



The GYE Handbook



PART 1 20 Practical Tools for Breaking Free

PART 2 30 Attitude & Perspective Principles

Important Note: This handbook contains information that may be deemed as sensitive and should not be passed around without careful discretion.

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

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With deep respects,

Aaron Feldman

אהרון פעלדן
ברוך הבא וברוך יומו
아버지 חיים לוי

הרב אהרון פעלדן
רב דקלה דר' אהרון פעלדן
רב דקלה דר' אהרון פעלדן
רב דקלה דר' אהרון פעלדן

שרגא האגר (אדמו"ר מקאשוב)

ר' שלמה אליאהו מילר

Rosh Kollel of the Kollel Avreichim Institute, Toronto

רב אברהם יהושע טברסקי
Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, MD
Founder, Medical Director Emeritus

ר' יצחק אלעזר מאסקוביץ שלייט'א
רב דקלה דר' ים – שאץ, ונשיא ישיבת אור תורה – מאנס'

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Hope Has a Home.®

Abraham J. Twerski, M.D.

Founder and Medical Director Emeritus

January 24, '10

Although it is my policy not to give endorsements, I must make an exception in the case of the Guard Your Eyes website.

I doubt that at any time in our history has there been as grave a threat to the morality of our people and to the stability of the Jewish family as the plague of addiction to internet pornography. I vaguely recall reading that before the Ultimate Redemption, Hashem will remove all restraints from the Satan, and I think that the plague of addiction to pornography is the fulfillment of this prediction.

If it were possible to restrict access to the internet, this would be ideal. Unfortunately, this cannot be achieved, and we must deal with reality.

There is no immunity to this problem. It has affected young and old, men and women, and even learned and otherwise Torah-observant people, who have been trapped in the addiction.

I try to contribute to this website, because it is virtually the only effective method available. I am aware of a number of cases who were rescued from this destructive addiction by this website, which provides support and guidance.

The "Guard Your Eyes" website is saving lives and families. Much more can be done to extend this invaluable program, but support is necessary to allow its continuing function and expansion. Supporting this life-saving cause is a great mitzvah.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abraham J. Twerski".

Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, MD
Founder, Medical Director Emeritus

Some Testimonials

I've printed out the handbooks and I've been working my way through them. I have to say that they are utterly brilliant. My favorite thing about them is that they provide me with so many different TOOLS to fighting the addiction. I really used to feel ILL-EQUIPPED in dealing with the dreaded urge, and all I'd be able to tell myself was things like 'come on, just fight it' or 'try harder', without really having any idea of HOW to effectively and creatively work around the problem. Kol Hakavod for providing this service!

- Yisrael

I have been reading and rereading and re-rereading your handbooks. They are great!. I think that the info on this site should be made available to all Mechanchim because there is definitely a strong lack of awareness in this area.

- Boruch

Thank you for the handbooks on lust addiction. I printed them out and read every word very carefully. It made me realize that if one wants to, there is no excuse not to stop. There are so many effective ways to challenge this addiction. We can only blame ourselves if we do not.

- Ilan

"The handbooks are excellent, pure gold! The information they contain is unbelievable. It really takes all of the things I've read since I joined the website and forum and puts them right in front of you, giving a clear framework for anyone who wants to recover.".

- Shmuel

"The GYE Handbook is to religious lust addicts what the Big Book is to alcoholics".

- Ahron

"I am a respected member of the community. I have been unsuccessfully battling this problem for at least 40 years. I read thoroughly the GYE handbook and would like to make the author my Rebbe. "K'mayim karim al nefesh ayefoh" (like cold water on a parched soul), this masterpiece has re-instilled a hope within me that maybe I can really be what the members of my community think of me. I pour out my heart to the Aibishter that one day I'll be able to help you rather than enlisting your help. I wish there were words to convey the magnitude of my bracha to you, for your hatzlacha is the hatzlacha of Klal Yisrael."

- Sent anonymously by e-mail

Welcome

Although we may have been raised religious, we found ourselves acting in ways that went against what we had been taught. Sometimes we came to believe that we never really had *Emunah* in the first place, or that we were simply “weak-willed” people with a “stronger than usual” *Yetzer Hara*.

After a while, we may even have come to think that we were **anyway** too far gone, and that Hashem surely despised us by now, or had abandoned us.

Then we found the **GuardYourEyes Network** - an entire community of Jews **just like us**.

We discovered that we weren’t alone. We learned that these behaviors are highly addictive, and what had started out many years ago as innocent curiosity or typical “teenage” problems, may have led us into a full blown addiction.

We learned that we really **COULD** change. All that was needed to begin our journey was **acceptance** that we had a problem.

The soul of every Jew cries inside of them, but we had accustomed ourselves to blocking out that cry. With proper guidance though, we began to discover that the *Emunah* we thought we never had **was really there all along**.

The word “kofer” comes from the word “covered over” (as in the word “kapores”). The faith of even the biggest Jewish *kofer* is only “covered over”. **Every Jew** believes deep down. It is an instinct that we inherited in our very genes, going all the way back to *Avraham Avinu*. And like birds that can fly thousands of miles back home without ever having learned how, **all Jews** find their way home if they just follow their hearts.

We discovered that Hashem had not abandoned us after all, but rather had a beautiful plan for us. And as we joined the GYE community, we began to see that plan unfold.

Every Jewish life is a song in Hashem’s honor. After 120, we will stand before Hashem and cry as the most beautiful song of “our lifetime” is played back before us. We will finally understand how much **Hashem truly loved us all along**, and that all the suffering and distance that we felt during our lives were really all part of a magnificent harmony.

Hashem has waited all this time for us to **read these lines** and feel the stirrings of hope awaken inside us. **Today** we will begin to feel the harmony of that beautiful song Hashem is playing with our lives, using the strings of our hearts as the notes...

Welcome Home!

Welcome to the Guard Your Eyes community, a vibrant network and fellowship of Jews of all affiliations, struggling to purify themselves and break free of inappropriate behaviors. Our network is comprised of a hotline, a website: www.guardyoureyes.org, a pulsating forum, weekly phone conferences, daily Chizuk e-mails, therapists and live 12 step groups. We also help people find accountability partners and sponsors, and we have a 90-Day chart where our members can sign up to chart their successes and keep a log of their journey to recovery.

For the first time, Jews have where to turn to for help in this area, as well as an entire network of services, tools, tips and group support to help break free of the insidious grasp of this addiction. All our work is free of charge and we zealously protect the complete anonymity of all our members. On our forum, charts, hotlines and the phone conferences, only nicknames and non-revealing e-mail addresses are used. For starters, you may want to make yourself an anonymous e-mail address (something like growingJew@gmail.com), as you enter our community.

