this person with his specific issue in the context of the 12-step program.

I have never seen one of these, and apparently it was a new idea to many other people who attended the tools of recovery workshop. Discuss it with your group before doing one.

At any rate, take notice throughout the meeting who is dealing with which issues. Make a point to be in touch with them afterwards and lend some moral support.

BASIC SELF CARE

28. Zero tolerance for lust

Lust is not good for a lust addict.

To quote a section of the White Book:

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We stop practicing our compulsion in all its forms. We can't be "sober" in one area while acting out in another. There can be no relief from the obsession of lust while still practicing the acts of lust in any form...

We stop feeding lust. We get rid of all the materials and other triggers under our control. We stop feeding lust through the eyes, the fantasy, and the memory. We stop relishing the language of lust, resentment, and rage. We stop living only and always inside our own heads. One of the fringe benefits of going to a lot of meetings is that it gets us out of ourselves.

As we become aware of other addictions that are part of our lives, we pray for willingness to surrender each one.

There can be no true recovery from addiction if we allow it to persist in any area, whether in our thinking or in our acting out.

What we are really saying when we start meeting with others is, "I have to stop; please help me."

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You might ask, "How is it possible to stop, if we are powerless over lust?" I'll try to offer a few approaches:

1. I can't stop ON MY OWN. When I reach out to other people for help, and when I reach out to G-d in prayer (soon enough and often enough), and through the tools of recovery, I will gain access to a power GREATER THAN MYSELF and THAT POWER will overcome the lust.
2. Also, when we try to FIGHT lust--to perhaps play with it without losing control, we ultimately can't win. We have to whole-heartedly make a firm decision to GIVE UP LUST. It's hard to explain; play with this awhile and you'll see.
3. Our ultimate goal in recovery is to become more aware of our perceptions and motives. It's hard to stop lusting when we're one click away from a porn site. As we become more aware, we realize that when I went to the computer to look at the news, I was really feeling weak against lust and it was just an excuse to drift over to porn. As we become more aware, we realize that our wife said something which offended us at breakfast, and so we're feeling unsettled, and so if we let this feeling simmer we're going to look at porn sometime within the next few days. We need to look out for all the events, and all the unpleasant feelings, which lead us to lust; deal with them, it's a lot easier. As we progress in recovery, we (usually) catch ourselves further and further away from the point of no return.
4. Recovery is a progressive battle over lust. Some people might be able to stop everything all of a sudden. But, I think for a lot of people, the struggle is more like this: We should strive for longer and longer periods of clean time. We should strive to refrain from the more obvious forms of acting out and, in time, work on the more subtle or more habitual behaviors. The main thing, though, is to ADMIT THAT ALL LUST IS DAMAGING. Even if right now you are clean from masturbation and pornography, but you can't stop yourself from looking at women on the street, ACCEPT that this is something you should strive to STOP ENTIRELY, although you are unable at the moment to refrain from this. And, try to make gradual, slow progress.

I think if people set their ideals too high at the beginning, and every little incident of lust is thought of as a huge fall, a person gets too discouraged and gives up the struggle.

On the other hand, if a person has a particularly difficult struggle giving up a particular behavior, such as watching "innocent" movies (with triggering scenes), and instead of admitting to the problem this person builds up a whole philosophy how watching movies is vital to his existence and absolutely impossible to do without and really there IS nothing wrong with movies (despite the triggering scenes) then, I think this person is going to spend a long time not getting very far in recovery. Despite the difficulties, a person can always find ways to make gradual progress. But to start, we have to admit to the problem.

I hope this has been helpful.

QUOTE FROM A MEMBER OF GYE: A couple of things you said from your last 2 posts resonated with me. I like many others here 'fought' with lust for years. I remember being clean for a few weeks and even a few months and then being in the check-out line at the grocery store and seeing the magazines on display. I would in my mind turn to Hashem and say 'it's not fair, I have been so good for a time, and

now you just put it right in front of me'. This stuff is everywhere. It's just not possible to be good.

I would 'struggle' not to look and that would start my mind turning. I would fight the lust or so I thought for a time until it overcame me. Perhaps even many days later, but I would struggle from that time that I was in line at the grocery store.

I think this is what Dov means when he says that the 'struggle' itself is toxic. I realized that viewing it as an epic struggle, set me up for failure. Now I (try to) not even give it the time of day. One day I was in line with all the shmutzy magazines. I immediately started texting someone from GYE. It kept my mind focused on something else entirely so I did not have to struggle. I could just chose to let go and not pay attention to it at all.

The same is true when I see someone on the street or in my office. Instead of thinking, "Oy vey, I really want to look, but can't," I just 'let go' and move on. I don't let the 'struggle' into my head. As long as I am 'struggling', I am in trouble.

ANOTHER QUOTE FROM A MEMBER OF GYE: If I am correct in my understanding, powerlessness means we are powerless to 'use' porn, fantasy, lust, whatever and then just hit the pause button and resume 'normal' life. Once we take a sip, it starts to eat at us and we eventually get to a point where we cannot stop, even when we 'want' to stop. A non-addict, can look at porn, then when it's time to do something else, they close the magazine or browser window etc. and go back to life. With us, it is an obsession. Once we start, we can't stop (except on very rare occasions).

We may stop for a short time to take care of something, but it's in our head already and we *will* almost always eventually act out, and even get into a pattern of acting out until somehow we snap out of that pattern for a short time. Then it's just a matter of time until the next trigger sets off the next lust attack and the process repeats itself.

29. Avoid all known triggers--people, places, and things

Take detours when necessary.

On this, I will also add an example of something less obvious that was a particularly difficult struggle for me: Watch out for that BIG MITZVAH (trigger in disguise)! Well, if I just call and say "Hi" (or send an E-mail) to so-and-so (girl from my class 20 years ago), it would be such a big *kiddush Hashem* that she knows I'm religious now. Just think--how often do you have these thoughts about the guys from your class? You can probably add your own examples.

30. Abstain from all mood-altering chemicals

This includes drugs and alcohol, and it also includes sugar and caffeine (for example), and probably also food colorings--they also alter one's mood.

The healthiest state of mind for a man of recovery is to have stable moods and stable emotions.

31. Avoid emotion-rocking activities

...such as roller coasters, other amusement rides, and horror movies, to name a few. (We could probably also add loud music, wherever it might be found).

Again, the healthiest state of mind for the addict is to have stable moods and stable emotions.

I find, for myself, when I read certain types of inspirational material (including certain types of chassidic writings) it also gets me flying high. I used to think it was a good thing, feeling all spiritual, almost seeing G-d with my own eyes! But, more recently, I see that it really throws me out of whack--giving me super highs, which are inevitably followed by drastic falls. I now try to avoid such material (or I water it down a lot for myself so I don't get all carried away); it may be fine and good for other people, but for me it is unhealthy and places my sobriety at risk.

I'll also add that heavy *mussar* (ethical writings), I have found for myself, is also unhealthy--likely to put me in a massive depression or to make me all paranoid or obsessive. Basically, throws me way off balance--which is a dangerous place to be.

32. Abstain from sugars and white flour

(Try it for 90 days and see the difference).

Interesting to realize that our addiction is not only fed by our state of mind, but also by our physical condition. The food we eat, and the care we take of ourselves physically, makes us more prone, or less prone, to act out.

Also, food and lust affect the same part of the brain. Men tend to gravitate towards the lust addiction (SA attendance is majority of men) whereas women tend to gravitate towards the food addiction (OA, as I understand, is majority of women).

So, when we're staying clean of lust, we might find ourselves substituting food for our original addiction. This is also unhealthy; it's an alternate pain killer. The goal of recovery is not just to stop lusting. The goal is to be free of the pain that drives us to lust; to live a happier and more content life. If we stop lusting, but we stay unhappy and discontent and then drown our misery in food, we have not recovered; we have merely switched addictions.

While I'm mentioning substitute addictions, I'll also add that our problem isn't just lust. Addicts are likely to display addictive behaviors in all their activities--spending lots of time in isolation doing activities that are imagined to be of the utmost importance (but at the expense of a real productive and fulfilling activities, and of time with real people--including one's wife and children). For example, general internet surfing for hours on end out of some sudden curiosity for some trivial and useless information which is probably never going to prove to be of any real use in your personal or professional life.

33. Write a Pornography-free certificate

Rid your house (and you computer) of pornography much the same way you would search ruthlessly for chometz and rid your house of it. Get rid of every trace of it, every hidden stash and every hidden file and every tiny lead (and all the E-mail addresses and phone numbers) you're holding onto "just in case you need it again someday for some good reason." Block every "innocent" website that you know you don't need but you're holding onto it just in case you need it someday for some reason (although it has caused you to slip and fall quite a few times--often we sense, deep down, THAT'S the real reason we can't let go).

Also, close up every loophole that you know of. We are smart enough to find these loopholes, don't think you can't find a way to block them, too.

Make sure that SOMEONE ELSE holds the passwords to your internet filter, etc. If you somehow discover them, admit to this immediately and have that other person change them.

Then, to make it all official, write a certificate "I certify that my house is a pornography-free zone," and give a copy to you sponsor.

34. Dump sexualized clothing

This may include those outfits which are more revealing, or just fancier or flashier. It may be pants and shirts, finely-tailored jackets, or other articles of clothing.

I would say, also, this may include particular types of clothing that your spouse wears that enhances your lust more than they enhance your relationship. This may include intimate apparel, certain Shabbos outfits, and even certain weekday outfits. Use finesse. But, our wives might be wearing certain clothes because of our approval, and even by our request. It might just be a matter of not putting in our requests.

On another point: I don't deal with this personally, but I can imagine that in a non-Jewish society, a wedding ring--particularly the lack of one, can also be included in this category. Although, there are lots of circles in Judaism in which the men do not wear wedding rings and such a practice would be met with opposition, if you are in such a circle and because of your lack of wedding ring the females you encounter all day long in the course of your job keep mistaking you as "available," it is probably advisable to wear a wedding ring and, I imagine that under such circumstances, the rabbis within such circles would even approve and even recommend wearing a wedding ring.

35. Know clearly: What is sex with self?

It is not just the obvious touching oneself. It includes anything arousing--whether it is something you look at, think about, listen to, read, write, or say. It also includes acting in any certain way that might be arousing.

36. Find yourself clean forms of entertainment

Make a point of enjoying your life.

37. TV and Movie abstinence

Lots of falls are caused by watching TV shows and movies.

38. Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?"

Recovery is about discovering our feelings. (We start out like a head on a stick). Once we put lust down (our "drug of choice" which is covering up our true emotions), then we discover them. At first we'll have withdrawal symptoms--all the hidden pain, fear, and resentments will come to the surface. After a while, things settle. After we pass through the withdrawal, then we start to discover the positive feelings which were also buried (when we hide the negative feelings, the positive ones automatically go into hiding with them).

Remember: All feelings are REAL, but not all feelings are VALID. We need to grow in our emotional intelligence; in our maturity. This happens when we identify our feelings, admit and acknowledge them, and share them. They'll move on if we let them. (Part of our sickness, I think, is feeling ashamed of our negative feelings rather than accepting them as a normal part of being human, and moving on. We are emotion perfectionists, which is unrealistic).

On the phone calls, Duvid Chaim says that our main goal in recovery is to "increase our awareness of our thoughts and motives." Lust is not really our problem; it is our solution--we use it to cover up emotional pain, fears, and resentments. As we grow in our awareness, we realize that it's not a big surprise when we feel trapped by lust. The journey to those particular web sites or to those particular activities started first when we were bored, searching the internet out of boredom, and one thing led to another.

But then, as our awareness grows even more, we realize that the problem wasn't really the boredom and searching the internet out of boredom. It was really fear and resentments from which we were trying to escape; emotional pain for which we sought pain-killer. We had a fight with our parents or with our wife, or we woke up late and our daily schedule was messed up, or we had a hard time on the job or in the beis medrish. We were feeling Restless Irritable, and Discontent, and those feelings festered for a while, dragging us down. Maybe it was hours, maybe it was days, and sometimes it was weeks. But, however long it lasts, it pulls us ever further down until we end up acting out.

But, as we increase our awareness of this process, we catch it earlier and earlier. We gain tools in recovery to recognize these feelings specifically, and to surrender them to other people and to G-d as soon as we notice them. Our struggle, in time, becomes more of a struggle with our fears and resentments than a struggle with lust (though lust stays with us, too).

I had a particularly stormy last few months, trying to stay even-keel, and getting thrown off-balance, after which I used the tools of the program to regain my equilibrium, after which I was thrown off-

balance again etc. Though this, I noticed a more subtle level of this struggle--the struggle to be calm and happy and content with life on life's terms. The struggle to be happy with all the things in life for which I have to be happy for, and to look forward to life's challenges (instead of dreading life's problems). It's not enough to be neutral, that's also a sign of sickness. There's so much to be grateful for and to look forward to, and an attitude like that is much healthier. It's preventative recovery. This is a new realization, and on days when I am thinking more clearly I manage to remember this and try to live up to it.

And, this is the story of my recovery in a nutshell.

39. Early to bed, early to rise

Most falls happen late at night. Go to bed early and avoid them!

My filter (K9) is set to block all internet access after midnight or something like that. My wife says, "If you're using the computer later than that, you're usually doing something you're not supposed to be doing." And, she's right.

Now it's time for the famous Acronym:

H.A.L.T.

Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired.

These are four things which often lead to a fall. Sometimes our feelings of Restlessness, Irritability, and Discontent, those negative emotions which drive us to act out, are caused by fears and resentments (and these are fueled by EGO--to be brief, we resent people and situations because they didn't go our way, and we fear the future because we're afraid it won't go our way). But sometimes we're feeling not so good simply because we have neglected to take care of our basic health. The solution then is much simpler if you remember this--sometimes we just need to go to sleep earlier or eat better.

If you have trouble falling asleep one remedy is to drink warm milk--it acts as a sedative.

Meditative deep-breathing exercises and muscle relaxation techniques can also be helpful.

40. Keep phone beside bed

...so if you suddenly need to call someone from the program (to avoid a fall) and you're feeling too lazy to get out of bed, you won't have any excuse.

41. International phone numbers

Have some phone numbers of people in different time zones so that if you happen to have a lust attack at 2am, you won't have any excuse not to call someone.

Through the Duvid Chaim phone calls, I got some numbers of people in different parts of the world. Also, you can exchange numbers with people in the forum. I think you can also get international phone numbers through SAICO@SA.ORG, the SA main office, but I'm not sure.

I have at times been spared a fall by sending a Private Message SOS to a bunch of people who showed up as ON-LINE on the forum; at least some of them responded quickly. (Not everyone who shows up as ON-LINE actually is; some people just didn't log off before shutting down their computer).

42. Healthy food

43. Moderate exercise

Again, sometimes we don't feel so good and are driven to act out simply because we have neglected to take care of our basic physical needs. Also, the GYE handbook has a whole section about physical activities which also describes the helpful hormones that are released through exercise.

On these and the other tools dealing with health and diet, where we might not reach perfection (I certainly don't), we should still value progress. If we can do with one less piece of cake, one less cup of coffee, a little more exercise, a little more rest, every bit makes a difference in our overall well-being.

44. Accountability or filtration software

Actually, both are recommended.

Now, a lot of people say, "If I'm in recovery, I'm supposed to be just fine even without any computer filters," quoting nothing less than the Big Book as a support. Another part of the program, however, is rigorous honesty. Do you REALLY need completely open internet access? Are you REALLY in such a strong place in recovery that you won't fall to temptation on, say, a bad day.

It took me a while to take that step and install a filter. I felt like I was losing part of myself--that ability to freely satisfy my curiosity on so many subjects that AREN'T porn related. I started off with a lower level of security. As time went on, I recognized that all my aimless searching the web for useless but interesting information was yet another manifestation of my addiction. I added more key-words to block on my filter, and more limitations.

Today I have it set to block all search engines, and my internet access shuts off at about midnight. If I REALLY need the internet to search for something (which, to be honest, I very rarely do) my wife has the password to the filter and she will open the filter for whatever time necessary.

The filter isn't a cure; it's just a safety net. I think after I installed my filter Guard wrote on my thread, "THAT'S THE FIRST STEP!" The MAIN battle is with the sex-obsession in my head (but this doesn't excuse me from taking precautions). That doesn't go away just because I put a filter on my computer. AND, in the heat of a major lust attack, the filter doesn't stop an addict from acting out; it just slows us down.

So, I have to regard my computer ALWAYS as if it is unfiltered, even though it is. Otherwise, with an

addict's mind, if something slips past the filter I'm likely to say, "Oh, that must be okay because the filter didn't block it." I've had some serious slips based on that crazy idea.

INTENSE EGO DEFLATION

45. Get out of self

This is difficult, but worthwhile. Take unselfish actions towards another person. For example, the next time you attend a bar mitzvah or some other function, look for the guy who is sitting there looking the most miserable and go sit down right next to him and say, "Hi, how are you!"

For me, I have found that an ability to be flexible and the ability to get out of self go together. I have to be able to put my plans and expectations and personal aspirations aside and be able to make room for other people and other people's needs in my life. I have to focus less on WHAT AM I GOING TO ACCOMPLISH and focus more on HOW CAN I BE OF SERVICE.

46. Practice rigorous honesty

Start with best buddies from your program of recovery. Be explicit with them (but don't be explicit at meetings or--for the forum, in a general post). Saying "Oh, I'm having a lust attack again," isn't quite as useful as admitting, "I've got this big urge to go to an internet cafe and do some unfiltered surfing and I can't believe I'm half-way there and my wife just thinks I'm staying late at work! I can't believe I've got such a strong drive to go through with this." For example.

"YOU'RE ONLY AS SICK AS YOUR SECRETS."

Also, when you can talk openly to program buddies about all this stuff that's REALLY on your mind and that you're REALLY thinking and feeling, I think it eventually it produces positive side-effects. I used to be scared to death to call particular people, especially particular relatives, because "I have no idea what to say." I would dial half the number, hang up, plan what I would say and try to figure out what they might say in response, and it would take at least fifteen minutes just to dial if I even managed to. As I have been able to be honest and earnest with program buddies about my sickness, and I have been able to just pick up a phone and say, "Hi I just need to check in with someone right now," and not be scared to death how the conversation will unravel, I have become more honest and earnest about keeping up a normal conversation with other people. Also, in mid conversation, in the past, I would often get this feeling like my brain had just short-circuited. I don't get that feeling so much anymore.

Also, I recently passed through a whole series of job interviews for a particular job. Instead of feeling frightened and intimidated, I actually enjoyed the experience of talking with all these people. I am sure this change of attitude is a result of recovery.

I think being honest with people is a huge part of our healing process. We see that we can be open with people and they won't kill us for it. To the contrary, they often appreciate it and even reciprocate; we

start to build real relationships with real human beings. We re-gain our trust in people which we somehow lost somewhere along the way for some reason. We can put down that defense mechanism which we once needed for survival but has really been hurting us more than it has been helping us: "Don't talk... Don't trust... Don't feel."

A word of caution about this rigorous honesty:

There's this tendency among addicts once we're really far along in recovery--like after about 3 days clean, our longest clean streak since we hit puberty, to finally spill all the beans to our wives; to finally stop hiding and tell her everything we've ever done since we were six, and everything we've ever thought, and just how hard it is to keep our minds off all the other women in the street, and to admit just how out of control we are about these crazy fantasies in our heads, and to cough up the truth about all the porn we've ever looked at and all the masturbation we've ever done, and that we were heading straight to jail or to die a horrible death from some horrible disease, but thank G-d we found out just in the nick of time and now we're in recovery and working a solid program (and aren't you proud of me!)... but dear wife, of course you understand it's nothing personal---I've got a sickness, an addiction, it's not my fault at all and there's nothing I could do about it, and of course I love you, etc.

But, too much disclosure too soon to the wife DOES FAR MORE DAMAGE THAN IT DOES ANY GOOD!

As you move along in recovery and have significant clean time, and really start to change inside, and really start to become more patient and more considerate and more helpful towards your wife, she will appreciate it. Just clean up your side of the street without any gory confessions to your wife, and she will notice that something has changed and she will appreciate it without knowing any specifics.

I don't understand how people, because they're afraid their wives will find out, can't manage to make the Duvid Chaim 12-step calls, or attend SA meetings, or even post regularly on GYE. Yet, these same people spent hours and hours and hours doing all sorts of things that their wives shouldn't know about--and somehow they managed to do it without that same worry.

YET, if this is your problem, it might be necessary to tell your wife the BAREST MINIMUM in order to get some breathing space to get yourself into a recovery program. Be creative, and don't be too specific, and ask G-d for help; you'll think of some way to do it without scaring your wife. SPEAK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT FIRST--SOMEONE WHO IS MUCH FURTHER ALONG IN RECOVERY THAN YOU ARE.

If you are not yet married, I think all the above may apply instead to you and your parents--especially if you are still living under the same roof.

47. Talk in detail to sponsor

48. What am I not telling my sponsor?

Ask yourself this question and then, whatever it is you have been reluctant to tell your sponsor, TELL HIM!

You might ask, "How is this any different than rigorous honesty with program buddies?"

I think the difference is as follows: Since the sponsor, even more than program buddies, is someone who guides you through the steps of recovery, and since one's relationship with one's sponsor is probably more regular than one's relationship to program buddies, then disclosure to one's sponsor usually is more humbling than disclosure to other program buddies because it carries with it a much higher level of accountability and follow-up work.

49. Over my dead body--what's mine?

What's that one thing we're not willing to change--that one thing that we can't give up or even think of doing for the sake of recovery. THIS is what's preventing your recovery. DO IT!

I can't make those Duvid Chaim phone calls because that's BED TIME for the kids and my wife can't manage without me!

I can't go to that SA meeting because I can't possibly miss my evening *seder*!

I'll never speak to so-and-so again even if I really ought to make amends with him.

I'll never step foot in their house ever again no matter what!

I really need to attend meetings but I can't because it's in a church basement.

I can't go to meetings because someone might recognize me there!

...for example.

And, I'll add, a lot of these things which hold us back in recovery, ironically, are of no concern whatsoever when we're in pursuit of our addiction.

50. Am I done with lust?

Decide. Are you done yet?

51. Am I in or out of SA (or GYE, for the forum)?

Are you a full participant, or just a spectator? Do you just show up once in a while, or are you a regular? Be of service, and make it a priority.

52. Openness

Inside and outside need to be the same.

How is this different than "rigorous honesty" mentioned above? I think the answer is as follows:

"Rigorous honesty" means not to withhold my dark secrets from my program buddies and from my sponsor. Now, besides that, addicts tend to suffer from schizophrenia--on one hand we're an honored and respected member of our shul and community (and believing that we are), but on the other hand we're sitting around looking at porn and masturbating and feeling like dirt (and also believing that we are). This confuses us and causes a lot of angst.

Yet, there's a more subtle form of schizophrenia I think addicts suffer from, if my own experience is at all typical. We tend to be grandiose; in other words, we blow our perception of ourselves and of reality out of proportion. We can't just learn Torah for a *seder* or two each day; we immediately imagine ourselves to be the next *Gadol HaDor* in the making. We can't just work and earn a respectable living and be happy with that; we immediately imagine ourselves to be the world's best at whatever we are doing. We cannot accept ourselves for who we are; we cannot accept--or perhaps even perceive, our actual limitations. We are paranoid to reveal any weaknesses to others (because even though we may have weaknesses, we don't really want to believe that we do, and we certainly don't want anyone else to believe that we do). So, we believe ourselves to be much more than we really are. And, we portray ourselves to be much more than we really are.

Imagining ourselves to be what we are not--more than what we are, ironically, I think is a major source of low self-esteem. We NEVER accomplish what we IMAGINE we are supposed to; we can't, because it's not realistically within our capabilities. Yet, we don't admit this, so we are forever disappointed and depressed.

But when we can be honest with ourselves ABOUT ourselves, and then when we can be OPEN with other people about who we REALLY are, when we can accept our limitations, when we can see our TRUE capabilities honestly and live life accordingly, then FEAR that other people will discover our faults DISAPPEARS. ANGER at ourselves for not amounting to MORE and MORE disappears.

This ANGER and FEAR about such a crucial point--our identity, is a huge source of that Restlessness, Irritability, and Discontent (RID) which causes us so much pain and drives us so often to our pain-killer drug of choice, to acting out. When we rid ourselves of THIS RID, we can be happy in our own skin. And, this happens to be very good for our recovery.

COMMENT FROM MEMBER OF GYE FORUM: I think you may have just uncovered a riddle for me. Dr Sorotzkin talks about people with low self-esteem needing to have a feeling of grandiosity as a counter balance. The lower the self-esteem, the higher the feeling of grandiosity.

He illustrates this by telling about a patient that had the lowest self-esteem he has ever seen. One day the patient reveals that he sometimes feels he is higher than G-d himself. The patient expected the doctor to be surprised. Little did he know that the doctor was not surprised in the least and was actually expecting the patient to say something like that!

What I haven't quite understood is the play between feelings of low self worth and feelings of grandiosity. Maybe I still don't. But something you said struck a chord. You said that our grandiose feelings lead to our low self-esteem. If we believe we are greater than we actually are, we feel low when we fall short (which is inevitable due to our unrealistic standards).

I think it may actually be a circle. Feelings of inferiority are unbearable to us, so we start imagining that we are greater than we actually are, which leads to failure since we are not in reality on the level that we "imagine". That failure leads to feeling even lower, which makes us imagine that we are yet higher.... and the circle continues... until the bubble bursts and we are forced to confront the fact that we are quite ordinary.

Once we accept that REALITY - we begin to accept ourselves - our plain ordinary lowly selves. Living with reality, and accepting ourselves as we are, is the key to proper self-esteem.

Am I making any sense?

The basic idea is that if we can accept the **truth** about ourselves - we have the key to self-esteem. Maybe that's why admitting the truth about ourselves to someone safe - is the key to recovery? It just isn't real until we can openly admit it. As long as it's safely locked in our own heads, it just isn't real.

So *really* it's simply a matter of **truth vs fantasy**.

Thank you. I'm glad that was helpful.

One thing I should also add--we have to appreciate that the TRUTH about ourselves, that we do learn Torah and have a certain proficiency in learning and manage to learn whatever amount and on whatever level we do, and that we do have a job and are earning an income and are supporting a family (or that we don't have a job but that may be beyond our control and we are being responsible and resourceful enough to at least keep on looking for employment) IS STILL SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF AND HAPPY ABOUT! It's okay we're not the *Gadol HaDor* or the richest person alive.

53. Ask for feedback

Check out your ideas and opinions with other human beings. We addicts tend to live entirely inside our own head. We devise plans and believe them to be flawless; of course we will be successful if we follow these plans. This is true regarding our efforts specifically to recover from lust, and it is true regarding our efforts to deal with life in general. I know that I have had some plans that I thought were great, but even just by SHARING these plans with other people (even before they say anything) I get this funny feeling like I'm not exactly thinking straight. Talking things out with another person has that power. Thinking things in your head, for some reason, doesn't.

54. Ask for reality checks

This is similar to the previous tool, but I think it relates more to your perception of others. "I've got this feeling that you're avoiding me, is that true?" (This tool is especially for program buddies. With extra tact, it's a good tool to use for life in general--Or, to be safer, tell a program buddy "I've got this feeling my kid hates me; do you think this is true?").

55. Willingness

For the sake of recovery, this is synonymous with "obedience." Be willing to follow a program (in other words, discussing the steps and trying to understand them is not DOING them! DOING them is DOING them.) Are you willing to follow instructions? Are you really willing to change? Or, as Duvid Chaim often puts it, "Are you coachable?"

56. Do what I don't want to do

This builds character. Perhaps you need to work for an employer instead of being self-employed. Take a cold shower instead of a hot one. Etc.

Notice that feeling you get every time your wife (or parents or anyone) asks for help--sort of like the feeling you get when someone scratches a chalkboard with their fingernails. THAT'S a good indication that you just found something that you don't want to do, and an opportunity to do it.

57. Clean the toilet

This is in line with the previous tool, but very specific and particularly humbling. You know when you enter a public restroom and you avoid that first stall because it's wet or messy? Well, go in there and take a huge wad of toilet paper and clean it up.

If you're not on that madreiga yet, take a couple of paper towels and dry off the wet counter by the sink.

This tool is also applicable in your own home; don't leave that mess for other people to clean up (especially when YOU'RE the one who made that mess!).

58. Pray out loud

This is not referring to the *shmonei esrei*, it is referring to spontaneous prayer--and often, in your own words. It need not be anything formal or anything complex. A simple, "I'm powerless, please G-d help me," will do.

59. Read the "Litany of Humility," (a prayer for humility)

which is as follows:

=====
From the desire of being esteemed,
Dear G-d deliver me.
From the desire of being loved...
From the desire of being extolled...
From the desire of being honoured...
From the desire of being praised...
From the desire of being preferred to others...
From the desire of being consulted...
From the desire of being approved...

From the fear of being humiliated...
Dear G-d deliver me.
From the fear of being despised...
From the fear of suffering rebukes...
From the fear of being calumniated...
From the fear of being forgotten...
From the fear of being ridiculed...
From the fear of being wronged...
From the fear of being suspected...

That others may be loved more than I,
Dear G-d, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be esteemed more than I...
That, in the opinion of the world,
others may increase and I may decrease...
That others may be chosen and I set aside...
That others may be praised and I unnoticed ...
That others may be preferred to me in everything...
That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should...

ON THE STREET

60. Take a different road to avoid triggers

Sometimes when there is an attractive woman on the street and I have a possible detour in front of me I think, "If I take a detour, I'm just going to see another woman on that street, so what's the use!" Ever get that thought? But, in the end of the day there's a DEFINITE trigger in front of us, and what we may find on the next street is yet UNCERTAIN. I think, when we take the action to avoid a DEFINITE trigger NOW, we get extra *siyata d'shmaya* to help us not to look at the trigger on the other road should there

happen to be one.

Sometimes instead of taking a whole other road, all you have to do is cross over to the other side of the street to avoid walking directly behind someone who is a trigger.

61. The SA (or GYE) salute

This is a salute where, instead of having your hand sticking out like a visor, you have it down in front of your eyes--like you're saying the *Shema*. If you feel too silly doing this, what I do sometimes is rub my temples (that's the sides of my head) with my thumb and index finger as if I am suddenly suffering from a major headache--the rest of my hand covers my eyes.

62. Custody of the eyes

Through practice (and lots of it), we should be able to keep our eyes down instead of letting them dart all over--looking at everything and everyone. But, it takes lots of practice and, for me, I think this has been one of the hardest struggles. I will add: it's important to keep things in perspective--if you used to look at porn and masturbate every day, and now you've got significant clean time from that, don't consider yourself a failure in recovery because you are having trouble controlling your eyes on the street.

I had a realization lately--I'm not lusting just when I'm looking at a female in the street; the lusting has already begun if my eyes are up looking down the street--why else am I looking up if not to see who's there? When I remember this, it makes it easier to keep my eyes down.

63. Paving stones and rooftops

This tool goes along with the previous one. What do you look at on the street? Develop an appreciation for different types of paving stones (sidewalk bricks) and sometimes it's helpful to look way up instead of looking down, and you can gain an appreciation for rooftops.

64. Flick your eyes to the top left

(I.e., look up to the top left for a second). This is supposed to be some sort of weird neurological maneuver which helps break fantasies. I think the next tool is the same idea...

65. Shake your head

66. Snap the elastic band

Wear an elastic band and flick yourself with it whenever you catch yourself looking at something or thinking about something that you're not supposed to be looking at or thinking about.

I did this for a while but stopped because, for me, I thought it was too intense--got me too focused all the time on what I was thinking. I think I went overboard. I suppose, if I didn't go overboard, it could have been more helpful.

Also, you don't have to flick yourself hard enough to bleed; just enough to give yourself an unpleasant feeling.

I think there is supposedly some deep psychological ideas behind this tool. I think it's supposed to be creating pain associations with looking at women and thinking about them to replace the pleasure associations which we have been living with for so long.

67. Don't breath through your nose

Sometimes this is necessary to avoid triggering fragrances that are in the vicinity. Also, if there are triggering sounds (like if you're sitting in a bus right in front of a young woman who is talking on her cell phone in French--and there are no other seats available), an MP3 player comes in handy. Or, you might need to stick your fingers in your ears and hum a tune.

68. "G-d, may I find in You what I'm looking for in that woman (etc.)"

(This and the next few tools are a few short prayers to say to help you against lust on the street.)

And, really ask yourself, "WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR IN THAT WOMAN?" Security? Pleasure? Acceptance? Attention? What is it for you? And, ask to find THAT in Hashem instead.

69. "G-d, take away my lust. I pray for her (etc.)"

Pray for that woman to have whatever it is you're seeking in life--good health, success, peace of mind, etc. Again, ask yourself, "What is it I am seeking in life?"

70. "G-d, please take away this image (or fantasy)"

As we mentioned earlier, in tool #1, for these prayers to be most effective, the earlier you catch yourself, the better. Turn to Hashem when you first catch yourself lusting (or even preventatively before you leave the house) instead of after you've been staring at some woman for ten minutes who has been walking in front of you down the street. Also, it's helpful to repeat these little prayers lots of times.

Also, with these prayers, the point is to SINCERELY turn towards Hashem, surrender our lust to Him (we

ask Him to remove it from us and to help us let go of it; we are not asking Him to give us the power to fight it), AND we try to change our attitude (with G-d's help) to think of that woman (etc.) as a human being instead of a sex toy. I find, when I keep this in mind, these prayers are helpful. When I expect some sort of results just by rattling them off, I find it doesn't help much.

What do you do if you, at times, find that you WANT to look? You don't really want to let go?

Then, ask G-d to help you WANT to let go of lusting.

71. Bookend risky situations

Call your sponsor (or a program buddy) before and after a risky situation. State what you are about to do, what your intent is, and then afterwards you report how it went.

DECISION MAKING

72. What's my next right action?

Ask yourself this question throughout the day, instead of running all day based on habit or impulse. And the LAST right action you can do is to go to bed early.