This handbook can be used by individuals who struggle with lust at any level, if they have tried to stop on their own and have not been successful until now. It can also be used by Rabbis, *Mechanchim*, *Mashgichim*, therapists and community leaders, who can learn to help others who struggle in this area. Unfortunately, this issue has reached epidemic proportions in the religious community today, mainly due to the privacy and accessibility that the Internet provides.

Part 1 provides the **practical steps** that we can take to break free of these addictive behaviors; starting out with the most basic steps to try, and continuing on through the more intense and life-changing steps - if necessary. **Part 2** of this handbook focuses on the proper attitude to maintain in this struggle.

Our sages have called *Shmiras Habris* "Yesod", meaning "Foundation". The foundation of a building is "underground" and no one sees it, yet it holds up the entire building! *Shmiras Habris* is the hidden part of a Jew, it's the real you. If the foundation of a Jew is weak, his whole spiritual structure is in danger of collapse.

With the proper guidance, we start to see genuine changes in ourselves that we never believed were possible. At GYE we are finally joining together, for ourselves and for all future generations, to strengthen the **Yesod** - the very foundation of our people.

Help us spread the word. Download this handbook from our website at www.guardyoureyes.org and share it with others, either in PDF format or by printing it out.

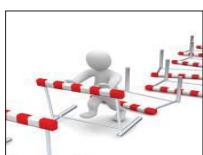
The Guard Your Eyes network has helped roughly 1,000 Jews get back on a path of sanity, self-control and healing, and has touched the lives of thousands more.

We attribute our success to 5 factors:



1) Experience:

The tools of our recovery program were developed with guidance from the best experts in the field and through the personal experience of hundreds of dedicated Jews who successfully broke free of their addiction and are determined to help others.



2) A Novel Approach:

Our recovery system is not only unique for the Jewish community, but unique in the world, in that we address the many different levels of addiction with a program that uses progressively more "addiction oriented" tools based on the level of the dependence. For example, there are many people who just started to slip in these areas and can get out of it with the proper perspective, filters, some basic safe-guards and some accountability. Others need far more intense solutions, such as our 12-Step phone conferences and referrals to live 12-step groups and therapists. All in all though, this program promises a solution for everyone, no matter how advanced the addiction may have progressed.



3) Anonymity:

The many tools and services on our network are mostly either on-line, in print or by phone. What makes this so powerful is that it ensures complete anonymity for those who turn to us for help. This is one of the greatest secrets to our success, because anonymity, especially in these sensitive areas - and all the more so in the religious community, is one of the main inhibitions of people reaching out for help.



4) Accessibility:

We harness the very power of instant accessibility of the internet which has fueled this epidemic, to reach and help thousands of Jews throughout the world that conventional therapeutic approaches would otherwise not be able to reach.



5) Providing Hope:

The inherently pure Jewish souls caught in this addiction are often just yearning for a helping hand to give them that extra push they need to break free. By finding that they are not alone and that hundreds of others have succeeded through our tools, they are instilled with the determination and courage to change.

PART 1: THE TOOLS

20 PROGRESSIVE TOOLS FOR BREAKING FREE

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Table of Contents for Part 1: The Tools

Introduction to Part 1: The Tools

The GYE Program in a Nutshell

The 20 Tools:

1. STOP
2. Attitude and Perspective
3. Guarding the Eyes
4. Daily *Chizuk*
5. Alternate Fulfillment
6. Physical Activity
7. Making Fences
8. Cutting Down
9. A Leap of Faith: The 90 Day Journey
10. Extra Strong Fences: The TaPHSiC Method
11. Accountability
12. Group Support
13. Talk to the Experts
14. Helping Others
15. 12-Step Anonymous Phone Conferences
16. Live 12-Step Groups
17. Therapy
18. Medication
19. Rehab
20. The Very Last Resort

Introduction to Part 1

When a newcomer first comes to the GYE network, they can easily be overwhelmed and feel lost. They will see many tips and much advice, ranging from the most simple and basic techniques, such as daily chizuk, forums, the 90-day challenge and more, and on through more drastic steps, such as 12-Step groups, therapy and even medication. It is often hard for the newcomer to pinpoint exactly how "addicted" they really are, and what kind of steps are the most appropriate for them to try. For example, obviously a beginner is not going to jump straight into psychotherapy or join a live 12-Step group, in the same way we don't try to treat the common flu with chemotherapy.

And that is the goal of Part 1 of this handbook. We have attempted to put together a guide of the practical tools that we in the Guard Your Eyes community have found useful. And we try to present them in a progressive order that goes more-or-less from the most basic and fundamental tools, and on through the more intense and life-changing recommendations.

The ideas and tools we share here, as well as the order they are presented in, are nothing more than suggestions. We are only sharing what many in the GYE community have found to work. You may try subtracting, adding, or jumping steps, as you see fit. We would be happy to hear if you feel that something has worked better or differently for you. We may even add it in future versions of this handbook (contact us through our website).

It is our hope that with this step-by-step tool guide, every person who struggles with lust addiction, no matter how mild or severe their addiction may be, will find guidelines that can help them achieve full recovery. All we need to do, is to start from the beginning and begin to check off the steps/tools that we have - or have *not yet* - tried. Should we find that we could not successfully break free even after applying the initial advice of this handbook, we will be able to find increasingly powerful and more addiction-oriented solutions, ensuring that we will eventually achieve a complete recovery be"H.

We must be aware of the importance of utilizing the increasingly earnest solutions presented below, in the event that we are **not** able to break free with the initial tools we try. The addiction is a disease, and if not dealt with properly, only gets worse. Addiction leads us down a path of pain and self-destruction, until we stand to lose everything important to us, in this world and the next.

Often people complain that they have read Part 1 of this handbook once or twice, but they are still experiencing falls. It is important to realize that although this handbook may make an "interesting read", its purpose is to be IMPLEMENTED. The tools can't work unless they are "used", not just read :-)

It is advisable to first read this handbook all the way through, from beginning to end, and afterwards to start again from the beginning and work through each tool more carefully. On the second time around we can try to start implementing each tool more seriously into our lives.

The first 18 tools of this Handbook are not intended for those whose behaviors may have overstepped the boundaries of the law or are causing harm to others. In such cases, please skip straight to tools 19 and 20 and seek immediate psychiatric evaluation **before the next victim is claimed**.

The key to starting out in recovery is simply "Acceptance". We must accept that we have an addiction to lust before we can start to heal. Otherwise, we will read through this handbook and say to ourselves: "*they're not talking about me*".

This disease **does not get better on its own**. And marriage **does not** solve the problem of lust addiction either. As Rabbi Twerski wrote to one struggler:

"It is important to know that the addiction is under control before considering marriage. Marriage is not a hospital and does not cure addiction, and continuation of the addiction is likely to ruin a marriage".

We have to be ready to do **whatever it takes** to break free. Rabbi Twerski calls this addiction a 'spiritual cancer'. And to cure ourselves from this 'cancer', he says, "**nothing** should stand in our way".

It is our fervent hope that those who still stand in the beginning stages of the addiction will take heed and learn from the experience of those who have already fallen to "rock-bottom". One of our goals at Guard Your Eyes is to help people **"Hit Bottom while still On Top"**. By helping people understand the "nature" of this addiction and where it ultimately leads to, we hope that they will take the necessary steps to break free of the disease while they are **"Still on Top"** and their lives remain intact.

The GuardYourEyes Program in a Nutshell

GuardYourEyes uses a unique approach to help people, by recognizing that there are many different levels in the struggle for "Shmiras Ainayim" and "Shmiras Habris". We have summarized here in a nut-shell, the suggestions that we found work best for strugglers at various levels.

THE EIGHT LEVELS

1

"I struggle with shmiras ainayim, desires and fantasies (like most males)"

Suggestions

Filters: Get a good filter for all your internet enabled devices. We can help you find what's best for you on our website or on our filter hotline (coming soon). Be in touch with our filter Gabai at filter.gye@gmail.com. We highly advise having your wife, a friend or the filter Gabai hold the password/s for you.

Daily Chizuk: Sign up to the daily 'Shmiras Ainayim' Chizuk e-mails, which offer daily tips and chizuk on dealing with today's environment, guarding our eyes, dealing with fantasies, struggling with the Yetzer Hara, etc.

Read Up: The GYE website has hundreds of inspiring articles which can provide you with tips and chizuk on dealing with the struggle. These articles appear under the "Tips" section, the "Q & A" and other sections.

Be Aware / Get Educated: The GYE website provides articles, shiurim and video clips (coming soon) from mechanchim, Rabbanim and experts, to help you be informed and up-to-date on the spiritual dangers of today's technology.



Join the Community: Join our "Prevention" forum (coming soon) to exchange ideas with other balabatim, parents and Mechanchim looking for the best solutions on how to deal with the nisyonos of our generation, both for ourselves and for our children.

2

"I have stumbled and 'acted-out' on rare occasions, but I believe I can abstain 'indefinitely' if I put in some effort and remain determined."

(The term "**acting out**" means either viewing inappropriate material and/or *hoto'as zera livatala*. It also includes promiscuous or illicit relations, but in the religious community these behaviors should be generally treated as indicative of a more severe level of addiction.)

Suggestions (in addition to previous)

Reporting Software: Install Reporting Software on top of your filter, to have lists of all questionable websites sent to a friend or Rav that you respect and would be ashamed to disappoint. We suggest either webchaver.com, eBlaster from Spectorsoft.com, or puresight.com (which combines a filter and reporting software in one). Give the password/s to the filter Gabai.

Attitude and Perspective: Read Part 2 of the GYE Handbook to understand the nature of this struggle, and to learn how to use it as a spring-board for personal growth and divine service.



Shmiras Ainayim Fences: Build up stronger fences for your eyes such as: avoiding challenging environments, avoiding websites like Facebook, YouTube, triggering movies, magazines, etc. (Read tool 3 of the GYE Handbook).

3

"I can abstain from 'acting-out' for long periods of time (more than 90 days), but somehow I keep falling into it again."

Suggestions (in addition to previous)

Acceptance: Addiction means something we want to stop but can't. Accept that you may have an "Addiction". Although there are many levels of addiction, the rules of the game change once we recognize this important truth about ourselves.

Stronger Daily Chizuk: Sign up for the 'Breaking Free' daily chizuk E-mails and get tips, advice and personal stories from the GYE community every day, on how to break free of these addictive behaviors.

Reading on our Forum: By reading through the posts of hundreds of other Yidden who struggle with this, you will internalize that you are not alone, and will get to learn the techniques and attitude that work for so many others.

Strong Fences: Make strong fences for yourself, such as writing a list of things to do before allowing yourself to fall, or making kablos to do something difficult if you fell. (See tool 7 of the GYE Handbook).



Stronger Shmiras Ainayim fences: Get serious about this. Recognize how easily triggered we are. We need to start avoiding mixed areas when possible, all non-religious movies, newspapers, magazines, and even non-frum news websites, entertainment, etc.

Read up: Read through the hundreds of articles on our website, such as the Tips section, Q&A and Stories to learn more about beating these addictive behaviors. Go to the 12-Step section of our website and learn the principles behind this world-renowned program for recovering from all types of addictive behaviors. (See tool 15 of the GYE Handbook).

Find daily activities to fill your time in positive ways: Begin to incorporate planned substitutes for boredom, procrastination and inactivity into your daily life. Create for yourself a more structured daily schedule which incorporates these new activities. Increase exercising on a regular basis (see tool 5-6 of the GYE Handbook) and see the "Kosher Isle" section on our website for suggestions of Kosher activities, Kosher websites, entertainment, shiurim and more.

4

"I've tried many times, but I can't generally abstain from 'acting-out' for significant periods of time (90 days or more)."

Suggestions (in addition to previous)

Add Meaning To Your Life: At this level it is important to focus on finding practical ways to add alternate fulfillment and meaning to your life. Find something new that will not only occupy you, but will also inspire you and get you out of yourself and into helping others. Some ideas could include chesed projects, involvement in the community, jobs and other activities that will give you inner satisfaction, keep you connected to the real world and out of isolation. (See tool 5 of the GYE Handbook).



Cutting Down: "The more you feed it the more you need it". Start cutting down over time by making red lines for yourself. Slowly wean yourself of these behaviors by progressively reducing the frequency and gravity of the stimulation and behaviors, thus pushing the battle lines further and further back. (See tool 8 of the GYE Handbook).

The 90-Day Journey: Take the "90 Day" leap of faith and stay clean for a full 90 days to break the addictive pattern in the mind (based on a recent scientific study). Use our 90-Day system to chart your progress and get encouragement as you advance to new levels. (See tool 9 of the GYE Handbook).

The TaPHSiC Method: Study and apply the TaPHSiC Method (see tool 10 of the GYE Handbook). This is one of the most powerful methods for frum people suffering from low-level addictions. It teaches us how to balance our Yiras Shamayim - which doesn't generally work very well in addictions, with tangible self imposed penalties. By wisely combining the two, as described in the TaPHSiC method, we can produce a strong fence to protect ourselves from the addictive behaviors.