73. Rushing is not sober

Sober is peaceful and serene; you can let things happen on G-d's time instead of trying to squeeze instant results out of life the way that you and your ego would like them to happen.

If I remember correctly, I think I read once in a footnote to "*Even Shleima*" (by the Vilna Goan), to paraphrase: The *yeitzer tov* is calm, whereas the *yeitzer hara* can be recognized because it is accompanied by a burning sense of urgency.

74. What would my sponsor do?

This and the next tool are questions to ask yourself.

75. What would my sponsor say?

After a while you get a feel for this. For the forum, you might be able to ask yourself, "What would Dov say?"

But, if you actually CAN ask your sponsor, don't rely on your own opinion of what they might say.

76. Take an action of love

"We can't think our way into right acting, but we can act our way into right thinking."
--AA slogan, if I'm not mistaken.

Or, "You can't heal a sick mind with a sick mind."

The more we THINK about what's wrong, the more we try to analyze ourselves, the more we try to figure out the cause of our lust or of our bad mood--especially all on our own, generally the WORSE things get.

But, when we make an effort and take an action to do something helpful, considerate, and unselfish, it can often put us into a better place mentally, too. It doesn't have to be something dramatic--like donating a kidney. Even a small action (and, perhaps, especially a small action) will do the job.

And, you probably all know the famous statement of the Sefer HaChinuch, to paraphrase, "Our thoughts follow after our actions." We might not be able to control our thoughts, but we can control our actions (much more easily), and THROUGH THAT we can control our thoughts.

77. If I can't reach my sponsor, the answer is "no"

And a similar tool...

78. If in doubt, leave it out

These are guiding principles for those questions where we think we have good motives, but perhaps our deeper motive is LUST. Should I send an E-mail to that girl I used to know? (It will be such a big *kiddush Hashem* that she knows I'm religious now and learning Torah!)

Also, this is a good tool for life in general. The addiction usually comes along with a host of other destructive emotions and tendencies--Especially anger and resentment, which makes us inclined to be argumentative, selfish, and even cruel. Should I hurl that insult? Should I send that nasty letter? Should I finally criticize my wife about the way she makes the *chollent* (of course I'll say it nicely)--just to name a couple of examples.

If you're not sure, leave it out. Sleep on it, or better yet--give it a week and see if you still feel like writing that letter or putting in that complaint.

Ignoring things, however, is also harmful. Through recovery I have learned new, healthy, and mature ways to deal with such emotions without wreaking havoc in my life (basically, steps 4-9 if done with the guidance of someone who has taken this path before).

79. Always have a plan, and use it

We do better when we have a plan. We need a plan for our day, and for our sobriety. Stick to your plan, unless G-d has other ideas for you.

I spent a long time thinking that, because I was on the Duvid Chaim calls, that I'm "doing the steps," I'm in recovery, and I'm sober. The truth is, unless I'm doing the steps, I'm not in recovery. If I'm feeling anger or fear inside (which will eventually lead me to act out) I now have a set plan how to deal with it (basically steps 4 through 9). If that doesn't work, I know I have to go back to the beginning (check out that steps 1 through 3 are in order). If I don't follow that plan, I know I am not following my program of recovery.

If I have a general plan for my day, I will end up, and the end of the day, with less regrets, and with a greater sense of accomplishment. This is very conducive to sobriety.

GOOD ATTITUDES

80. Abstinence from lust is the most important thing in my life without exception.

This includes family, career, and even religion. Without sobriety, we will lose all of it.

"Good attitudes," can also be thought of as affirmations you can tell yourself. Think about it: We easily believe that we are worthless good-for-nothings because "That's what my parents told me over and over again." Was it true? No. But we believe the constant criticism, though it was false, was able to shape the way we view ourselves and the way we act (or fail to act) throughout life. Basically, it's propaganda, "Tell someone a lie enough times, they'll believe it."

Now, THIS WORKS FOR THE POSITIVE, TOO! Why not! And, WE DON'T HAVE TO BELIEVE the message we are telling ourselves, either! Just pick some positive messages to tell yourself, and keep telling them to yourself over and over again. Don't analyze whether you believe it or not. Don't spend time philosophizing about WHY you don't believe it, and HOW you can get yourself to MAYBE believe it at least a little bit. If you do any of that, if you wrestle with the positive attitudes, IT BACKFIRES, and only reinforces the negative messages. Just TELL it to yourself, over and over again. Be WILLING to believe it--no matter how unbelievable it may be to you right now. Don't THINK about it much. Little by little, it sinks in. And, as you are trying to undo 20 or 30 or more years of previous negative programming, you need to give the new attitudes a while to sink in. However, improvements, small change, will probably be noticeable already without waiting too long.

81. All hits are toxic; I refuse them

If we fall short in avoiding triggers--especially the more subtle ones, it is still better to acknowledge that we are harming ourselves rather than to rationalize that such hits (like looking at tznus women in the streets) are really okay. Also, keep things in perspective--if you are now 10 day clean from looking at

pornography (your longest streak so far), don't go paranoid that you can't stop looking at women in the streets. We strive for a progressive victory over lust.

82. I won't act out--no matter what

Be prepared for when the urge strikes: Make sure you have an arsenal of recovery tools--such as a list of phone numbers, a list of activities that help you sober up, writing exercises (perhaps), etc.

And, I can't emphasize this enough--keep track of the activities and even the thoughts and moods that PRECEED a lust attack. Keep a look out for THOSE; it's easier to cheer yourself up from a bad mood than to walk away from your computer when you're one click away from porn (and feeling compelled to look at it). In this way you can catch yourself hours, or days, and sometimes weeks before that fully-fledged lust attack strikes.

83. It's none of my business

Or, SHE'S none of my business

A lot of our looking around is fueled by curiosity--I MUST know who's out there! Oh! Maybe there's somebody I know and I'll miss him and he'll think I'm rude! And, a bit less innocent, "Maybe there's some woman out there really worth looking at and I'll miss the chance!" Then, when she's there on the street, our mind starts churning, "Who is she? What does she do?" etc, etc.

So, we must remind ourselves, "It's none of my business."

84. Who I am is none of my business

Our sickness is one of self-obsession, of ego. A lot of our restlessness, irritability, and discontent is fueled because we are always worrying about ourselves--what am I supposed to be? Am I fulfilling my potential? Am I making the grand contribution to my community and to all of mankind that I am certain G-d intended for me to make? Constant introspection and self-analysis. And, how do I FEEL about being a computer programmer, or a traffic cop? Is it right for me? Is it the proper use of my talents? When am I ever going to make something of myself!

I used to think all this was a sign of my superior intelligence; a byproduct of being multi-talented, and also exceptionally self-aware. But really, it is a sign of my sickness. It is self-obsession. It's also a waste of time.

Recovery is about self-forgetting. Turn to Hashem and to other people to be of service with unselfishness.

We need not be concerned about ourselves besides, "What is the next right step?"

COMMENT MEMBER OF GYE FORUM: Yup, reading my mind again. One of my personal favorites is

looking to see if there is *ervah* so I can make a *bracha*. Can't make it in front of *ervah*, right? Must look around to make sure.

Then there's the "I can't believe that frum woman is dressed like that". Take a look and shake head (at least in my mind), how terrible. Take a second look so I can really look down upon her and wonder "does she have any idea how *untzniyus* she is".

As the great Bards says - SHE'S NOT MY PROBLEM.

Also works on the internet... I can't believe a picture of THAT just popped up! So I have to look again to make sure it was really what I thought it was.

85. Bring reality into situations

Frankly, I don't remember the point of this one. If I would guess, I think it means something like this, for example: We somehow have some dream that, if only we could attain the object of our fantasy, we'd have a perfect life with her. That woman looks so attractive, and we can imagine nothing else other than having a pleasurable experience and a happy life with her.

Now, realize, she is a human being just like you are a human being. She has her needs and demands, and shortcomings. Perhaps, in truth, she's a big snob. Or maybe she's so shallow that it gives you a headache to talk to her (but she is also a non-stop talker). Maybe, if you'd ever speak to her, you'd find out that she talks through her nose and every word she says gives you the feeling like someone is running their fingernails on a chalkboard (remember those?). Maybe she nags and whines all the time. Is she married? Perhaps with children? In your fleeting fantasy you imagine some fleeting and ideal romantic interlude, but in reality, you might end up getting stuck responsible for a huge family (not to mention still being responsible for the one you lost, G-d forbid, in the process). Or, you imagine making some sort of pass at some lady, but in reality the police might get involved and you might end up in jail. Or, you might end up with some sort of disease.

Rav Avigdor Miller *tz"l* says that second marriages are always worse than the first. The second wife not only has her own shortcomings, but she also doesn't have all the qualities of the first wife.

Also, I don't remember where I heard this, "If she'll cheat WITH you, she'll cheat ON you."

Just a couple of ideas. These are the types of ideas that, when we begin our struggle, we think ought to be enough to keep us sober all by themselves. They do help some, but they don't take the place of a full program of recovery.

COMMENT FROM GYE FORUM MEMBER: I'm sorry, but I never understand these you-won't find-fulfillment-with-her ideas.

RESPONSES TO ABOVE COMMENT:

The point is just to get our head out of fantasy-land into reality-land. It's a tool to realize that if we ever, G-d forbid, realized our fantasies they wouldn't be nearly as great as we imagine.

This lady REALLY HAS NO INTEREST IN SLEEPING WITH YOU, no matter how beautiful you think she is, and no matter how much pleasure you imagine you can get out of her, she finds you totally unattractive, and perhaps repulsive (No offense). You can imagine all the fantasies you want, but it's not reciprocal in the least bit. She doesn't want to sleep with you, and she really doesn't even want to look at you either! If you would even try to make some sort of pass at her, she might spit on you, run away, scream, and even call the police. That's the reality.

Does that do anything for you?

The next few tools are along the same lines as "bring reality into the situation":

86. No one is flirting with me

87. No one is lusting after me

88. This is not a sexual situation

Another variation is, "That woman is not dressed up like that because she wants you to look at her."

As lust addicts, we tend to interpret practically everything as having sexual significance. The truth is, most of the things we think are sexual, really aren't.

I had a big realization with this especially in marriage. I would always think my wife was trying to get flirtatious, and then I would act on that, and at the end of the day my wife would get all upset.

"But YOU started it!" I would say.

NO I DIDN'T! All I did was...

Yeah, but that was flirtatious!

NO it wasn't! I was just...

89. Only a sick person would respond to my lustful advances

Or ask yourself: have you ever had a healthy relationship with a healthy person as a result of a lustful advance?

A normal person isn't obsessed with sex, thinking about having sex all the time with anyone they might meet. It's not normal; it's sick.

I'll share a story, which I have found that other sexaholics seem to have a similar experience in their past (feel free to share your own story!): When I was a teen-ager, I went to a (non-Jewish) friend's new guest-house for a weekend. The previous owner had left a stack of pornographic magazines in the basement, and the basement had not yet been cleaned up yet. I expected that we would spend a good part of the week-end in that basement with those magazines. My friend did show me those magazines, we looked at them together for a little while, BUT THEN HE LEFT. He was done! I actually felt embarrassed to try and look at those magazines any more--I felt like my friend thought something was wrong with me.

90. Sex is only a small part of any real relationship

I used to think it was normal that I judged my marriage solely on how often we had sex, and on how it went, and on how soon we were likely to have sex again. That's not normal, it's sick.

91. Clean and Sober

Clean means free of lust. Sober means technical sobriety which, according to SA, means no sex with self or with any partner other than one's spouse. And, this is a topic of much controversy, as the GYE definition also includes not looking at pornography. (Still, viewing pornography is definitely not encouraged by SA).

However, I have seen people in SA who have brought their bottom line up and include looking at pornography (or similar activities) as a fall. I have also seen people on GYE who were so steeped in all sorts of acting out that their bottom line was much lower and I don't think they would have improved at all otherwise. Consult with your sponsor (or with Guard); don't decide such matters on your own.

But, I think a person has to reach a clear decision about his bottom line, and stick to it whatever it may be. I have heard people rattle off a long list of sobriety dates, "Five years since prostitutes, two years since masturbation, nine months since chat-rooms, and six hours since porn." (I am exaggerating slightly). If I were not able to admit the falls I have had, as difficult as they were to admit, I would not have continued onward with a stronger sobriety. I would have just kept playing games, deceiving myself, thinking that if I keep on doing XY or Z, it REALLY is alright. It's not alright, it was a fall; I have to re-set my date and if I ever do it again I'm going to have to re-set my date again. I am forced to work all the harder at recovery (to rely ever more on my Higher power and on the fellowship of recovery).

And, even if one continues to fall, look at the progress--I managed to stay clean LONGER this time

(because I was working on myself and my attitudes and because I was relating to my Higher Power and to other fellows in recovery). We may make mistakes, but just try not to make the same mistake twice. Figure out what went wrong--what was lacking in your recovery program, and try to add it to your life from now on.

92. Attitude of gratitude

This can include such exercises as making gratitude lists, and reviewing them daily. Also, listen to yourself throughout the day; How often do you complain? How often do you express gratitude? Try to complain less, and express gratitude more. The way we talk will eventually change the way we think.

Being sad and depressed feeds our addiction; it gives us an excuse to escape reality. Also, we often blow things out of proportion. But, in truth, we often have quite a lot going for us; and a lot of opportunities in front of us if only we look for them. I think the biggest thing we have to be grateful for is our ability to make new life choices from now on, and our ability to choose the way we think--we can choose to think more positive about ourselves (and about other people) and about life. (Yes, of course, all this with G-d's help, and with the help of associating with the right people. We can't really do it on our own, but with help we can do it).

I'll add: Actually, I hate when people tell me, "Just look at the bright side!" etc.

On the other hand, we do have the power to change our attitudes. I think that in order to acquire a new attitude, we need to acquire a new attitude that is plausible to us. We may have those moments of sudden inspiration, but they often fade just as quickly. Those gradual changes are what last. We might not be able to change dark to light overnight, but we can shift through lighter and lighter shades of grey. Progress. Eventually, we become able to see a bright side to everything. I'll admit that I'm still working on this myself.

93. Easy does it

I think part of the addictive personality is that we obsess about almost everything we do. Where are we exerting ourselves--trying to force results. And, where are we over-doing things? (I want to recover, and I want to recover NOW!). A sober mindset, I think, is one of patience. Also, I think a sober mindset is to do whatever we can for today, and be able to leave the rest unfinished for tomorrow. Time takes time.

94. One day at a time

This, in its simplest sense, means "don't act out just for today." It's easier to think of not acting out for one day rather than trying not to act out from now on for the rest of my life. At times, we need to think of even smaller increments--one hour at a time, one minute at a time, and sometimes even one second at a time.

In another sense, "one day at a time" means this: Remember, our acting out is really a SOLUTION, albeit

a self-destructive one. We are trying to escape the pain of our restlessness, irritability, and discontent with life--in particular, our resentments and our fears. Resentments is when we are dwelling on the past--what people did or said to us, or what happened. Fears is living in the future--afraid what people will do to me or say to me, or afraid of what will happen to me tomorrow.

I heard a poem which I don't know if I am quoting correctly:

Yesterday is history
Tomorrow is a mystery
All we have is today--
That's why it's called "the present."

One day at a time means to live in the present; to deal with today and only today, because that is the only thing that is within our power. It means to let go of those resentments--what's done is done. And it means to let go of those fears--there is nothing we can do, today, about tomorrow.

I think I heard once (even if I didn't hear it, I think it makes sense): Hashem gives us the Divine Assistance to cope with whatever challenges He gives us, AND He doesn't give us any challenges that we can't overcome. When we dread tomorrow, when we are overwhelmed with fear of the future, it is because we are thinking about a test WHICH WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED YET, or we perhaps will never have to face--therefore, we have not yet been given the Divine Assistance to cope with it.

I may have said this before, and I might say it again, but it's worth repeating:

FEAR=False Evidence Appears Real.

Regarding resentments: even if someone honestly did hurt us and we really did not play any part in it--the FIRST time it happened THEY hurt US. Every time we re-live the pain by re-playing the episode in our minds--WE are hurting OURSELVES. (We're letting these people to keep on living, rent-free, in our heads).

This is somewhat related to something mentioned above:

A lot of people have low self-confidence problems, and they seem to never be able to over-come them. The reason is because their self-image is based on lies: "I'll never be successful, I'm not good at anything, I'm worthless."

So, you can't ever find a solution to a problem which doesn't really exist!

I think there was more to it, but that's all I remember right now.

95. Keep it simple

This applies to our program of recovery. The 12 steps are "A simple program of recovery." Simple, but not easy. There's an AA slogan, "The 12 steps are a simple program of recovery for complicated people."

(I think I risk being cross-referenced again).

It's not supposed to be COMPLICATED to recover.

However, it's hard to let go of our self-deceit. I think, a litmus test for us, if something has to be explained or justified, it is probably wrong.

We are equally as dishonest, in that same sophisticated and complex way, in placing blame on others.

I had a *maggid shiur* once, and I noticed that whenever a *talmid* answered a question--the longer the *talmid* kept talking, the more the *maggid shiur's* face twisted and contorted. I was in that *shiur* for a couple of years. And the most important thing I learned is--if something is long-winded, it is probably wrong. If something is short and simple and straightforward, there's a chance it is correct.

"Keep it simple," is not only about recovery and a test for self-deceit. It should also be our approach to life. As addicts, we tend to over-complicate things. For example, we have intricate plans and dreams about how we are going to deal with life--what we need to improve our relationship with our wife and children, and especially how we are going to earn a living. The more complicated our ideas, most likely, the more out-of-touch with reality we are. We need to think "what is my next right step," rather than building up giant structures of fantasy and imagination.

When you're only thinking one step ahead, you can't be THAT far off!

I have spent about 15 years trying to be self-employed. I have changed from one profession to another (and back again), I have made all sorts of plots and schemes, both to improve my work and also to design winning advertising campaigns. Now, however, I am looking for a simple job in a simple office where I can just go to work in the morning, go home at night, and get paid at the end of the week (or whatever). Is that the ideal job? No. But it's the next right, and simple, step. After I actually have an income to speak of, I can work on improving things from there. I can take life one step at a time.

96. This, too, shall pass

When in distress, we want to act out because we feel there is no other way to relieve our pain. Or we feel this "urge" is never going to go away unless we act out. Often, after no more than a good night's sleep, we feel less in the grips of lust, or we feel somehow more hopeful about our circumstances. Sometimes it may take longer.

I read in a sefer by Rebbi Tzaddok (it was probably Tzidkas HaTzadik), that just as there is an appointed time for the ultimate redemption and, no matter what, when this time arrives the redemption will come, so too regarding our suffering and redemption on a personal level. Every thing we suffer from, no matter how small or how large, had a time set for the beginning of that suffering, and there is a time set for the suffering to end. No matter what. And, just as the Jewish people as a whole, if we are worthy, can bring about the ultimate redemption before this appointed time, so too, if an individual is worthy, he can bring about a personal redemption before its appointed time.

97. Three thinks is the limit

Don't obsess. Instead, take some constructive action.

This is a general tool for our approach to life. (Disclaimer: it was not a license to think about women, or other triggers, 3 times).

98. Let go and let G-d

Here's a quote from the Big Book (pp 60-62), which I think is appropriate here:

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Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show: is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wishes, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements our actor may sometimes be quite virtuous. He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self-sacrificing. On the other hand, he may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest. But, as with most humans, he is more likely to have varied traits.

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. He begins to think life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself some more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him. Admitting he may be somewhat at fault, he is sure that other people are more to blame. He becomes angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is his basic trouble? Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind? Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well?...

...This is the how and why of it. First of all we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal, we are His agent. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.

99. First things first

How often do I sit down to work at the computer, and then I say, "First I've got to check my E-mail." Then, there's a link to something interesting, or some article that interests me a lot. An hour or 2 goes by, now I don't have any time to work anymore.

So, as an addict, I feel especially bad about that. Then I am more likely to act out.

It's often not a question about what to DO, but rather what to do FIRST. If I work FIRST, I'll get around to

checking the E-mail. If I check the E-mail first, I won't necessarily get around to working.

Lately I have been reading the book "the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People". I have read it before, but didn't put it so much into practice. Now I am also trying to put it into practice; I think this is only possible because I have matured a bit through recovery. I am able to face life and be responsible.

One topic this book discusses (as I remember from last time):

There are activities that are urgent and some that are not urgent. There are some that are important, and some that are not important. With these 2 variables, we end up with:

Urgent, not important. Time wasting. Checking the E-mail (FEEL so important--have to do it NOW!)

Urgent, important. Rushing someone to the hospital so they don't die of a heart attack.

Not urgent, not important. Don't remember--perhaps this includes activities such as discussing your opinion of the current political climate.

Not urgent, important. This includes such activities as planning out your week, examining how you are spending your time, brainstorming ideas for getting unstuck in life.

The items in the 4th category (Not urgent, important), are the ones that can make a huge impact in our lives. Yet, we usually don't spend much time on them, because they are not urgent.

I have been trying to spend more time on such activities, and I feel like a lot more options and possibilities in life are opening up to me.

Being mature and responsible is part of recovery.

100. Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today

Here is a reading commonly used at meetings:

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ACCEPTANCE

And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation--some fact of my life--unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing heppns in G-d's world by mistake. Until I could accept my illness, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes. (AA p.417).

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I have also found this quote to be helpful: "We stopped fighting everything and everyone. We have to." (AA. end of chap 7)

THINGS TO REMEMBER

101. The pain and the loss

Remember, acting out only lasts for a second. Then it leaves you with a lot of pain. Try to remember how bad you feel afterwards--BEFOREHAND.

Think of what you've lost as a result of acting out. For me, I see the biggest loss is that I have been disconnected from reality and from other human beings. My emotional and social development was frozen since as far back as I can remember. Realize--here's another urge to act out--do you want to escape further into this sickness, or snap out of it and grow up and have a real life with real people and real relationships and real fulfillment?

I don't think this sort of thinking helps so much when you're in the full grips of a lust attack (though anything is worth a try). But, pull out these thoughts when you start to get that feeling that you're starting to go in the wrong direction. It can help then.

Also, share on the forum, share in meetings, and share on phone calls to program buddies. The more you talk about these things, the more it helps you get in touch with them and remember them. I think for normal people they say the furthest distance is the distance between the head and the heart; and for addicts the distance is even greater. In recovery, we can finally start to connect our heads to our hearts. We start to feel out emotions, and we start to feel more comfortable about expressing them.

102. My addict never sleeps

...and the moment I'm weak, it wakes up. This is one reason why it's so important to make sure you're doing something every day for recovery. Which reminds me...

Sometimes I have used a particular tool of recovery, or worked specifically on a particular step of the program, and despite that, I didn't seem to get any better (or I even kept sliding further downhill). So, if that happens, I have to ask myself:

1. Am I really working this step properly? For example, I have found that taking inventory of my fears and resentments but failing to share it with another human being, or even sharing my fears and resentments with other people but without taking a **written** inventory first, often doesn't help me enough. A spoken inventory doesn't do the job. But when I write out my fears and resentments and then follow through and share it with another person, it is very helpful.

2. Am I working on the right step or with the right tool? Perhaps another tool, or step, would be more helpful or more appropriate at this moment. I find myself sometimes working on my inventory of fears and resentments and sharing them with other people (steps 4 and 5) to no avail--because what is really wrong now is that I have neglected steps 1-3. I have forgotten that I am powerless, that my life has become unmanageable (my self-will won't work), that my Higher Power can restore me to my sanity (and without Him, I won't return to sanity), and then I have to turn my will and my live over to His care.

I also have a tendency to focus more on the problem than on the solution, which isn't healthy. Live in

the solution, not in the problem.

COMMENT FROM GYE FORUM MEMBER:

Are we really stuck with this for the rest of our lives?

RESPONSE:

Our lusting, remember, is not the problem--it's the solution. We have learned ineffective ways of dealing with life and with people (total self-reliance, ego, and escapism). The result--pain. Then, we seek our drug of choice to kill the pain and make us feel better.

I think, what a good recovery program does, is get us to be mature and responsible and deal with life in a healthy way. Then we find satisfaction and serenity in life, no matter what happens.

Yes, that is something a person ought to do his whole life.

103. My addict lies

We lie to ourselves.

One aspect of this is that, since we are sick, we have lost our sense of good and bad, right and wrong. We stare at women and we think it is helping us, making us feel better, helping us cope with life. In truth, it is really destroying our lives.

Sometimes when I'm trying to delve down to the source of my addictive behaviors, I think to myself, "But I ENJOY this--why!" Then, I have to remind myself, "I only enjoy it because I'm SICK."

Also, it is important in recovery to notice the similarities between fellow addicts, and to overlook the differences. The addict side of us likes to do the opposite--notice the similarities when it will serve to feed our addiction, and to also focus on the differences (no matter how small) to absolve us of recovery work. "I'm different than him--he went to prostitutes but I only looked at porn (or vice versa), so this recovery plan won't work for me."

Another thing we do is totally disregard feedback we hear from other people. We may talk to people at length about all the things we are angry about, and they'll say, "You really should work on this anger," and we'll say back, "No, I just think I've been eating too much junk food lately. If I work on my diet I'm sure I'll feel better. That will make the lust go away." We are inclined to think that WE have a BETTER plan!

104. I am not smarter than my addict

He's cunning and baffling, and experienced. I'm not as smart; I need to keep tabs on the way I'm thinking.

I think, what this means, is we have to be extremely skeptical of our thinking, and especially be on the

look-out for rationalization and justifications. It's easy for us to get confused between a good reason and a good rationalization, because our addict self is always trying to trick us.

A more blatant phenomenon, though no less frequent and no less troubling, is that feeling we get when we know we are making up an excuse, but we think we've got a good excuse when really it's a lousy one.

Here's a good rule of thumb: If you would describe your motives for any particular action, and to do requires at least four words, then you are probably rationalizing. Also, if it takes less than four words, you are also probably rationalizing.

Also, if you are thinking about doing something, and you feel a burning urgency about it, you are probably being motivated by your addict.

In addition: it's not only that my addict is smart. It's that my normal way of thinking is messed up. I have a sick mind--I have lost sense of right and wrong, good and bad. And, as the saying goes, "You can't heal a sick mind with a sick mind." The more I try to THINK my way out of this problem, the sicker I get. I have seen this over and over and over again. It's only when I put logic and philosophy aside and blindly follow the steps of a recovery program simply because I know it has worked for millions of other people (though I don't really understand why and how it works), THEN I start to get better. I need to get out of my head, because inside my head is a very dangerous place to be.

A good DEED, TAKING ACTION "as if" we were healthy, DOES make a difference.

I believe the 12-steps give us the ACTIONS to take in order to deal with life in a healthy way--the actions that we naturally would have taken had we not become warped by our addiction and self-obsession.

105. Run the movie through to the end

Whatever you're thinking to do, think what will happen next... all the way to the end.

I was walking with my children one day, and also having a hard time controlling my eyes. I was thinking, "Okay, here's an attractive lady. Let's say I manage to play out my fantasy--to spend some time with her, etc. Then what? I'm going to lose ALL THIS (all my kids)! I won't ever see them ever again. I won't see their success in school, I won't see them grow up, I won't see their bar- and bat- mitzvahs, their *chasunas*, and their own children, either." Is it worth it for a few seconds of second-rate pleasure?

That's one example.

Also, "If she (actually) will cheat WITH you, she'll cheat ON you." Just a matter of time. Then you won't have ANYTHING!

Also, sometimes, depending on who you are attracted to, it's not hard to imagine catching some venereal disease and dying a horrible death. I heard of an SA guy who had something like 10 or 20 years of sobriety, he let up on the program, went on a massive spree, and then caught AIDS and died as a result.

Some people struggle with "accidental" contact with women in public places. I have heard a number of stories of people who got reported to the police for such acting out. In our heads we think all this stuff is harmless, but we are warped. Other people don't think the same way we do.

Joe and Charlie (from the Joe and Charlie AA workshops, available for free download on Silkworth.net) said a line which is appropriate here: "The trouble with trouble is that it always starts with fun."

106. The joy of recovery

We need joy in our lives, especially when we're tempted.

I try to keep in mind that, as I see it, the worst thing this addiction did to me was separated me from other human beings--I became completely inept at communicating with other people. As a result of recovery, I am becoming less fearful of talking to people and of social situations.

The fact that I can cope with life much better, that I can be patient with my wife and children (at least more often than in the past) and spend time with them and have a relationship with them--this is all a result of recovery.

The fact I can be responsible and waste less time and take care of my responsibilities and be helpful to other people instead of being afraid and resentful of them--this is all a result of recovery.

The fact I can turn off the computer and get a good night's sleep and function the next day instead of drifting aimlessly through the Web--this is also a result of recovery.

The fact that my emotional well being and feeling of self-worth is no longer directly, and solely connected to my sex life--this is a result of recovery.

The thing is, I find I have to think a little bigger to identify and then appreciate the benefits of recovery. It's a little more abstract, but more fulfilling and lasting, than a brief moment of physical pleasure.

You can probably identify different ways that your own life has improved as a result of recovery.

When I first joined this forum, I remember a big issue for me was these huge mood swings. I was totally at the mercy of my emotions--some days I'd be flying in the sky, and other days I'd feel totally depressed. Also, I could brood about things for weeks on end.

My moods, now, if charted out, still wouldn't look like a brain wave scan of a corpse. But, I definitely feel much more emotionally stable as a result of recovery.

107. If I take an action, my feelings will follow

This may sound familiar, for anyone who has ever learned "*Sefer HaChinuch*".

Take positive actions, you'll start to feel better.

I don't WANT to stop acting out. I may NEVER FEEL like I want to stop--certainly if I wait to FIGURE OUT what's in my head, and if I wait until I understand myself well enough and can psychoanalyze my addiction away.

But, if I act "as if" I am not interested, (and if I keep it up, though at the beginning I don't feel like not acting out), then my feelings will eventually follow.

And, again, it's not enough to just NOT ACT OUT. Negative sobriety doesn't last. We need to take some positive action, to be involved with life and with other people in a positive way.

108. Keep learning about recovery

The standard recovery literature for our particular issue includes:

The Big Book

12 Steps and 12 Traditions

SA White Book

And on the forum, of course, the GYE handbook

I have also gained a lot from the following recordings:

The Joe and Charlie workshop (AA conference)

Sandy B (AA meetings)

(Available on Silkworth.net)

I gain a lot just by reviewing these materials regularly. Also, there's plenty of great material out there, and there are also people who are further along in recovery to learn from. And you can also find a lot of helpful and inspiring *seforim* that can easily be applied to our struggle. But personally, I find that when I stray too far away from pure recovery material, I end up in confusion more than I end up in recovery, which isn't a healthy place to be.

PART 2: Improve Relation with G-d

SURRENDER, PRAYER, AND MEDITATION

109. Surrender in every moment

Surrender is constant.

Your first objection might be, "I'm a *frum yid!* I daven 3 times a day, learn Torah, and do mitzvahs. I'm *moser nefesh* all day long! I already HAVE a great relationship with G-d. What do you mean I need to improve it?"

I can only speak for myself, but I think it is easy, especially with mitzvah observance, to be doing OUR thing. I know I have spent time in Kollel when my wife was a *shmattah*--sick or pregnant and taking care of all the kids. Looking back, I don't think G-d wanted me in Kollel at that time. I am learning, but I learn WHAT I want to learn and WHEN I want to learn it, and HOW I want to learn it. Is that really what G-d wants? I have buried my head in the sand for over 10 years and basically neglected my responsibilities as a provider for my family--and my wife has really suffered as a result. Is that what G-d wants? I am so busy in Kollel and busy "working" on the computer, but at the same time I have wasted--probably years--sitting in front of the computer simply wasting time, and often looking at pornography. In the name of my holy learning and my so-important "work," I have almost entirely ignored my wife and my children. Is that what G-d wants? And, furthermore, due to my addiction, over the years I have had a totally warped idea of marital intimacy and this has taken a toll on my relationship with my wife--and I could back myself up with *shalom bayis shiurim* and *halacha sfarim*, too. I even had rabbis, therapists, and even my wife convinced that I was right. But, was I doing what G-d wants?

I daven every day, 3 times a day (hey, and sometimes 4 or 5), but I am not connected to G-d when I do so. If I would talk to a human being in the same way, I think it would hurt our relationship. When I do have moments of inspiration, when I call out to G-d from the depths of my heart, I approach Him in much the same way one would approach Santa-Claus, "gimme gimme gimme." If I would relate to any human being like that, I don't think they would appreciate it.

So, I have work to do.

Surrender does not just mean, "don't act out." It means, throughout the day, all day long, I should be asking myself--and frequently--WHAT DOES G-D WANT ME TO DO. And, it may be something which is the total opposite of what I FEEL MOST like doing right now. Surrender means, doing what I think G-d wants me to do, instead of what I want to do.

It also means, all that obsessive thinking--worrying, plotting, and planning--all the constant noise in my head, I need to let go of it. I have to Trust G-d to take care of me.

It also means I have to quit playing the expert on all matters--financial, medical, raising children, etc. I

have to turn to people who are wiser than I, and I have to stop thinking that I, with my awesome mental powers, am able to solve any problem and am able to out-smart anyone no matter who they may be. I have to defer to people who actually know what they are doing; I have to stop thinking I have all the answers.

I have to surrender my right to judge everyone; I have to admit that I really don't know what they should be doing or how they should be doing it. It is not my job to control everyone and everything.

Rather, I must stop fighting everyone and everything.

110. Meditate upon the "Serenity Prayer"

Say it slowly; internalize it.

In case you happen to not know what the Serenity Prayer is yet, here it is:

G-d grant me the
serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

(Some people add the following: Your will, not mine, be done.)

111. Select prayers from the Big Book

(See tool 15 or the section "A Few Recovery Prayers" in the appendix)

112. Daily quiet time

Besides all this praying and talking to G-d, we need to spend some time LISTENING to Him.