Listen in to GYE's Phone Conferences: By listening in to a group of other Yidden who struggle with this and are working through a program of recovery, you will be reinvigorated with hope and no longer feel alone. You will also learn the techniques and attitude that work for so many others. GYE has phone conferences almost every day of the week - morning, noon and night!

5

I've tried everything in levels 1-4 and still can't stay stopped.

Suggestions (in addition to previous)

Anonymous 'Virtual' Support:

Forums: Post on the forum to get support from the rest of the GYE community. Tell your story, post a log of your journey, reach out for help when feeling weak, and strengthen each other. The forum is a life-line of chizuk and support for hundreds of people in exactly your situation.



Chat-Rooms: Chat with others in the GYE chat-rooms (coming soon).

Social Network: Cultivate a group of "Friends" to stay in touch with through GYE's cutting edge "social-network" system (coming soon).

A Partner: Get a partner through GYE's partner/sponsor system. Be in touch by e-mail/chat daily. Learn honesty, integrity and get accountability. Strengthen each other.

6

I've tried everything in levels 1-5 and still can't stay stopped.

Suggestions (in addition to previous)

Anonymous 'Phone' Support:

The GYE Hotline: Call our hotlines / experts for advice. (Coming soon: the new 'one-number' GYE international hotline - 24/6)



12-Step Phone Conferences: Get the power of group support. Join GYE's 12-Step phone conferences anonymously, and work this powerful program along with people in your situation, with guidance from an experienced moderator. This world-renowned program has helped millions of people around the world to break free of all types of addictive behaviors. GYE has phone conferences almost every day of the week - morning, noon and night!

A Sponsor: Get a sponsor through GYE's partner/sponsor system. A sponsor is someone clean for over 90 days, who can guide you and share what works for him.

Phone Partner: Get a partner to be in touch with **by phone** as often as necessary (through GYE's partner/sponsor system).

Build a Personal Phone Roster: Have a group of friends to call when feeling weak. PM friends on the forum and ask them for their telephone numbers, or join Dovid Chaim's phone group to get access to his phone-roster (currently with over 50 people).

The GYE Phone community: Join the 'GYE Phone community' (coming soon) and get access to hundreds of numbers of people like you, who want a community to reach out to.

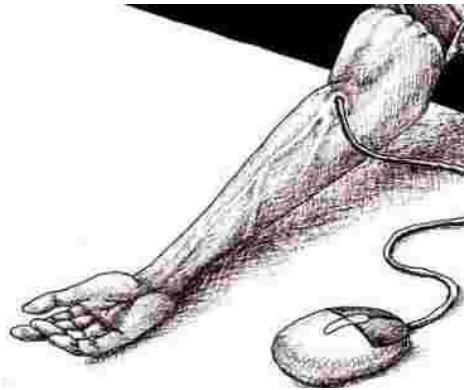
7

I've tried everything in levels 1-6 and still can't stay stopped.

Suggestions (in addition to previous)

'Live' Support:

Live 12-Step Groups / GYE Groups: Get the power of live-group support and open up to others face-to-face. Find a 12-Step group in your area, or register to join a live GYE group in your community (coming soon). Let go of the shame and open up to others. Find that you're not alone, at all. Use the power of the group to help you fight this disease, which is often much stronger than we are. Work the 12 step program with the group.



A Sponsor: Work the 12-Steps with an experienced sponsor. Let go of the need to be "in charge" and learn to listen to another human being. Let your sponsor guide you, and be ready to do whatever he tells you. Change from being a 'self-centered' person to a 'G-d centered' person.

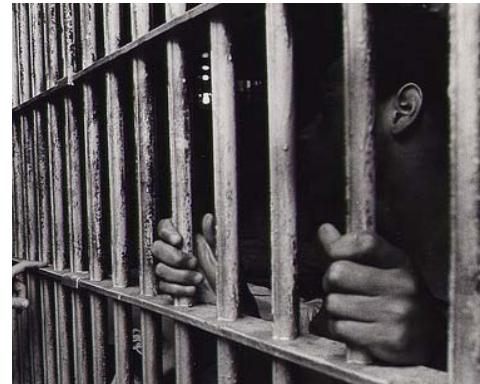
Therapy: See GYE's therapist referral pages to find a therapist / psychologist who is trained in addictions. Discover the root causes. Learn methods to beat addictive thinking and behaviors.

8

I've tried everything in levels 1-7 and still can't stay stopped. It seems that inner change is not possible with me!

Suggestions (in addition to previous)

Psychiatrist/Medication: A psychiatrist may be able to prescribe medications to help take the "edge" off the underlying mental conditions (such as OCD or depression) that may be exacerbating the addictive behaviors. (See tool 18 of the GYE Handbook).



Rehab: GYE has a list of rehab options with both inpatient and outpatient care for addictive behaviors. A complete change of environment, professional help and a regimen of intense workshops and therapy may be what it takes to finally break free (See tool 19 of the GYE Handbook).

Last Resort: For those who are in danger of harming others, there are chemical castration methods that are safe, have few side-effects and are not permanent. (See tool 20 of the GYE Handbook).

A Few Important Notes about the GYE Program in a Nutshell:

1) **"Optional" vs. "Essential":** Most of the tools that we suggest as "essential" for higher levels, will also help those on lower levels in letting go of lust. Generally speaking, lower level strugglers are invited to try higher level tools if they feel it would help them, or if it was recommended by someone with experience. Examples of such tools are: calling the GYE Hotline, joining the GYE forums and chat-rooms, joining the 12-Step phone-conference-groups (all mentioned in Levels 5-6 above). Warning: Going to live 12-Step groups is not recommended for low level addicts and may prove harmful.

2) **General suggestions that are helpful at all levels:** (1) Attempting to achieve progressive success in guarding our eyes, (2) developing the proper perspective and attitude on the struggle (by reading GYE materials and applying what we learn), (3) adding more meaning and fulfillment to our lives through alternative activities and pursuits, (4) increasing physical activity and exercise (5) staying out of isolation in everyday life, and (6) connecting (even anonymously) with others who have the same struggle through the GYE network.

The 20 Tools

Tool #1 STOP

The tools of this handbook are not designed to motivate us to stop - we have done that a thousand times already. Deep inside there's nothing we want more than to stop. Rather, the tools here are designed to help us **STAY STOPPED**. Therefore, tool 1 is to just make a decision to **STOP just for today**. The past is gone, and the future is not in our hands.

As long as we are still actively feeding the addiction, our brains are like on drugs and we cannot think straight. As one long-time GYE member wrote:

*I want to share with you a hard-earned truth, which I fought and struggled for months to reach: In order to fully absorb the lessons taught in the 'GYE Handbook' (or the 12-Step program), you have to be sober for a few days. Why? Because when one's head is absorbed in the insanity, **no matter how much the person might want to be clean, the filth is still tugging and affecting their perceptions**. This is not just my own opinion, it is written straight out in the 12-step program; i.e. that it is advisable to be sober for at least a few days before starting the program. And after trying both ways, clean and not clean, I GUARANTEE that no recovery program can be effective unless you are clean. It's not enough to want to diet if you're still eating chocolate cake. Your mind will NOT accept fully what it needs to accept while under the direct influence of the insanity.*

But deciding to stop does not mean that we won't ever fall again or that we'll succeed in staying stopped forever on our first try. However, it does mean that we are committed to trying, by being open minded to internalizing the principles and tools discussed in this handbook which have helped hundreds, if not thousands, break free.

Often we thought that if we would only feed the lust a little bit more and give it what it really wants, it would leave us alone. But it is exactly the opposite. Our sages have said: "**There is a small organ in a man, if one feeds it - it is hungry, if one starves it - it is satiated**". Although it is hard to stop and we may likely even experience withdrawal symptoms for a while, the more we successfully stay stopped in the short term, the easier it will get in the long term. Knowing this Yesod can make a **huge** difference.

We must realize that the Yetzer Hara/addiction wants our soul, not the pleasure. Otherwise, why is a thousand times never enough? Keep this 12-Step saying in mind: "**Just once is too much, and a thousand times is never enough.**"

The Steipler Gaon points out in the first volume of *Krayna D'igrisah* that anyone who keeps away from these forbidden pleasures is promised to receive the pleasures of life **from other areas instead**. And it follows that those who accept upon themselves the suffering that breaking-free entails, will save themselves much suffering in other areas of life.

Once we have decided we want to STOP, just for today, we are ready to read the rest of this handbook to learn the many tools, tips and techniques that can help us STAY STOPPED.

Tool #2 **Attitude & Perspective**

Having the proper perspective and attitude on this struggle can make all the difference. Often people write to us saying that **had they only known** the proper perspective and attitude guidelines that we discuss on our network when they were younger, they would have never fallen into the addiction in the first place!

Part 2 of this handbook is a collection of what we in the GYE community feel are **some** of the most important "Attitude" principles in this struggle. These are only suggestions of what worked for us. This handbook is a work-in-progress and we would be happy to hear from you what "attitude & perspective" ideas you think are important as well (contact us through the website).

We highly recommend reading these principles in the initial stages of your journey because they can be a cornerstone tool in our struggle. Not only can the proper perspective help us make solid progress, but often, various misconceptions that we had about the struggle contribute to the underlying reasons that we act out in the first place. For example, one *bochur* who was making an initial push for purity contacted us after a few days and wrote:

The initial enthusiasm has kind of worn off and my Yetzer Hara keeps telling me that it's not so bad. I can't keep up the spiritual enthusiasm for very long, and I don't see how I can possibly hold out much longer.

We sent him some of the sections from Part 2 of this handbook and the next day he wrote back:

Thanks so much! It helped tremendously! It makes me see this whole process in a completely different light. Instead on focusing on how depressing the struggle can be, I should be happy that I am "zoche" to have been given the opportunity for such great spiritual growth. Also, as you mentioned, it is likely that this is part of my main mission in this world. And not everyone is so lucky to know what his personal Avoda is! And the fact that every little bit counts even if we end up falling, and also that we shouldn't focus on staying clean

***forever** but rather only "one day at a time". I must say, that for the first time in years I feel there's real hope and I am actually looking forward to change!*

This is just one example of how a simple change in attitudes can make a big difference.

Therefore, it is vital that the proper perspective accompany us on our journey to recovery, from day one and throughout all the practical steps we take. With the proper attitude, we can succeed in learning to control the addiction in a much shorter time frame, and with far less extreme steps.

The "Attitude Section" of this handbook is divided into two parts. Part A brings attitude principles that apply to anyone who struggles in these areas, even if they don't yet have an "addiction". These are important principles for adolescents to read when their hormones kick in and the struggle becomes an increasingly dominant force in their lives. They are also important reading for any adult who feels overwhelmed by the struggle, at times. The principles of Part B are geared towards people who have tried to stop these behaviors and find that they keep falling back into them, i.e. for addiction levels. The principles in Part B address the nature of addiction and how dealing with it often necessitates real inner change.

Aside from the many important principles presented in the "Attitude Section" of this handbook, we can sign up and receive the daily Chizuk e-mails at www.guardyoureyes.org to continue learning and refining our perspective on this struggle every day. By reading the chizuk e-mails daily, we will quickly be swept up by the spirit of the Guard Your Eyes community and rapidly internalize many of the guidelines that will help us maintain the proper attitude and perspective on this struggle throughout our journey.

Tool #3 Guard Your Eyes

It is not for nothing that our network is called "Guard Your Eyes". Aside from having the proper attitude in this struggle - as discussed above, the most obvious *practical* step to conquering lust addiction is learning to guard our eyes. This is the cornerstone of breaking free, and it's obvious why: **We can't lust for that which we don't see.** When we guard our eyes, it's like we are avoiding the wrestling rink where the mighty Yetzer Hara is waiting to beat us up. If we simply don't enter the rink, he can't touch us!

Conversely, it is impossible to even *begin* to heal from lust addiction if we continue to be bombarded with triggers at every turn. As lust addicts, our minds have become accustomed to lusting. We can not gaze at stimulating imagery and expect not to be triggered. We cannot have it all within hands reach and expect

to be strong enough to stay away. We have grown addicted to the chemical rush in our mind that the lust brings on, much in the same way that an alcoholic craves his bottle. Therefore, if we are to break the addictive cycle, we must first keep lust at a distance to be able to begin our journey to recovery.

And one of the first things that this entails is installing a strong Internet filter.

Internet Filters

The GYE website has an entire division dedicated to helping people with filters. See www.Venishmartem.com. Filters range from "server" to "client" based, free or commercial, Jewish or non-Jewish. There is something there to meet anyone's needs. On our website, we can also learn about how the different types of filters work and what the terms mean, such as "server based", "client based", "white-list", "blacklist" etc...

If you're looking for a free, relatively solid and simple-to-use filter, we recommend the Venishmartem Cloud Filter (www.venishmartem.com/vcf). Your settings are changeable only by Venishmartem staff, and it cannot be removed. In cases where the VCF filter won't work for you (like on mobile devices), GYE also has a special "filter-Gabai" who can hold the password for you. This way, we never need to have the password ourselves and can feel truly free! Contact the filter-Gabai at filter.gye@gmail.com. (You may also ask advice on Venishmartem.com through our Help-Desk system on how to filter your handheld devices, such as Blackberries and iPhones.)