It need not be a meditation marathon. Even 60 seconds can make a difference.

113. Invite G-d in

...to every action. "Help me, I'm having difficulty with..."

I have also heard that steps 1-3 do not only apply to lust, but can also be applied to whatever we are struggling with.

For example, for financial difficulties:

1. I believe I am powerless over my financial situation; my life has become unmanageable.
2. I have come to believe that a Power greater than myself can return me to my sanity.
3. I now make a conscious decision to turn my will and my life (in particular, regarding financial matters)

over to the care of G-d as I understand Him.

The same can be done for health problems, broken washing machines, child-rearing difficulties, etc.

Make G-d a part of your life.

"All G-d, all the time."

114. G-d's will discernment tool

Before you are about to do something, ask yourself if it is:

1. honest
2. unselfish
3. pure
4. loving

A "yes" to ALL FOUR indicates that what you want to do is probably in line with G-d's will.

Also, ask yourself if what you are about to do is the following (the flip-side):

1. Dishonest
2. Selfish
3. Impure
4. Fearful

A "yes" answer to ANY ONE of these four indicates that what you want to do is not in line with G-d's will.

I guess it's necessary to ask from the positive and negative perspectives because it's sometimes easier to recognize one side than the other. Also, I don't know why "fearful" seems to be the opposite of "loving." This is just the way this tool works somehow.

115. Envision the presence of G-d

Interestingly, pretty much near the beginning of the *Mishna Brura*, regarding "*Shivisi Hashem L'negdi Tamid*," he mentions that, quite literally, some people envision the 4-letter name of Hashem in front of them throughout the day.

I think it is noteworthy that this Name refers to G-d's attributes of kindness, and also it refers to His being above time--He IS, WAS, and SHALL FOREVER BE.

I think our acting out is basically a product of our fears and resentments. On a more basic level, we act out because we're in pain, because we don't think G-d is providing for us.

RESENTMENT is when we feel that G-d wasn't providing for us in the PAST.

FEAR is when we feel that G-d won't provide for us in the FUTURE.

And, I think LUST, is when we feel that G-d is not providing our needs in the PRESENT.

Or, if we believe He was taking care of us, we believe He was "taking care of us"--being cruel towards us instead of acting out of kindness for our best interest.

Just a little idea.

Another point--from what I understand, it is forbidden to BELIEVE that G-d has a corporeal existence. However, it is permitted to IMAGINE some sort of physical being in order to help us feel G-d's presence. Aggadah, and Tanach, are filled with this--"G-d appeared as a mighty warrior, or He appeared as an old man cloaked in a tallis, and the visions of a man sitting upon a celestial throne." And, from what I have learned (but have not yet experienced myself), these images are crutches, but necessary ones; however, after a person gets used to imagining and feeling G-d's presence in a concrete way, he can begin to sense G-d's presence, just as tangibly, without needing to imagine anything physical. (I highly recommend the *sefer* "*B'nei Machshava Tova*," by Rebbi Kalonymous, the Piacezna Rebbi, the same author as "*Chovos HaTalmidim*". But, don't get too carried away with it!)

116. Examine your old ideas about G-d

Start having a mature relationship with G-d. Stop relating to Him as one might relate to Santa Clause "gimme gimme gimme."

Our relationships with other people are supposed to help us get out of our own heads, and to be a springboard for our relationship with G-d. In other words, our relationship with G-d should be SIMILAR to our relationships with other human beings. What works with other people is what works with G-d; what doesn't work with people, doesn't work with G-d. That's the way He set up the system.

Imagine that what you are doing to G-d, someone else IS DOING TO YOU! Imagine a friend who only came to you to kvetch about his problems and beg for help whenever he was in serious trouble. But, besides that, you never saw him much. Or, you saw him very frequently, but only when he was coming to nag for help. Again.

Now, imagine a friend who is considerate of how he can be of service to you. You have a good relationship. And, besides that, sometimes he asks for help.

What does our relationship with G-d look like?

117. Came... Came to... Came to believe

This is a slow-motion step 2, "Came to believe a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity."

At first, we just participate. Come to meetings. (Post on the forum).

After a while of this, we gain a bit of clarity; we start to realize how sick we have been in our thoughts and behaviors. I remember people pointing out to me, "There's nothing normal about having sex with yourself! It's sick!" Or, when I was wondering about the exact extent of my addiction someone commented, "You can't be only a little bit pregnant; either you are or you aren't."

Ultimately, we see other people who have been around longer, and who have traveled the road to recovery somewhat further along than we have (and can give us such helpful feedback as mentioned above). We realize that, we too, can travel that path. Help (with a capital H) is available to us, and can restore us to sanity.

MAINTAIN A FIT SPIRITUAL CONDITION

118. Pray every morning and every evening

Note: This is an SA tool. If you are Jewish, you probably already are *davening Shacharis, Mincha, and Ma'ariv*.

The prayer referred to here, however, I think is supposed to be that spontaneous prayer, or even a particular prayer text, which relates in particular to recovery and its various aspects. Such as asking for help with lust, asking to find in G-d what you are looking for "out there," asking for G-d to remove your character defects so that you can be of service to Him and you fellow man, and asking for knowledge of G-d's will and for the strength to carry that out. Also, you may have a discussion with G-d about any particular challenge you are facing right now, and for clarity on the subject. I think it also may include asking for help staying focused, sober, and useful throughout the day (in the morning and as the day goes on), and asking at the end of the day to see things as they truly were--where were you at fault, and also where did you succeed.

...just some ideas for you.

119. Read SA & AA literature

Don't just read it; read it like a *mussar sefer*. Figure out how it relates to you, and how to apply it in your own life.

Frankly, I read the Big Book a number of times on my own and totally missed the point; it didn't make so much of a difference in my life. But, after I joined the Duvid Chaim calls and heard how a veteran in recovery views these texts, and after I heard which points (and practical exercises) he pulls out from them, THEN it made a huge difference.

Also, I know some people go right to the 12 steps and figure that ought to be enough (I did that myself for a while). I just read the list, and try to do what it says. But, without actually reading the Big Book, the steps don't make too much sense on their own. For example, "Admitted I was powerless over lust," so, it's easy to get confused about what that actually means. The Big Book spells it out very clearly. To simplify--there's an obsession of the mind which drives us to act out. Yet, there's an "allergic reaction" we have which guarantees that, once we start, we won't be able to control ourselves. We're stuck; left to ourselves, it is inevitable that we will eventually act out, and then once we do, we won't be able to stop. And, it doesn't matter how frequently or infrequently, and it doesn't matter that sometimes it seems that we really DO have control over ourselves (if sometimes we don't, then really we don't).

Besides that, there are very clear, and simple instructions for making an inventory of our character defects. There is a precise procedure for sharing this inventory with another human being in such a way as to free ourselves of our character defects. It's all spelled out in the book, but if you're trying to figure it out all on your own, you're going to miss it. You either won't do the necessary activities for recovery, or you are likely to devise something which is so convoluted that it is likely to worsen the addictive condition rather than bring relief and recovery.

Also, a common objection is, "Well, if I'm powerless, I guess I'm just doomed to act out." The Big Book very clearly spells out how to tap into a power that CAN heal us, though, on our own, we are powerless. Sort of like, if your laptop battery dropped dead, you can still plug it into the wall and it will work. A self-interpretation of the Big Book, or a superficial reading of the 12 steps, will leave one in a confusion.

Another mistake that people make is to try working the 12 steps from the "12 Steps and 12 Traditions," or from the White Book. These books, however, are only supplementary readings. The instructions for how to work the steps are really contained only in the Big Book.

120. Write fear lists

Write down ALL your fears.

I have sometimes thought I didn't have so much bothering me, though I was aware of a couple of fears bouncing around in my head. After I put those down on paper, I was surprised to see that room cleared up for some more fears to come forward. Sometimes I assumed 2 or 3 things were bothering me, and I have written a list of 20 fears. NO WONDER I WAS ABOUT TO ACT OUT!

I have also had the opposite experience. I assumed a few dozen fears were haunting me. I set out to put them on paper, and after writing 2 or 3 fears, I sincerely felt I was done. Perhaps they were major fears, so they felt a lot worse. I would look at the list afterwards and say, "OH, THAT'S ALL?" I guess I don't really have to feel so bad, then!

We don't really know what's bothering us until we put it down on paper, where we can see it clearly--no matter how clearly we think we understand what's going on in our heads. Also, I think there's something about the writing process which takes our emotions and somehow helps us be more calm and rational about them.

After completing a fear list, say the following prayer:

"ALL my fears are self-centered. I surrender them to G-d. I humbly ask that He remove them and direct my attention to what He would have me be. Immediately I begin to outgrow fear."

How are fears self-centered? I don't quite understand. But, I think it's because when we are afraid, it is because we are relying on self-will; we feel that WE need to solve our problems, and we are concerned that perhaps WE won't be able to do so.

Just an idea.

It is possible to get dragged down by focusing too much on one's fears; this should be done at regular intervals, or when you're feeling particularly overcome by fear. It should not be done all day long all the time. Also, there is another tool (coming up soon) to help keep a balance.

121. Maintain a gratitude list

Write a running gratitude list. Add something every day, and review it every morning.

It is also recommended that, whenever you stop to do a list of your fears (the previous tool), finish off by writing a gratitude list on the spot. This helps give you a balanced perspective on life, helps you not to get completely bogged down in those fears, and even helps you to be positive.

122. Restart your day anytime with the serenity prayer

I'm sure you know it already, but for the sake of convenience:

G-d, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

I find that sometimes when I'm getting really bogged down it's often because I just messed up or just slipped or just got angry or just had a bad day yesterday and then I have this feeling that since from now until the end of time is going to continue in much the same manner.

But, I can disconnect myself from what WAS just going on. I can just put it behind me and start all over again. I don't HAVE to keep on feeling or acting the way I just was just because that's what I was doing. I can PAUSE and make a choice to change directions. But, I need G-d's help to do it, so a little prayer is helpful.

123. Daily Sobriety Renewal

What is the Daily Sobriety Renewal? It is the following series of questions to help us re-commit to sobriety:

SA Daily Sobriety Renewal Checklist

(Taken from the SA newsletter, "The Essay")

These questions are shared between recovery partners at the beginning of the day.

1) Are you willing to admit you are powerless over lust and sexual acting out, just for today?

2) Do you desire sobriety for the next 24 hours: freedom from sexual obsession and acting out, freedom from fear, resentment, shame, and isolation?

3) Are you willing to do whatever is necessary to protect this desire including spiritual reading, reaching out and calling others, prayer and meditation, physical care of your body, setting appropriate boundaries, and refusing all lust hits as toxic?

4) Just for today, do we commit to G-d and this group that we do not have to have sex with ourselves or anyone else (except a spouse) no matter what, realizing that at the end of this 24 hours we are free to continue with sobriety or go another way?

5) Do you understand that this renewal does not keep you sober (G-d does), but it does make you aware of yourself and accountable to others?

6) And, just for today, are you willing with me to hand over your will and the care of your life to the One Who kept you sober yesterday and has protected you from the full consequences of your lust in the past?

7) Have you done anything in the last 24 hours that you're ashamed of?

8) Are we aware of anything in our plans for the next 24 hours of which we might become ashamed? Any danger zones, slippery spots on the horizon, or hidden bottles we should bring to the light?

Close by exchanging at least one gratitude.

124. Contact your sponsor regularly

What is this doing in "improve your relationship with G-d"? I don't know.

I can guess, though, that when you're out-of-touch with recovery it means you are, little-by-little, becoming more self-centered (and therefore less G-d centered). Your sponsor is not a therapist, he is just supposed to be a guide to show you how to stay on-track in recovery which, by the way, keeps you from being self-centered and helps you to be more G-d centered in your life.

125. Take Good Orderly Directions

It takes a bit of humbling oneself to follow directions, and humbling oneself makes one more receptive to G-d's will. When a person insists on making up his own method of recovery (and refuses to follow anyone else's directions--and PRIDES himself on this), it is a function of the ego--and it is precisely our EGO which fuels our addiction. Ego is really at the core of every lust hit we take, so trying to cure ourselves "ALL BY OURSELVES" is, essentially, like trying to cure oneself of lust by looking at pornography.

Also, ISOLATION is another major aspect of our addiction. By insisting on doing things alone, by refusing to take directions from anyone else, we keep ourselves in isolation. This, too, is like trying to cure ourselves of lust by looking at pornography.

Another aspect of this addiction is that, "We have lost all context of what is right and wrong." We are not likely, on our own, to devise a recovery plan that works. "You can't cure a sick mind with a sick mind." So, we need to follow the example of people who have been restored to sanity, even if we don't understand them.

Actually, since we are addicts with sick, addictive minds, we are almost SURE not to understand the cure until after we follow it and see that it works. Since our vision is backwards, if something makes sense to us while we are still sick, it may actually be an indication that it is wrong.

126. Make a written 10th step

The following paragraph describes step 10 (from the Big Book, pg. 84):

This thought brings us to step ten, which suggests we continue to **take personal inventory** and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our life time. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

The "personal inventory" refers to a **written** personal inventory.

Step 10 is really a review of steps 4-9, which the Big Book describes at great length. So, the above quote gives you an idea, but it is by no means the full picture, or the full instructions. Take care, especially when it comes to "amends," to first consult with someone else from the program--it's very easy to get the wrong idea about what that means, and it's easy to end up doing more harm than good.

Also, discussing our character defects is best done with someone further along in recovery, who can give us a healthy and sober perspective about ourselves and our life's problems. It is not supposed to be psychoanalysis (such discussions usually make things worse) and also, the point often doesn't have to be about finding solutions (this can also get very messy very quickly). It is often enough just to share what's going on in your head. I have sometimes, when I was unable to reach anyone, just left a detailed message on a friend's answering machine about what I was thinking and feeling, and that helped. Similarly, I sometimes receive such messages. There is more to it than that, but that's often enough (though it doesn't make any sense, it really does work somehow).

127. Write about what's bothering you

This is more of a free-style writing exercise. I got an idea once from a book on creative writing that says, after you get a little bit warmed up, you get this feeling that you've really caught on to something deep. Go with it! And don't quit suddenly because the 10 minutes you allowed yourself for writing has ended.

I find it best not to think and write from the mind, but rather from the emotions. Just let the words flow,

without worrying if it makes too much sense. If an idea pops into my mind that seems totally unrelated, I write it down, too.

I find it helpful to ask myself questions along the way, and write them down to myself. Especially after I feel like I've cleared out a lot, I find it useful to ask myself questions to focus myself on recovery. "Okay, what is my part in this?" Or, "What can I do about this now?"

At times, my writing is just a primitive, "I HATE LIFE I HATE LIFE I HATE LIFE," and that's okay, too. I usually hate life significantly less after getting that down on paper.

You can share these writings with a sponsor or with a friend in recovery, and you can even post them on the forum. But, sometimes it's best just to write for yourself knowing that you can write whatever you want and it doesn't matter because you don't have to care at all about what anyone will think.

ENLARGE ONE'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

128. Attend a religious service at least once a week

As religious Jews, most of us probably attend a religious service more frequently than that.

I must say--I think we are so hard on ourselves for not *davening* with perfect *kavana*, or for having learned up tefillah well enough, or for not understanding what we're saying, etc, that we take for granted that showing up to *davening* is, in itself, something to appreciate.

Yes, it's best to focus on every word, and yes, it's best to have in mind--from start to finish--that we are standing before Hashem and His Throne of Glory. Yet, even if we have so much as a fleeting thought along these lines during the time we are *davening* (and even if we don't), it is still beneficial.

Many a times I have shown up for *shacharis* FURIOUS about something, or someone, and my *kavana* at the beginning is something like this, "I hate G-d, I hate life, and here I am lying lying lying all through *davening*. Singing praises to Hashem and other such words I don't believe right now. I'm lying lying lying!" And, at times I am very insistent on this attitude and I don't believe it will ever go away. At times I don't even want it to go away--I relish in the resentment sometimes, especially when I think it is so justified. I am determined to hold onto this resentment and hatred forever. I probably wouldn't even daven some days, but I think that is a bit below my point of *bechira*.

Yet, despite all that, as I mumble the prayers with anti-*kavana*, while seething with anger and hatred and Atheistic sentiments, I almost always can't help but drop most of these feelings somewhere before the end of *shacharis*. I can't help but have a thought or two along the way that changes my perspective a bit. It may not disappear, but it does diminish. I may have been determined to hate a particular person forever (sometimes my wife) but, after *shacharis* I find myself able to make some sort of amends.

I'll admit that *mincha* and *ma'ariv* don't always have this affect, but usually *shacharis* does. And, even for really serious resentments and general discontent, a nice long Shabbos *shacharis* almost always

makes a difference (usually before *kriyas hatorah*, or somewhere in the middle of it).

129. Move from fear to love.

Realize when you're in fear of something. Ask Hashem to remove it, then take an action of love.

Again, I don't know what the connection is between fear and love.