If we *must* have completely open Internet access for our work, we can still download accountability software, where e-mail reports are sent to a partner who will see all the questionable pages that we may have browsed. Please see www.webchaver.org or use e-Blaster at www.spectorsoft.com/gye. Even if we have a filter installed, it is important to have accountability software. When lust attacks, an addict can usually find a way around his filter, but if he knows that his partner will see all the sites he is trying to access, it will be a far stronger deterrent. If you are having a hard time finding a partner or you're too embarrassed, use our Knas Based Accountability program at www.gye.org.il/kba (minimum \$100 Knas for every bad report).

If our Internet filter does not block all questionable sites, we must carefully consider our motivation for every site we visit. We must begin to recognize the sly voice of our addiction. If it's a news site, we need to consider why we want to read certain articles. If it's because the site or article discusses inappropriate topics (fashion, celebrities, or "news items" relating to immoral behavior), or even if it *might* discuss them and the *Yetzer Hara* (read: **addiction**) wants us to find out *for sure*, then we must learn to hold back and not click on the links. In general, it is important to limit the number of sites we visit to a small list and question any time we feel the need to visit a site that is not on the list.

In healing from this addiction, we need to learn to be very honest with ourselves. If we find that we can't control our surfing habits, we need to admit it and make stronger fences, such as limiting our time online, making concise lists of sites we allow ourselves to visit, getting better filters/accountability software or setting the current filter's settings to a higher protection level.

We highly suggest getting solid Internet filters that block any questionable sites. The best type of filters are Jewish server-based filters like Jnet, Koshernet, Yeshivanet and Internet Rimon (in Israel). And of course, the best level of protection is "White-list", which means that all sites are blocked except for specific sites that we can ask the company to open for us (or sites that the company has already checked and white-listed). If the "white-list" option is impossible for us to have due to *Parnassa* requirements, the filter should at least be set to the highest protection setting that we can afford to use, even if that means less entertainment.

It is important to realize though, that the goal of the filter is only to keep it "out of sight and out of mind". It is not going to remove the possibility of accessing indecent material altogether. If a person is determined enough, they will often be able to find ways to bypass filters, and even if not, they will always be able to find many other venues to access inappropriate material. Ultimately, the change must come from within, with a sincere desire to stop lusting. (See Part 2 of this handbook for more on how to achieve this sincerity).

The filter acts mainly as a "*heker*" (a reminder), similar in a sense to what our Sages tell us about *Palti ben Layish* (to whom Shaul Hamelech gave over David's wife). Palti was alone every evening with Michal (who Chazal tell us was one of the most beautiful women) and yet he never stumbled because of a sword that he placed between the two of them, saying that whoever bypasses this sword should be run through by it. The filter is like our sword, it is our "*heker*". But it will not stop us completely unless we *want* it to. However, since it can take a long time until we learn to genuinely give up our lust to Hashem, we must have a strong filter at all times. For if we don't get it out of reach, we won't be able to stop the vicious cycle of addiction and **begin** the healing process.

Another great way to make sure we guard our eyes online is to place the computer in a highly visible area of the house, such as the living room, and to also make sure never to use the Internet when alone in the house.

In any event, it is best for us - if possible - to avoid all non-Jewish or secular news and entertainment sites (and the like). See the "Kosher Isle" on our website for lists of Kosher news and entertainment sites that can provide us with more than our 'daily dosage' of news and distractions.

Guarding our eyes outside

As addicts to lust, we must be extra careful about where we go. It is best to refrain from frequenting malls and other such public places where we know that we will have difficulty guarding our eyes. If we must be in such places, we can try to spend as little time there as possible, and perhaps even remove our glasses if we have bad eye-sight. Otherwise, we can try wearing sunglasses covered inside with non-see through lamination, or color the inside of a special pair of glasses with a black magic marker, leaving only a small hole to peer through (the Steipler Gaon gave someone this idea). For those who need to take public transportation to work, bringing a sefer along or an MP3 player with shiurim to listen to while keeping one's eyes closed has been known to help. Even weddings, Simchos and family gatherings can be problematic for us, and we can try to prepare ourselves mentally beforehand. We can resolve to remain in the non-mixed areas as much as possible, or try to find a seat facing in a direction opposite from any possible triggers.

If we will have to be in an area where we know there will be a struggle, we can try to offer a short prayer before leaving the house: "Please Hashem, help me not to take any second looks". And if we find that we do stumble and take a second look, we can quickly offer another short prayer and say, "Hashem, I surrender my lust to you! Please take it away from me".

Guarding our eyes off-line

If we are serious about breaking free of lust addiction, we need to try to refrain from watching TV, movies and reading secular magazines and newspapers as much as possible, since **all of them** are full of promiscuity. Even the most innocent-sounding children's movies today are filled with imagery which can be very triggering for a lust addict and we must therefore try to avoid them as much as we can.

Let's talk about movies, for example. Movies are one of the biggest stumbling blocks to a proper healing from lust addiction, because often we find them very hard to give up. They serve as a source of entertainment for millions of people around the world, and they are often a welcome distraction from the difficult realities of life. But movies are filled to the brim with triggers to lust. And even if one is successful to find a movie with absolutely no provocatively dressed women or kissing scenes in them (almost impossible today), will there still not even be any attractive female actors in the movie at all? If we are trying to guard our eyes in the street - and we *must* be; how can we allow ourselves to stare at attractive women in a movie for about 2 hours straight? As lust addicts, most of us simply cannot look at attractive women - even modestly dressed - and not think or feel any undercurrent of lust. The nature of the addiction has taken this ability away from us. And we must admit this truth to ourselves; as long as we are lustful - we are still feeding the addiction.

Therefore in the GYE community, we know that if we are truly serious about breaking free from the poison of lust, we must let this be our sacrifice for Hashem's glory and give up non-Jewish movies for good. And surely this will be considered a most precious sacrifice in Hashem's eyes, a sacrifice brought on the altar of our hearts!

The cornerstone

It is important to realize that guarding the eyes is not just "Tool 3", but rather it's the cornerstone of **all** the tools. Without guarding our eyes, we continue to lust and feed the addiction, and no matter what other steps we may take, we are still acting like an alcoholic who takes small sips of whiskey to get his high. We have to learn to **let go of lust** and not allow ourselves to have that "first drink". There is no "drinking like a gentleman" for an alcoholic, and neither is there for us. Once we taste it a little, we are easily drawn back in and will often lose control.