I think the action of love doesn't necessarily have to have anything to do with the thing you are afraid of. Just like, in a previous tool, you can pick up some garbage to help free yourself of a lust attack. I think the point is to get yourself to focus on a healthy attitude, which is to be loving, rather than on fear which is unhealthy. And, we can't heal a sick mind with a sick mind. Therefore, we have to take some sort of action--do a kindness for someone, rather than just have some positive thoughts about someone we care about (or, should care about).

130. Listen to the Joe and Charlie AA workshop

They go through the Big Book and really spell out what it means to work the steps.

This is available as a free download from Silkworth.net ([HERE](#) is the link). This site has a lot of other great resources, too. I highly recommend the Sandy B. recordings, and also the Audio Big Book.

The Joe and Charlie recordings are also available from another site, XA-SPEAKERS.ORG ([HERE](#) is the link), which has a lot of resources from a variety of recovery programs.

131. Keep a diary

Write something every day.

Why is this in the section of improving your relationship with G-d? I don't really know, but I could guess. One reason is because you can view your diary as private writing that nobody else knows about--just you and G-d. Also, you can sometimes write direct entries, "Dear G-d."

But there's another aspect, I think. The 12-steps are a lot about finding your Higher Power and letting Him into your life. I spent a long time seeing the program as sort of a self-improvement program. I didn't understand what G-d has to do with it. But, now I see that, as I straighten myself out, as I start to shed some of my character defects, G-d automatically starts to come in. So, with a journal, it's a good way to clear out the crazy thoughts that are bouncing around in our heads. And, by writing every day, we keep these thoughts in check. By having to write something every day, we manage to dig a little deeper, and find these thoughts which we might not have noticed were there, and to evict them. Then, there's more room for G-d to come in.

On the forum, keeping up your thread--and posting every day, is a very good thing for recovery.

Two sayings (which I think are AA slogans) that I think are relevant here:

I don't need more of G-d in my life; I need less of ME!
If G-d seems far away--who moved?

132. Read spiritual literature

As religious Jews, we have no shortage of spiritual literature.

I have a few words to say about learning Torah, as spiritual literature, with regards to recovery. One rule of thumb I learned is--Torah is supposed to be positive (so is recovery). If you are learning something such as mussar and it is dragging you down, you're not learning it right and, learned as such, it will do more damage than good.

Also, in the course of my recovery I have read very uplifting ideas (often from Chassidic works), and there was a danger in that, too--flying too high in the clouds. Sobriety is being stable and calm.

Also, I often come across Torah ideas and think, "This is so great! THIS will help me and I don't need SA anymore!" However, I have to remember that the only reason I have been able to extract such a healthy and practical message out of this, and to successfully put it into practice, is BECAUSE of the recovery work I have done. It is not a substitute, but it is a great supplement--and I have to remember that.

As I have read once in a Chassidic *sefer* ("*Derech HaMelech*," from the author of "*Chovos HaTalmidim*"), but very much in my own words--the sign that you have really internalized an idea is that you will start to see hints of that same idea showing up in everything you learn and everything you do.

I have often referred to "*B'nei Machshava Tova*" on this forum (from the same author), which strikes me through-and-through as having an uncanny resemblance to the most useful ideas I have learned about in recovery. There is even a very detailed section about making sure to have a close friend and sharing with him your feelings about whatever is happening to you in life, both positive and negative.

People seem to have a lot of success with Breslav writings, and I have also found them helpful. But then, I have found it's really easy to get too carried away with these, so I have to be very careful.

Also, I have found the writings from Rebbi Tzaddok to be very uplifting and encouraging (I learned about them from Battleworn, who was one of the key members of this form a few years ago).

Part 3: Improve Relations With Others

FORGIVENESS AND AMENDS

133. Forgive them all (step 8.5)

This step is especially difficult to do for people who have hurt us.

In order to truly forgive, we first need to take a good honest look at our character defects (and this often requires a frank discussion with another person who has made a good start on the road to recovery and is in a healthy place). For example, if I wasn't so dependant, it wouldn't have bothered me that my parents, or wife, or rav let me down. If I wasn't so approval-seeking, it wouldn't have bothered me so much that certain peers or relatives don't accept me. You can appreciate that, I hope.

In most cases, you'll see that it is really WE who hurt ourselves.

Everyone says, "Well, Mr. Ploney--he REALLY WAS an evil person bent on ruining me for the sole pleasure of bringing about destruction and pain in the world!"

First, I'll say, start with the other 99% of the people that you can forgive without conducting a philosophical debate.

Second, I'll say that still, your own character defects played a part in Mr. Ploney having affected you this much. You probably can imagine a different person who, had he been Mr. Ploney's victim, would not have been bothered by it, or at least not to the same extent.

Also, even if Mr. Ploney had committed an evil crime against you, he only hurt you at the time of this incident. We, when we re-play these incidents in our minds, we harm ourselves over and over again--each time we play it back.

Yes, if legal action is called for, amends does not mean for you to forego your legal rights. Also, if the person truly is dangerous, amends does not call for stupidly walking right back into their clutches. Due precautions are in order. But, let go of the past as best as you can. Get it out of your head and move on with life. Ask G-d to help you do this.

In short, making amends is not step 9 for nothing; it takes a bit of work, and a bit of time, and a lot of maturity, to get to it properly. And, it is usually unwise (and even harmful) to make this step without qualified adult supervision.

But, every person you can forget means there's a little less pain that we need to carry around with us. And, the less pain we have, the less pain-killer we feel compelled to take.

While I'm on the topic, I will also add that we **NEVER** go and make direct amends to the old girlfriends,

mistresses, prostitutes, etc.--obviously, but I thought I would make it clear, just in case.

134. "I was wrong when..."

These are key words to say when making amends. It's easy to be sorry and do something again, but it's hard to say something was wrong and then do it again.

Actually, I got a different script to use for the amends from the Duvid Chaim calls. You can change the wording to fit your situation, but it should basically convey this message:

First, ask G-d for help. Then:

1. Our relationship isn't as good as it used to be...
2. and I regret that.
3. I feel like I have something to do with it.
4. What can I do to improve things.
5. BE QUIET. Just listen to whatever the other person says.

Don't bother going into specifics of what you have done--it is usually not necessary and can possibly cause harm. Don't go into the past. And, even if they start to confess their own sins to you, don't go in that direction either. Steer the conversation, "I'd like to focus on what I can do now."

I spent many years making what I thought was amends with people, but I was basically trying to force a relationship. I was either trying to twist myself up to please someone else, or trying to pressure the other person to play by my rules of a good relationship.

Somehow, when I have just used the above formula and let things unfold, my relationships have improved in ways that I never imagined. Also, people that have been haunting me for years, after I made amends with them in this way, have once and for all finally left my head and my life. Enemies have even become welcome acquaintances.

In the program, this is essentially step 9 (though there's more to it), it is built upon the foundation of knowing that almost everything unpleasant in our lives, the pain we have suffered, is mostly the result of our own character defects. When we can take responsibility, when we can let go of our fears and our resentments, when we can look people in the eye who we used to run away from, then we can start to enjoy life to a much greater extent.

Real amends is knowing that the only thing I can do is clean up my side of the street. I can't control the outcome, or change anyone or anything else.

But, usually, once my side of the street looks better, the rest of the world starts to look better, too.

135. Who do I least want to meet today?

Ask yourself this question. Then, go right to them. Every day. You'll start to enjoy meeting people.

I found that one thing holding me back was, since I spent so much time in my head weaving complicated thoughts and ideas, I thought that every conversation is supposed to be very profound and complex. I find that there really is a value in just letting people know that you wanted to say hi and ask how they're doing.

Also, I used to be really afraid to talk to people unless I could plan out the entire conversation in advance--what will I say, how will they respond, and then what will I say to that, etc. I have become more comfortable to just say hello and then just let a conversation unfold on its own.

Another thing that was holding me back, I think, is that I didn't know how to get out of a conversation. I'd feel trapped once I said "hello" to anyone. I have learned to say, "It's been nice talking to you, I've got to go." My reason for leaving does not have to stand up in a court of law as a fully justified reason of something that is absolutely more important than this other person. It's enough of a reason that I want to go now and do other things, whatever they may be.

Also, making calls to friends from the program, "Hi, I'm about to act out," or "Hi, I'm feeling all stressed out and I'm about to look at porn," after a while, makes it much easier to open up a little bit to anyone else and feel comfortable about it.

Another thing that was helpful was putting aside my ego and accepting that other people don't have to agree with me (and that I'm not likely going to be the one to convince everyone to agree with me). For example, I don't have to discuss the merits of being religious, or the problems of not being religious, with secular relatives. I don't have to argue about the best learning method with everyone in my Kollel. It doesn't make for a good relationship to always pick on that sore spot. Rather, there's plenty of common ground to choose, and plenty to say about it.

136. Traffic Sobriety

You sort of make a game out of avoiding walking into people while you're also looking down. I think the idea is that by focusing on getting out of people's way, you take your focus off of who is there and what they look like.

137. Do whatever your sponsee refuses to do

(If you happen to be a sponsor). Also, this applies to the forum--you ever post a message to someone, and it seems obvious to you what this fellow needs to do for his recovery. Yet, he just keeps arguing with you or denying it. You think, IF ONLY HE WOULD JUST... So, you do it instead!

I have had this happen quite a few times. Also, I find that when I post an idea that I have realized, often an opportunity comes up soon afterwards to put it into practice. Then I'm thinking, "I just wrote all about this, I can't NOT do it!"

138. Rescuer, Victim, Abuser

I love this one!

These are three dysfunctional roles that an addict plays, and it's a cycle:

RESCUER. First, we see someone that we can rescue! So, we go ahead and rescue them. Perhaps in our marriage, when we see our wives are disturbed, this plays out that we try to be extra helpful. All our wives need is our help, and then we make an extra effort to be helpful. We're going to rescue our wives so they can finally be happy!

(We also might try to rescue our parents, our siblings, our children, our peers.)

VICTIM. After all we've done, we expect that our wonderful kindness will be reciprocated. Why is my wife still upset? She's so ungrateful! I'm so unappreciated! I'm just being controlled by her now, with nothing in return! Oh, I hate this! I'm being stifled, manipulated, etc.

ABUSER. There's only so much of that abuse we can take. After a while, we snap. We retaliate. We scream and yell. We insult, we swear. We perhaps get violent against inanimate and also animate objects. Perhaps we take it out on the kids (don't they deserve a little harsh discipline every once in a while to keep them in place?)

So, we need to realize that it's not our job to solve other people's problems. (In fact, trying to manage other people's emotions may very well be an excuse for ignoring our own). We can't control them, and we are not responsible for their moods. I should, of course, be helpful and responsible with other people. However, my goal is not to fix anyone through that. If my wife is upset, it's not my job to make her happy. I should not be cruel and inconsiderate. However, I can be considerate and even empathise without getting sucked in to her negative emotions. I can be calm, despite this. If I make a responsible and reasonable effort to help her out, or just to empathize, and she remains upset, that's OKAY!

I think, realizing that we are responsible for our own thoughts and emotions, and it's okay that other people have their own thoughts and emotions which are beyond our control, is a big factor in getting out of this destructive cycle.

139. Pray together

I don't remember what this one means exactly. Simply put, praying together with other people is a beneficial thing. Not only the *shmonei-esrei*, but more informal prayers at more informal times. It's not uncommon to end a phone call to a program buddy with the Serenity Prayer, or something like that.

Also, according to my notes on this one, apparently it is recommended to imagine as if you are praying together along with that person that you have negative feelings towards. I guess I can sort of relate--on rare moments of clarity I have noticed that the *shmonei-esrei* is in the plural, and I have had in mind to include other people in my prayers and to realize that we are praying together. Also, at times, that thought that we declare at the beginning of Yom Kippur, that it's permitted to include evil-doers in our prayer services, comes to mind (when there's someone in shul that I have difficulties with). And, it is generally a powerful and a positive experience.

FRIENDSHIPS

140. Work with another SA (or GYE person)

Help each other, share with each other, challenge each other.

One advantage with a one-on-one relationship is that you can share things, and spend time discussing things, which often isn't possible in a public group or forum--either because of the personal nature of the discussion, or because it's hard to develop one idea and give it a chance when lots of people get involved.

141. Stick with the winners

If you spend time with relapsers, you're likely to relapse.

Look not only for the length of sobriety, but ALSO the quality of sobriety.

At times when I feel like my recovery has been at its weakest, I realize I haven't spent enough time with people who are significantly healthier than myself.

142. Stay in the present

When we're stuck in the past, we usually end up with resentments (re-playing those events that were not to our liking).

When we're stuck in the future, we usually end up with fears (worrying that tomorrow won't turn out the way I want it, or afraid what will happen tomorrow and that I won't be able to handle it).

But, there's nothing we can do about the past or the future. These are included in "Accept the things I cannot change."

But, the present is something, in some respects, we have the power to do something about. When we focus on what we can do at the moment, and there's actually something we can do, I think it produces a very healthy feeling.

Also, often we fail to enjoy the pleasures of the moment because we're not consciously in the moment--we're floating around in the past or in the future. So, when we can focus on NOW, we can enjoy it much more.

Another point about staying in the present--stay in reality. We may start daydreaming or fantasizing about all sorts of things we would like to do now. But, we should rather focus on what we actually are doing now, and on what we actually can do now.

Part of being an addict is that we have a hard time dealing with life. But, I think part of the reason we

don't cope well is simply because we're not HERE! If we get out of the past, the future, and the fantasy, that alone makes it much easier to function a lot better.

143. What you think and what you feel and what you do...

Okay, this takes a little explanation. The full version is like this:

What you think, and what you feel, and what you do, and what you say
is more about you and your history than it is about me.

And,

What I think, and what I feel, and what I do, and what I say
is more about me and my history than it is about you.

This tool is about EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES. We're not responsible for other people's feelings, actions, thoughts, or words. We are, however, responsible for our own feelings, actions, thoughts, and words.

We tend to spend a lot of time feeling guilty about things that we're not responsible for, which is not healthy.

When we can separate ourselves from other people, it is a lot easier to stay calm in the midst of chaos.

This comes into play, I think, especially in marriage. I used to feel responsible if my wife was upset--I must not be doing a good job as a husband (even when her upset was not related to anything I had done). So, I thought it was my responsibility to stop her from being upset. But, she's entitled to her emotions, whatever they may be.

And, I must say, sometimes I am trying to be considerate and thoughtful, but for some reason, my wife is still upset by my efforts, "If you REALLY wanted to help, you wouldn't wash the dishes--you'd decorate the kitchen because that's what I really want you to do!" I don't have to fill myself up with guilt for my lack of ESP (but I can try to ask my wife in the future what I can help with before I spend some time helping).

All this does not mean to be cruel and unsympathetic. But, it does mean I don't have to feel responsible for the way other people feel.

Also, in dealing with people in general, I don't have to figure out how a conversation is going to go before I call someone or speak to them. They are free to say whatever they want, and the conversation can unfold on its own.

This tool is useful for self-defense, too. Sometimes someone asks you a question that you'd rather not answer, or starts to discuss a topic that you'd rather not discuss. You are not under oath to keep to the topic at hand. You can change the topic, and you can even say, "Sorry, but I'd rather not discuss that."

I have found that, having an increased level of maturity to stop a conversation when I no longer want to be a part of it, has made it a lot easier for me to talk to people in the first place.

144. Put the welfare of others first

Let other people be first. I find this tool comes into play especially when attending *simchas* (and even at my own Shabbos table). Don't grab to take the food first, or the biggest piece.

And, at home, try to do something that might help your wife sometimes, instead of always just doing your own little self-centered plans.

Also, in a more general sense, let other people have their way sometimes.

This is only loosely related, but this tool reminded me: There was one idea I had which kept me from getting so annoyed with people (and, I think the less annoyed we are, the more sober we are). What was it? That everyone is crazy, in one respect. There's the guy that has so much dandruff it's disgusting. So, that's his one free ticket. There's another guy who *davens* out loud and is really annoying--so that's his one free ticket. I have found that people (especially the people I only know on a very superficial level) only have one really annoying thing that stick out. If I grant them that, I can usually be much more at peace with them.

SERVICE

145. How are you?

Call 2 newcomers (a day, or a week) and ask them how they're doing. Also, you can drop a PM to someone on the forum just to say "Hi, how are you?"

Dovinisrael on this forum, once upon a time, wrote up this really psychedelic story about someone's brain being taken over by mutant insects or something (it was called Eli's Little *Averah* and the Invisible Mud Wasps. [HERE](#) is the link). It was a *mashal* (and not so far from the *nimshal*) about our addiction. Dovinisrael also happens to specialize in puns. Now, I forget how the pun worked (and I also forget most of the story, but he had some great graphics in there) but basically whenever you get caught up in thinking "HOW AM I," flip it, instead, and ask someone, "HOW ARE YOU."

146. How can I be of service?

You can ask this question to other people, and you can also ask it to yourself in order to change your focus to how you can be of service to other people.

147. Always say "yes" to SA (or GYE) requests

If you are asked to be of service, to be available, to be someone's accountability partner, or even just to speak with someone. It's enlightened self-interest; helping out other people in recovery is best for you, too.