Although we present this tool in the very beginning, guarding our eyes applies throughout *all* the tools. Even those who are more seriously addicted and are working already with the advanced tools of this Handbook will still need to guard their eyes. True "lust addicts" do not have control in this area. No matter how many years they manage to stay clean and no matter what steps they may have taken, if they are faced head-on with lust, they will feel powerless. We have an "allergy" to lust, and as the saying goes: "*Once an addict, always an addict*". As scary as this may seem, it really is not so bad. People who have a deficiency of iron in their body, even if it's a chronic condition, can still lead perfectly normal lives as long as they take their daily iron pill.

With the 12 Steps (Tool 15-16 below) we learn how to admit powerlessness and surrender our lust to Hashem. By following the steps of this Handbook, we can learn to keep the addiction completely in check, and lead happy and fulfilling lives. But we must never let our guard down. The number one symptom of this disease is that when we are faced head-on with lust, **we cannot help lusting**. And that is why the very first practical tool in recovering from lust addiction is to guard our eyes and avoid lust as much as possible.

It's a Process

As we discussed, guarding our eyes is the starting point, middle point, **and** the final frontier of this struggle. Even when we have already learned to control the more seriously damaging addictive behaviors, we may still find that it takes us yet another few years to learn how to fully surrender our lusting to Hashem and gain complete control over our eyes. So **don't get discouraged** if you break free of the inappropriate behaviors but still find it difficult to guard your eyes on the street. It is a process. But if we stay determined to get our lives and priorities back on track, we **will** see progress in this area, slowly but surely. And we **must** progress. Staying in the same place keeps us vulnerable to relapse, and if we

don't try to move forward a little every day in learning how to guard our eyes, we will remain susceptible to being drawn back into the harmful addictive behaviors as well.

The MeKaDeSH Method

There are four important ingredients to being successful with Shmiras Ainayim *for the long term*. The word **MeKaDeSH** is an acronym for the following: (1) **Machlit / Make a decision**. (2) **Knas** (3) **Daven** (4) **SHmirah**. If any one of these ingredients are missing, we will likely continue to experience ups and downs in our struggle. Let us briefly discuss these four components:

1. Machlit / Make a Decision: Shmiras Ainayim will be a constant battle as long as we don't fully accept how harmful it is for us. We all know deep down that even if we would get all our desires, the pleasure would last only a short moment and leave us feeling empty afterwards. We know from past personal experience and from so many other people's experiences that lust brings only emptiness and pain. The more we feed it, the more it wants. It is never satisfied, and fulfilling our desires just leaves us with a void that demands to be filled again. Lust takes us away from all the good that Hashem has in store for us. It severs our relationship with our Creator, with our wives and children, and even our relationship with ourselves. Although we are pulled to lust when feeling stressed or down, there is a very true saying (from SA): "*No situation can be bad enough that a little lust will make it even worse*". When we realize all this and come to the conclusion that lust is really poison for us, we are finally able to make a strong decision in our minds that we *really don't want it*. This is a vital ingredient to being able to hold on to our success in Shmiras Ainayim for the long term.

2. Knas: The struggle with Shmiras Ainayim is so difficult and slippery (especially for those who have become addicted to lust related behaviors) that making strong decisions are generally not enough *on their own* for long-term success. Over time, our inspiration fades and we start lust again because we feel we **can get away with it**. To really get past this stumbling block, we have to get TOUGH with ourselves, as the Pasuk says: "*For with a strong hand, He took us out of Mitzrayim*". It takes a strong hand to break free of this Mitzrayim, and this can be accomplished by making for ourselves *knasos*.

We can try to accept upon ourselves - or make a vow (not forever, just for "x" amount of days or weeks, at first) that every time we take a *second* look at something triggering, we will (either):

- give ourselves a pinch that hurts,
- wear a rubber-band and snap it against our skin,
- give \$1 to tzedaka,
- give our eyes a "time out" by closing them for 6 seconds.

Study also the TaPHSiC method below (Tool #10) to learn ways of making stronger *knasos* for ourselves when it comes to preventing even more addictive behaviors.

3. Daven: With all our efforts, only Hashem can really help us at the end of the day. As Chazal say: "*The Yetzer hara tries to kill a person each day, and if Hashem wouldn't help him, he could not overcome him.*" We have to recognize this truth and constantly whisper *teffilos* to Hashem for help. The Steipler writes regarding these tests, that some people need to daven 50 times a day to be protected.

4. SHmirah: Even with a strong decision, *knasos*, and with davening, we can't expect to succeed in Shmiras Ainayim if we are surrounded by triggers. Our efforts can only bear fruit *for the long term* if we put up strong shmiros for ourselves. As discussed above, this entails avoiding triggering areas, installing internet filters and accountability software, and staying away from triggering media like TV, Movies, Magazines, Newspapers.

More Guard Your Eyes Tips

There is a saying: "*The first look is on G-d, the second one is on us*". In other words, we can't help if we saw something triggering in the street unintentionally. But if we take a *second* look, we are feeding our addiction. Here are some GYE training tips that might help us get started in learning to guard our eyes on the street.

1) The "Three-Second Rule": If we see something inappropriate (on the first look), we can implement the "three-second rule." Doing so involves three steps: alert, avert, and affirm. The first step is to realize that we're seeing something inappropriate. That's the "alert" stage, and it may take a second or two. The second step is to close our eyes or look away. That's the "avert" stage. These two steps should take place within [about] three seconds. The third step is to give yourself a mental "pat on the back" thinking something like, "I saw that by mistake, and I quickly looked away. I'm still clean and, G-d willing, I'm going to build on that, one day at a time." That's the "affirm" stage.

This is crucial, because as addicts, it's often the first slip that does us in ("just as an alcoholic needs to avoid that first sip, a lust addict needs to avoid the first slip").

Many times we feel, "I looked away, but maybe I waited a drop longer than I had to". Then the Yetzer Hara makes us feel guilty when we've done nothing wrong at all, and that can lead to further slips and falls. The "three-second rule" recognizes that it may take a second or two to realize that something is amiss, and only then are we expected to look away.

2) Small Goals: Make very small goals at first. For example, we can accept upon ourselves that for the walk from home to shul and back, no matter what, we will absolutely not look anywhere besides at the ground. It may be difficult at first, but after a few times of doing this we will hopefully be able to increase our goals.

3) Developing the Proper Attitude towards Shemiras Ainayim:

a) We need to tell ourselves that no matter how painful it feels **not** to look, it will always be even *more* painful to look. Because when we look, there are two acute pains we feel:

- We feel suddenly far from Hashem and from our goals.
- We know we can't have it anyway, and when we look - we desire it and it HURTS.