148. Take on a service commitment

As far as the SA groups are concerned, there are a number of official positions, such as the group secretary, treasurer, and the guy who puts out the coffee (some positions require a certain amount of sobriety). There are also unofficial positions that you can find, such as helping the guy whose job it is to set up the chairs, etc.

As far as GYE is concerned, there are also plenty of opportunities to be of service, and you can even find something that you can commit to--be the guy to post the newcomer message to newcomers, etc. Send a PM to Guard, he is likely to have some ideas.

At one point Guard was looking for people to become experts in the GYE handbook and then direct people to the right pages, because most questions people have on the forum are already answered in there (but there aren't enough people who can point this out to them).

149. Sponsor others

But you can't give something that you don't have.

On the other hand, a paradox of recovery, once you've got something to give -- if you don't give it away, you don't keep it.

Also, in a less formal sense, look for those people who are new to recovery (or new to the forum) and can really use a bit of encouragement and a helping hand. Make a point to be there for them.

150. Buddy List

There's an SA buddy list with contacts available all around the world--find a sponsor, find a sponsee, or just find other program buddies (PM me for more details). There is also a GYE contact list which, I think, serves the same purpose (I don't have the information off-hand. Anyone want to be of service?)

151. Rotate out in good time

This applies to filling a service position. Usually each position has a specified term--maybe 3 months, or 6 months. After your term is up in any given position, leave. Give someone else a chance to also be of service.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE

152. Call two newcomers every day

This is as simple as taking someone's phone number when you first meet them, and then calling them up the next day to just say, "Hi, how are you."

On the forum, look out for newcomers. Say hello on their thread, send a brief PM.

You don't have to say (or write) anything long or fancy. The main message, I think, is that someone is out there who cares, and who is willing to help.

153. Share your experience, strength, and hope

In other words share about your past, present, and future. (Don't over-do the experience, though.) Your goal in sharing should be to lift the other person, to leave him (or them) better than you found them.

If you tell them just all about your miseries, you'll just make them more miserable.

It's so easy to focus on the negativity, and overlook the blessings in our life, and I think that's part of what feeds addiction. We need to start doing the opposite (and share that with others), and I think that's part of recovery.

154. Give your sobriety date

Or, state your length of sobriety.

Until I started keeping track of my sobriety, I didn't realize just how sick I was. I thought I had a problem maybe once every month or so. But then, when I signed up for the 90-day chart, I noticed that I had a hard time at first keeping clean for a week (I finally had an accurate picture of my sickness).

Also, stating your sobriety date helps you feel more accountable to stay sober. Sometimes the thought of announcing to a group, "I'm Elyah, and I'm a sexaholic. I've been sober for one day," when I had previously been sober for a good number of months, has kept me sober.

I think there's a lot of discussion on this forum about not getting caught up in counting days. I think, without counting days, there's really no way to tell how you're really doing. True, quality is what counts. But, I think if a person has trouble adding up quantity sobriety, it's a good indication that there probably isn't really any quality sobriety either.

Keep track of the days, but don't obsess about it. Don't think that just because you've broken your record you've made it to safety. Don't think that just because you passed the magic 90-day mark that you're cured (I have now made it beyond 90-days for my third time).

If you're having trouble, don't think one more day of sobriety will solve all your addiction problems. You've got to dig deeper than that, and you've got to pull out as many tools as you can to keep your sobriety. There's a lot more to do for the sake of recovery than just to strengthen your resolve to stay clean for one more day.

And, I have heard people lamenting the fact that they fell after X amount of clean days, and they'll never regain what they had. Such as, "I was clean for six months and then I fell, and it took me five years to get back to the same place." Perhaps I exaggerate about that a little. The way I see it, however, is that I used to fall a couple of times a week. I was taking a high enough dose of recovery to stay clean for a few months. I definitely gained something. However, it wasn't enough. So, after a fall, I increase the dose and move forward. I didn't lose the tools I had gained; I just needed to add to them.

155. Quit preaching - tell them about the illness

Here's what I had in my notes on this one:

Simply put: We have an on-switch in our brains for lust, and it works well. We also have an off-switch for lust, but it's broken.

A CT scan of someone watching porn looks the same as a CT scan of a crack cocaine user.

A little bit of lust creates a craving for more and more, until we act out.

The only solution is not to lust.

I'll add: Bill W. started off trying to help other alcoholics by telling them about his spiritual experience, and that had very little effect (the only one it helped was himself). It wasn't until he started sharing the exact nature of this malady, and his own story of being powerless over alcohol, that he started to keep other alcoholics sober, too.

156. Find your own Dr. Bob

In other words, in case you're not familiar with AA history, you need someone you can share deeply with. It's nice to have a list of phone numbers and to be able to reach someone when you're suffering from a lust attack or just to say hello. But, besides a bunch of new acquaintances, you should also look for someone in whom you can share and confide on a deeper and more personal level.

157. Laugh

Sobriety, and life, is supposed to be positive and enjoyable. Although it is necessary to be aware of our problem (or, problems), it is not healthy to obsess about it. One should reflect upon it at certain times throughout the day, but most of the time we should be focusing on, and living in the solution.

Even when we think about our problems, we should not be wallowing in self-pity. Rather, the main focus should be--what positive actions can I take to move forward?

Make an effort to do those healthy activities in life that bring you enjoyment.

Also, here's an abridged version of the Serenity Prayer I saw in a list of AA Slogans: "Lighten up!"

This concludes the list of tools I received at the Additional Tools for Recovery Workshop. I have a few more I wanted to add (and one I forgot, too)...

Part 4: Miscellaneous

158. Twelve Steps to Insanity

Sometimes, the best way to appreciate sobriety and recovery is to consider what the opposite looks like. Here is a piece called "12 Steps to Insanity":

TWELVE STEPS TO INSANITY

1. We admitted we were powerless over nothing - that we could manage our lives perfectly. We could also perfectly manage the lives of those around us.
2. Came to believe that there was no power greater than ourselves and that the rest of the world was insane.
3. Made a decision to have our loved ones turn their wills and lives over to our care even though they couldn't understand us at all.
4. Made a searching and fearless inventory of everyone we knew.
5. Admitted to the whole world the exact nature of everyone else's wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to make others give us the respect we thought we deserved.
7. Demanded that others do our will because we were always enlightened.
8. Made a list of all the persons who had harmed us and became willing to go to any length to get even with them all.
9. Got direct revenge on such people wherever possible except when to do so would cost us our lives or at least a jail sentence.
10. Continued to take inventory of others, and when they were wrong promptly and repeatedly told them about it.
11. Sought through complaining and self-medication to improve our relations with others as we could not understand them at all, asking only that they do things our way.
12. Having had a complete physical, emotional, and spiritual breakdown as a result of these steps, we tried to blame others and get sympathy in all our affairs.

159. The pre-recovery promises

In the same spirit of the previous tool, here's a piece called, "Pre-recovery Promises." It is adapted from

part of the Big Book where some the promises of recovery are written:

PRE-RECOVERY PROMISES

If we are lackadaisical about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we even get started. We are going to know new anger and a new sense of despair. We will not recognize the future nor wish to open the door on it. We will comprehend the word hopeless. We will know discouragement. No matter how far up or down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experiences will be an obstacle to others. That feeling of usefulness and self-worth will disappear. We will lose interest in selfless things and gain interest in ourselves. Self-denial will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook, full of despair, will remain the same. We will be unable to handle situations which we used to think we were in control of. We suddenly realized that we were doing for ourselves the things G-d would not do for us. Are these actually real promises? We think so. Unfortunately they are being fulfilled among us, often slowly, often quickly. They will always happen to us if we allow them.

160. Hang out with your own gender

This was actually in the original list under "friendships," and I can't believe I somehow skipped it.

This has many applications.

I hear a common addict rationalization (and, indeed, I have used it myself), IT WOULD BE SUCH A BIG *KIDDUSH HASHEM* if I, a *frum* (and recovering!) yid, would mingle a little bit here and just say how wonderfully I am doing and even just show everyone (especially the females) that *frum* (and recovering!) *yidden* can socialize just fine just like any normal person.

Well, here's a litmus test. How strong is that same desire to be a *Kiddush Hashem* by socializing with other males? The thought has probably never crossed your mind.

So, whether it's the opposite gender in recovery (note the GYE mechitza), at work, on the street, in the classroom, in your old E-mail contacts, "friends" on Facebook (if you haven't deleted your account yet), etc., or hosting seminary students and being such a good example for '*kiruv* purposes' (that was my favorite one when I saw someone do it), **STICK TO YOUR OWN GENDER!**

161. Write yourself a letter (and a reply)

I have used this tool in extreme emergency situations when I really needed to reach someone but was unable to do so. I wrote a letter as to what was bothering me and how I was feeling, and then I stopped and read the letter as if someone else had written it to me. Then I wrote a response as if I were writing to someone else.

If possible, it's better to deal with real people, as this tool runs the risk of staying stuck in your own head (which is part of the problem). Nevertheless, I have found it to be very helpful in case of emergency.

162. Slogans of Recovery

At times when I least feel like reading recovery literature (in the mood for lighter reading), but I know I need to, I pull out a huge list of AA Slogans and just browse through them. I posted a whole bunch of them on this thread a long time ago:

400 AA Slogans (also applicable to GYE)
([HERE](#) is the link)

163. Short prayer: G-d, please help me have a positive sobriety

164. Short prayer: G-d, please help me see straight

"See straight," now that I think of it, has got a double meaning. The one I intended is, as an addict, I easily mistake good for bad, and vice-versa. So, I ask G-d to help straighten out my thinking.

Regarding "positive sobriety," it's easy to get obsessive about DON'T DON'T DON'T!!! And to focus on every tiny little slip. So, I ask for G-d's help that life in general, and sobriety in particular, should be a positive experience. "Live in the solution, not in the problem." We can't forget the problem, but our main focus should be on what positive actions we can do now.

165. Increase your awareness of your perceptions and motives

Duvid chaim says that, in the course of his 12-step calls, if this is the only thing you gain out of it, then it's enough!

At first, you notice when you're about to act out and, being aware of what you're doing, you can take action to avoid acting out. But, after a while, you start become aware of increasingly subtle motives, and increasingly subtle states of that feeling of restlessness, irritability, and discontent (which, left alone, will compel a person to act out). You become more aware of the subtle workings of your ego trying to manage life on your own terms.

And, the earlier you catch these things and deal with them in a healthy way, the less you feel compelled to act out.

166. Talk, feel, trust

The line I heard that sold me on the 12-step program was from something I have seen labeled as, "The Newcomer's Welcome Statement," or something like that. One thing it said was that, in the course of our addiction we have learned the rules for life, "Don't talk, don't trust, don't feel." Something clicked for me--this disease is about isolation. I have been isolated my whole life, unable to talk, trust, or feel. I thought I needed to just read some Dale Carnegie books on public speaking, or just improve my self-confidence. My inability to talk was a direct result of this illness. And therefore, healing from this

inability to talk, trust, and feel, will be the result of recovery.

And, that's what is happening. I have a new group of friends and acquaintances with whom it's safe to share my innermost and darkest thoughts and feelings. I have come to trust them. And, as I start to dislodge these clogged up negative emotions--especially guilt, fears, and resentments, then positive emotions that I don't remember feeling much of before also come to the surface.

You can't just suppress your negative emotions and keep your positive ones; it's a package deal. As a result of hiding the negative, we have also lost the positive. When we start to uncover the negative and bring it into the light, the positive side also comes back to life.

Accepting ourselves for who we really are--both the good and the bad (and taking responsibility for who we are, rather than hiding from our true selves out of guilt and shame), I think is what helps most to move this process along.

167. The Ramban's Letter

Since avoiding resentments and developing humility are a key to recovery, I find the Ramban's letter is a good reminder for staying on track.

What is it? It's a letter that the Ramban wrote to his son. You can find the Hebrew in almost any siddur. Here is an English translation I found, though I don't vouch for its accuracy):

=====

The Ramban's Letter

Hear, my son, the instruction of your father and do not abandon the law of your mother. (1) Accustom yourself to speak all your words with gentleness to all people at all times. This will protect you from anger - which is an unfavorable trait that brings people to sin. And thus said our sages of blessed memory:

Whoever becomes angry all types of Gehinnom have power over him (2), as it states: Remove anger from your heart, and eliminate evil from your flesh (3) - and the evil that is meant here refers to Gehinnom, as it states: And also the wicked is destined for the day of evil. (4) And when you free yourself from anger, the trait of humility will enter your heart - for this is the finest quality of all favorable traits. As our Scripture says: The heel of humility is the awe of Hashem. (5) And through humility you will gain upon your heart the trait of awe. Because you will always know in your heart where you came from, where you will go and that you are delicate as a worm or a maggot in your lifetime and even more so at the time of death. Remember before whom in the future you will give a reckoning and an accounting for your deeds - before the King of Kings. As it states: The heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. (6) - how much more the hearts of men. (7) As it is states: Do I not fill up the heavens and the earth? says Hashem. (8)

When you contemplate all this, you will fear your creator and you will be guarded from transgression. And with these qualities you will be happy with your lot [in life].

When you accustom yourself with the quality of humility - to be reserved before all men and to fear before G-d and from transgression -then will the spirit of the divine presence and the radiance of His Glory rest upon you and [you will gain] life in the world to come.

And now my son, know and observe that the one who is haughty in his heart over his fellow creatures, rebels against the Kingdom of heaven. Because he glorifies himself with the royal garments of the Kingdom of heaven, as it states: Hashem reigns - he is clothed in glory. (9) And what is there for a person to make his heart haughty?

If he has wealth - it is Hashem who declares poverty and bestows riches. If it is because of honor, doesn't too belong to Hashem? As it says: And the riches and the honor comes from You. (10) And how can one glorify oneself with the honor of his Creator.

And if one glorifies himself because of his wisdom: He removes the speech of the trusty and takes away the wisdom of the elders. (11)

It is found that all is equal before the Omnipresent, because with His anger He makes the haughty fall, and with His will he raises up the fallen. Thus lower yourself and Hashem will raise you.

Therefore I will advise you how you should be accustom yourself to the trait of humility - to act with it always. All your words should be said with calmness, and your head should be bowed. Lower your eyes down to the ground, and direct your heart upward. And do not stare at a person when you speak with them. Each person should seem greater than you in your eyes - if he is more wise or wealthy than yourself, it is upon you to honor him.

If he is needy and you are wealthier or wiser, think in your heart that you are more obligated in your deeds than him and he is more meritorious than you when he does good deeds. Because if he transgresses, it is unintentional, and if you do, it is deliberate.

In all your conversations and all your deeds and your thoughts, at all times, think in your heart as if you are standing before the Holy one blessed be he and that His *Sh'china* (divine presence) is upon you, because His Glory (Honor) fills the world. And let your words be said with fear and awe like a servant who stands before his master - and act with timidity before all men. And if a person calls you do not answer with a loud voice - just respond with calmness as if you are standing before your mentor.

And be attentive to learn Torah with diligence so that you can fulfill it. When you rise from your book - reflect on what you learned if there is something that you can incorporate into your daily life. Search into your deeds in the morning and night - and thus you shall devote all your days to in repentance.

Remove from your heart all your worldly preoccupations when you pray, and prepare your heart before the Omnipresent, blessed be He. Purify your thoughts and reflect upon the words before they leave your mouth. Thus you shall do all the days that your breath remains, with each and every thing, and thus you will be spared from transgressing. Through this your words, your actions, and your thoughts will be proper. Your prayers will be meritorious, clear and pure, meaningful and accepted before G-d, Blessed be He - as it states, You will prepare their heart and You will cause their ears to hear. (12)

Read this letter once every week and not less - to apply it and you will walk after Hashem - May He Be Blessed - always, so that you will be successful in all your endeavors and you will inherit the world to

come that is hidden for the righteous. And every day that you read this letter, whatever that you desire in your heart will be answered by heaven... forevermore. Amen.

Selah!

References: (1) Proverbs 1:8, (2) Nedarim 22a, (3) Ecclesiastics 11:10, (4) Proverbs 16:4, (5) Proverbs 22:4, (6) Kings I 8:27, Chronicles II 6:18 (7) Proverbs 15:11, (8) Jeremiah 23:24, (9) Psalms 93:1, (10) Chronicles I 29:12, (11) Job 12:20, (12) Psalms 10:17.

168. Torah

Can't ignore the fact that Torah, somehow, in some supernatural way, has a purifying and uplifting effect on us. I saw in the *Sheilas* and *Teshuvos* of the *Nodeh B'Yehuda* (Ohr HaChaim 35), an incident where a *bochor* was boarding in someone's home, was having relations with the lady of the house quite frequently, and in the end married her daughter. After a couple of years of this, he was doing *teshuva* and wanted to know if he needed to inform the husband, which would forbid his wife.

The response began, first of all, saying how, despite everything, it may very well be in the *zchus* of this *bochor's* learning that he was able to eventually turn around and do *teshuva*.

I would also add that, as Torah observant Jews, we have noticed that something is wrong much earlier than it would take someone to notice who is not Torah observant. If we're looking at women on the street and touching ourselves a bit and can't stop, we know something's wrong. I think, without those pages of the Shulchan Aruch we are so familiar with, it might have taken us much longer, and we might have had to sink much further and lost a whole lot more, before we decided we need help. In fact, our standard for what's wrong is so high that we can come in here totally obsessed and yet truly wonder if anything is really wrong with us after all.

Now, more specifically about learning Torah: I would say that we have to be careful HOW we learn Torah. It is very easy to use Torah learning to sink more into our isolation, to escape responsibility even more while feeling fully justified, and it can feed our egos like nothing else can.

The **process** of learning is as important, and perhaps more so, than gaining mastery of the material. Overall, learning Torah should make us more open-minded, more able to consider someone else's point of view, and more tolerant of other people. Also, it should make us more considerate of other people, and more capable of making balanced and mature decisions.

In short, if you are learning by yourself most of the time because nobody else is quite right for you, or if you are going through *chavrusas* like a laxative addict through toilet paper, if your wife just had her third child in three years and desperately needs your help but you're nowhere to be found in the house at any time because you're always too busy learning (hiding in a sefer), then your Torah learning is probably not contributing to your recovery and may very well be hindering it.

I also want to add--there's a lot of debate on this forum whether recovery can be achieved strictly through Torah sources, or whether we have to rely on non-Jewish sources. I have put a lot of thought into this, and I'll say this: After each fall I have had, I tried to examine what was missing in my recovery that led me to fall. Where was I weak, what was I lacking. On my last fall (nearly a year ago), I realized that, although I was on these 12-step phone calls, I didn't have enough actual people in my own time-zone that I could speak to and meet with. It was the fellowship, the real human support, that was lacking. So, even if the text of the Mesilas Yesharim truly does contain everything I need to stop masturbating (and even if I truly was wise enough to extract all this information on my own and apply it correctly on my own), I WOULD STILL BE LACKING THE SUPPORT, which is a major ingredient to recovery. Even if I join a *mussar vaad*, I can tell them, "I have a *nisayon* with the *yeitzer hara*," but I can't tell them, "I feel like a demon possesses me and forces me to masturbate nearly every time I step in the shower." And, it is such specific sharing with people who have similar experiences which has been most helpful to my recovery.

169. Is this good for my recovery or not?

This is a handy dandy question to ask yourself when you're wondering about whether or not you should do something.

170. Whatever I place my recovery in front of will flourish; whatever I place in front of my recovery won't

Another consideration, particularly regarding our involvement in recovery. Very often we sound like this, "I can't make the phone calls, or go to meetings," or, "What if my wife ever finds out I'm in recovery," or, "I can't miss afternoon seder!" Suddenly, when it comes to recovery, we're so responsible and nothing in the world can possibly budge. However, we didn't quite make the same calculations (or, we don't make quite the same calculations) when it comes to our acting out.

Here's another AA slogan which is relevant here:

PUT RECOVERY FIRST TO MAKE IT LAST.

171. Humility, Fearlessness, Honesty

These are the BIG 3 traits--assets, that striving for them is a major part of recovery.

The opposite, Arrogance, Fearfulness, and Dishonesty, are traits--liabilities, which quite obviously feed our sickness.

To cleanse ourselves of these liabilities and to develop these assets, in one respect, is to change ourselves. Though, in truth, I think it is a process of just uncovering who we really are deep inside. It's not that we don't HAVE these assets. We DO, and we certainly conjure them up at time, even in our

worst moments. We just need to develop them and to activate them more frequently.

172. Watch out for RID

RID stand for Restlessness, Irritability, and Discontent--in case you didn't know.

It is these feelings that lead us to act out, and it is a lot easier to notice when these feelings are starting to develop (the sooner the better) and to deal with them in a healthy way than it is to stop ourselves from acting out when we're only a click away from pornography.

I've mentioned this idea before (and probably more than once), but I thought RID deserved it's own tool.

173. BYOB--Bring Your Own Book

This tool is helpful for when you have to ride public transportation. Take something that's really interesting and will keep your mind and eyes occupied rather than sitting around and staring at every female who enters the bus or who is walking around on the street.

Please do not use this tool when driving your own vehicle.

COMMENT FROM MEMBER OF GYE FORUM: For those who can't read in moving vehicles, I suggest shiurim (that's what I do during my numerous travels). This is also permitted if you are driving your own vehicle, unless you are a new driver.

174. Write your old ideas

Part of recovery is discarding our old ideas and adapting new ideas along with a whole new design for living. I wrote up the beliefs and ideals that I picked up along the way and have held so dearly for most of my life--they come primarily from breath-mint commercials and TV sit-coms. Here are a few of them:

- * If I get lucky enough to make eye-contact with the right person (usually happens while crossing a street), I will achieve instant bliss (we'll magically end up in bed together within the next fifteen seconds).
- * The goal of life and the only way to be happy is to have as much sex as often as possible with as many people as possible. (And everyone else shares this belief, too).
- * If you don't have sex, or if you don't want to have sex, something is seriously wrong with you.
- * Sex is the only thing that matters in life.

This next one isn't directly related to sex, but is sure results in a lot of that Restlessness, Irritability, and Discontent which will eventually compel me to act out for relief:

* There's no problem in the world that can't be solved in 90 minutes or less (usually 30 minutes, including three commercial breaks).

Recovery must include letting go of these ideas, and adapting healthy ones.

175. SA and Recovery Audio Recordings

Here's a huge stash (hundreds of recordings) at these two links:

[SA Recordings](http://www.mediafire.com/sa_recordings) (http://www.mediafire.com/sa_recordings)

[Daily Reprieve](http://www.mediafire.com/dailyreprieve) (<http://www.mediafire.com/dailyreprieve>)

And I'd like to point out two specific sets of recordings:

176. Back to Basics

([HERE](#) is the link)

This is a recording of four one-hour sessions which covers all twelve steps. It's very straightforward and very practical.

177. Big Book on Audio

([HERE](#) is the link)

This is an audio recording of the Big Book.

178. Al-Anon prayer

I cannot control or change my friends or loved ones, so I release them into Your care for Your loving hands to do with as You will. Just keep me loving and free from judging them. If they need changing, God, You'll have to do it; I can't. Just make me willing and ready to be of service to You, to have my shortcomings removed, and to do my best.

One of the most painful aspects of recovery is seeing our own lives improve while yet seeing other people who are so near and or dear to us who could benefit so much from what we have gained. However, they remain either unable or unwilling to follow a similiar path.

All we can do is change ourselves. We cannot change our wives, our parents, our children, our siblings, our friends, or our neighbors. A big part of recovery is being able to accept other people for who they are, and to focus only on cleaning up our own side of the street. Sometimes someone does walk into the doors of recovery, and we help them for a while, but then they leave and slide further and faster downhill. That is the most painful, I think. But, you can't help someone who doesn't want to be helped.

Along the road to recovery I think we will find opportunities to help people who need help and want it, and when those opportunities come along we should hope they should be obvious to us. If we need to force anything, we're probably putting our efforts somewhere where they are not welcome.

Also, as radical as this statement may be, it may very well be that the road to recovery you have found is not necessarily the same road that other people need to take.

"Love and tolerance for all is our code." It has to be, otherwise we'll go crazy.

APPENDIX

For your convenience, I put many of the resources mentioned throughout this E-book together in one place, here in this appendix.

THE STEP ZERO QUESTIONNAIRE

Compulsion: Having started the process with one fix, one drink, one look, one thought, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our sensitivity to lust, we are completely in the grip of a destructive power greater than ourselves.

Have I stopped compulsion in all its forms?

Have I stopped feeding lust? – through my eyes? – my fantasies? – my memories?

Have I stopped living only and always inside my own head? This means, do I keep my thoughts, battles, and struggles a secret? How do I deal with those [people] outside of myself?

List and identify my forms of compulsion.

What are my methods of acting out?

What are my biggest triggers?

What do I try to stop the compulsions?

Do I have an accountability partner? If yes, explain the relationship. If now, why not?

What am I willing to do to achieve sexual sobriety?

Am I getting involved in the program of SA [or in the forum of GYE]? How? What do I do daily?

Do I have a sponsor?

Obsession: The fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

What do I obsess over?

Do I talk about the overwhelming impact that the temptations have on me to my sponsor, accountability partner, or group [for the forum: Do I post about it or PM to anyone]?

TWENTY QUESTIONS

20 Questions found in the White Book (pg 8) to gauge the severity of your addiction. Count how many times you answer "yes":

1. Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thinking or behavior?
2. ...That you'd be better off if you didn't keep "giving in"?
3. ...That sex or stimuli are controlling you?
4. Have you ever tried to stop or limit doing what you felt was wrong in your sexual behavior?
5. Do you resort to sex to escape, relieve anxiety, or because you can't cope?
6. Do you feel guilt, remorse, afterward?
7. Has your pursuit of sex become more compulsive?
8. Does it interfere with relations with your spouse?
9. Do you have to resort to images or memories during sex?
10. Does an irresistible impulse arise when the other party makes the overtures or sex is offered?
11. Do you keep going from one relationship or lover to another?
12. Do you feel the right relationship would help you stop lusting, masturbating, or being so promiscuous?
13. Do you have a destructive need-a desperate sexual or emotional need for someone?
14. Does pursuit of sex make you careless for your self or the welfare of your family or others?
15. Has your effectiveness or concentration decreased as sex has become more compulsive?
16. Do you lose time from work for it?
17. Do you turn to a lower environment when pursuing sex?
18. Do you want to get away from the sex partner as soon as possible after the act?
19. Although your spouse is sexually compatible, do you still masturbate or have sex with others?
20. Have you ever been arrested for a sex-related offense?

If you answered "yes"...

1-5 times, Lust may be causing a few problems in your life and you probably have more of it than most people. You may or may not be a lust addict.

5-10 times, You may well be a lust addict. Attend SA meetings and see if you identify [see if you identify with "Daily Dose of Dov"].

More than 10 times, Good indication you are a lust addict.

A FEW RECOVERY PRAYERS

The Serenity Prayer

G-d grant me the
serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

Beginning of Day Prayer (BB 86-87)

O G-d, please direct my thinking, so that it may be divorced from self-pity and from dishonest and self-seeking motives. Let me make every decision and begin every action in You and continue it only through Your Inspiration. Throughout this day, show me the next step to take and to trust in Your care of me and my problems. Free me from all self-will and self-sufficiency. Help me to neither seek nor pray for selfish ends.

3rd Step Prayer

G-d, I offer myself to You - to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of life. May I do Your will always!. (BB p 63)

7th Step Prayer

My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that You now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding. Amen. (BB pg 76)

Prayer for Overcoming Fear

ALL my fears are self-centered. I surrender them to G-d. I humbly ask that He remove them and direct my attention to what He would have me be. Immediately I begin to outgrow fear.

JUST FOR TODAY

Just for today: I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle all my problems at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for today: I will be happy. Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

Just for today: I will adjust myself to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my "luck" as it comes, and fit myself into it.

Just for today: I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.

Just for today: I will exercise my soul in three ways: I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anybody know of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do—just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt: they may be hurt but today I will not show it.

Just for today: I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, keep my voice low, be courteous, criticize not one bit. I won't find fault with anything, nor try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

Just for today: I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for today: I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

Just for today: I will be un-afraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and will believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give back to me.

LITANY OF HUMILITY

From the desire of being esteemed,
Dear G-d deliver me.
From the desire of being loved...
From the desire of being extolled...
From the desire of being honoured...
From the desire of being praised...
From the desire of being preferred to others...
From the desire of being consulted...
From the desire of being approved...

From the fear of being humiliated...
Dear G-d deliver me.
From the fear of being despised...
From the fear of suffering rebukes...
From the fear of being calumniated...
From the fear of being forgotten...
From the fear of being ridiculed...
From the fear of being wronged...
From the fear of being suspected...

That others may be loved more than I,
Dear G-d, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be esteemed more than I...
That, in the opinion of the world,
others may increase and I may decrease...
That others may be chosen and I set aside...
That others may be praised and I unnoticed ...
That others may be preferred to me in everything...
That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should...

ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation--some fact of my life--unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in G-d's world by mistake. Until I could accept my illness, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes. (AA p.417).

GOD'S WILL DISCERNMENT TOOL

Before you are about to do something, ask yourself if it is:

1. honest
2. unselfish
3. pure
4. loving

A "yes" to ALL FOUR indicates that what you want to do is probably in line with G-d's will.

Also, ask yourself if what you are about to do is the following (the flip-side):

1. Dishonest
2. Selfish
3. Impure
4. Fearful

A "yes" answer to ANY ONE of these four indicates that what you want to do is not in line with G-d's will.

SA DAILY SOBRIETY RENEWAL

(Taken from the SA newsletter, "The Essay")

These questions are shared between recovery partners at the beginning of the day.

- 1) Are you willing to admit you are powerless over lust and sexual acting out, just for today?
- 2) Do you desire sobriety for the next 24 hours: freedom from sexual obsession and acting out, freedom from fear, resentment, shame, and isolation?
- 3) Are you willing to do whatever is necessary to protect this desire including spiritual reading, reaching out and calling others, prayer and meditation, physical care of your body, setting appropriate boundaries, and refusing all lust hits as toxic?
- 4) Just for today, do we commit to G-d and this group that we do not have to have sex with ourselves or anyone else (except a spouse) no matter what, realizing that at the end of this 24 hours we are free to continue with sobriety or go another way?
- 5) Do you understand that this renewal does not keep you sober (G-d does), but it does make you aware of yourself and accountable to others?
- 6) And, just for today, are you willing with me to hand over your will and the care of your life to the One Who kept you sober yesterday and has protected you from the full consequences of your lust in the past?
- 7) Have you done anything in the last 24 hours that you're ashamed of?
- 8) Are we aware of anything in our plans for the next 24 hours of which we might become ashamed? Any danger zones, slippery spots on the horizon, or hidden bottles we should bring to the light?

Close by exchanging at least one gratitude.

TWELVE STEPS TO INSANITY

1. We admitted we were powerless over nothing - that we could manage our lives perfectly. We could also perfectly manage the lives of those around us.
2. Came to believe that there was no power greater than ourselves and that the rest of the world was insane.
3. Made a decision to have our loved ones turn their wills and lives over to our care even though they couldn't understand us at all.
4. Made a searching and fearless inventory of everyone we knew.
5. Admitted to the whole world the exact nature of everyone else's wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to make others give us the respect we thought we deserved.
7. Demanded that others do our will because we were always enlightened.
8. Made a list of all the persons who had harmed us and became willing to go to any length to get even with them all.
9. Got direct revenge on such people wherever possible except when to do so would cost us our lives or at least a jail sentence.
10. Continued to take inventory of others, and when they were wrong promptly and repeatedly told them about it.
11. Sought through complaining and self-medication to improve our relations with others as we could not understand them at all, asking only that they do things our way.
12. Having had a complete physical, emotional, and spiritual breakdown as a result of these steps, we tried to blame others and get sympathy in all our affairs.

PRE-RECOVERY PROMISES

If we are lackadaisical about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we even get started. We are going to know new anger and a new sense of despair. We will not recognize the future nor wish to open the door on it. We will comprehend the word hopeless. We will know discouragement. No matter how far up or down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experiences will be an obstacle to others. That feeling of usefulness and self-worth will disappear. We will lose interest in selfless things and gain interest in ourselves. Self-denial will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook, full of despair, will remain the same. We will be unable to handle situations which we used to think we were in control of. We suddenly realized that we were doing for ourselves the things G-d would not do for us. Are these actually real promises? We think so. Unfortunately they are being fulfilled among us, often slowly, often quickly. They will always happen to us if we allow them.

SCRIPT FOR MAKING AMENDS

First, ask G-d for help. Then:

1. Our relationship isn't as good as it used to be...
2. and I regret that.
3. I feel like I have something to do with it.
4. What can I do to improve things.
5. BE QUIET. Just listen to whatever the other person says.

AL-ANON PRAYER

I cannot control or change my friends or loved ones, so I release them into Your care for Your loving hands to do with as You will. Just keep me loving and free from judging them. If they need changing, God, You'll have to do it; I can't. Just make me willing and ready to be of service to You, to have my shortcomings removed, and to do my best.

HYPERLINKS

[Additional Tools for Recovery](#), thread on GYE forum

<http://www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=4870.msg128036#msg128036>

[Joe And Charlie AA workshop](#), from Silkworth.net

<http://www.silkworth.net/freestuff.html>

saico@sa.org, for information about SA

[xa-speakers.org](#), lots of recovery resources

[Eli's Little Averah and the Invisible Mud Wasps](#)

https://dl.dropbox.com/u/22530846/Eli%20ver%203_12.pdf

[400 AA Slogans \(also applicable to GYE\)](#)

<http://www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=1412.msg37411#msg37411>

[SA Recordings](#), huge stash of SA audio recordings

http://www.mediafire.com/sa_recordings

[Daily Reprieve](#), another huge stash of SA audio recordings

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[Back to Basics](#), audio recording of four one-hour sessions which covers all twelve steps

<http://www.mediafire.com/dailyreprieve#mb80a4u8qnp9>

[Big Book on Audio](#)

<http://www.mediafire.com/dailyreprieve#8u6ij23rutiec>