So essentially, the pain we feel when **not** looking is much better than the pain of looking! And as they say in the 12-Step literature, "*No situation can be bad enough that a little lust won't make it worse*".

b) The pain we feel when not looking is HEALING pain, like the pain from surgery. The pain is healing us. On the other hand, the spiritual pain of looking is the pain of the disease getting worse. Which pain do we choose?

c) The pain we feel when not looking is not really **our** pain at all. It is the pain of the Yetzer Hara in his "death throes". He is screaming that we are hitting him hard. So we can actually enjoy the pain! We are feeling the pain of our enemy as he gets weaker!

d) The whole desire is a blown up bubble of hot-air, built around what we see and imagine in our minds. Experience has shown us all, that as soon as we get what we thought we wanted -- what we thought was going to be absolutely incredible (according to what we saw and fantasized), the bubble pops and all that's left is "hot air". We are left shaking our head and not believing that for this we sell our very souls.

e) Let us also reflect for a moment. If we were blind, chas veshalom, we wouldn't struggle with lust. If we didn't have this amazing gift of sight that Hashem gave us, would we be *able* to lust through our eyes? Scientists tell us that the human mind makes billions of calculations per second when processing information from the countless nerve endings that connect our eyes to our brains. How can we take this **amazing gift** and use it against Hashem's will?

4) Letting Go of Lust: The world is full of temptations. If we want to hold on to lust, we will have **endless** opportunities to continue lustful thoughts at every turn. We will be fighting a losing battle of Shemiras Ainayim by constantly trying not to look at things that we **do** want to look at so badly. Instead, **the real trick** to success is to

learn how to let go of the lusting altogether. Instead of fighting it head-on, we need to simply **let go of it**.

As someone who is working the 12 Steps once wrote:

"Today, the fight is much easier for me. When I have urges, I admit powerlessness, acknowledge that Hashem is the only One that can - and will - help me, and I ask Hashem to remove the lust from me. I am frankly surprised by how much better this works than fighting the urges head on".

Another important step in letting go of lust, is learning how to deal with obsessive lustful thoughts and fantasies. See principle #11 of Part 2 below, for some great tips and techniques on how to let go of lust and fantasies in our minds.

5) Get daily chizuk on "Guarding Our Eyes": To receive daily *chizuk* on *Shmiras Ainayim*, sign up to the *Shmiras Ainayim Chizuk* e-mail list on our website.

The eyes are the windows to our souls and must be guarded diligently if we are to make real spiritual progress. We can download a free e-Book called "Windows of the Soul" by the Salant foundation from our website. This book, which can be purchased in hard copy as well, provides a 30-day Chizuk program to help us learn how to guard our eyes properly.

The GYE network also has a daily phone conference on Shmiras Ainayim (for non-addicts as well) where we can join together with a group of other Yidden by phone to get Chizuk and learn techniques on how to guard our eyes in today's difficult environment.

Tool #4 Daily Chizuk

To succeed in this struggle, it is important for us to get fresh perspective and Chizuk each day. Chazal say that the Yetzer Hara renews his attack on us every day. He plays real nasty, and will use every trick in the book (and not in the book) to get us to fall. To counter this, we need new Chizuk and tips all the time. There is so much material on our website, but it's often overwhelming and not practically within reach when we need it most. Our network provides daily Chizuk e-mails with antidotes, tips, articles, and quotes from our sages, therapists, and fellow strugglers, to help us break free of this addiction. We have thousands of members signed up already, and many people feel it is literally their lifeline.

So sign up today and make sure to read each day's Chizuk e-mail. The Yetzer Hara will do his best to get us to ignore the e-mails after a while, but if we are determined to break free - we must make sure to read and internalize their

messages every day. Like drops of water on Rabbi Akiva's rock, a little Chizuk each day can make a very strong impression over time.

The GYE Forum is also a great source of daily Chizuk. Hundreds of members post daily about their struggles and successes, and they share Chizuk, inspiration and hope between each other. For many, the forum is literally a lifeline of daily Chizuk; keeping strong as a community.

Our website has many different categories, such as Tips, Stories, Personal Victories, Quotes, Testimonials, Torah Thoughts and more. With all this great content we can learn new things and get stronger all the time!

We can read the Recovery Stories on our site and see how we are not alone. We will read how others - even worse off than us - were able to break free, and we will be inspired to follow their example!

We can use the Tips section on the site to get new ideas all the time of how to succeed, and we can browse through the hundreds of previous chizuk e-mails to help us continue refining our perspective on this struggle.

We can read through the Q&A category where we will likely find answers to many questions that bothered us, or simply to get some good perspective on a host of issues relating to this addiction.

When feeling bored or vulnerable, we can check out the Kosher Isle of our network, for Kosher entertainment sites, activity ideas, and lots of Torah audio and video shiurim.

Breaking an addiction is a little like "mind surgery", and in the same way that no one can become a good "neurosurgeon" without huge amounts of studying, we must also be ready to "study" well to succeed in this battle for our souls.

But let's not try to bite too much at once. It is better to read less (and consistently) and *internalize* what we are reading, than to read tons of material all at once and quickly forget it. We need to find a balance that works best for us, where we read a few articles or tips every day; just enough for us to be able to swallow, digest and feel a little stronger **today**. The Chizuk e-mails are often a perfect "daily dose" in this regard.

Tool #5 Alternative Fulfillment

We frequently focus on breaking the addiction by avoiding triggers and running **away** from the Yetzer Hara. But often the best way to deal with an addiction, is to

remove the underlying "needs" that the addiction is trying to fill by proactively engaging in *alternative* fulfilling pursuits.

More often than not, an addiction is a psychological escape that we learned to use as a way to flee from the realities of life. If we can manage, in the early stages of the addiction, to keep ourselves occupied with healthy and fulfilling activities that we enjoy, and find more meaning in our lives, the addiction will often fade away of its own accord. Fulfillment often comes from finding realistic challenges and reaching the goals that we set for ourselves.

We should try to find new jobs or projects that will enable us to express our creativity, find enjoyment, and reconnect with life and the world around us. This will help fill the "void" that we were subconsciously trying to satisfy with unhealthy pleasure seeking. Some ideas can be found in our "Kosher Isle" (and especially in "Kosher Activities" section).

"False" fulfillment causes us to close up into ourselves and slowly destroys our lives and our souls. *True* fulfillment, on the other hand, helps us open up to the world around us and reconnect with our souls. Every Jew has a "G-d Hole", a place inside them that feels empty if not filled with G-d. Often, we subconsciously try to fill that feeling of emptiness with lustng. The best way to fill the 'G-d Hole' and achieve fulfillment and joy obviously comes from a true connection with Hashem. As the Pasuk says: "*Tamu U're'u Ki Tov Hashem – Taste and see that Hashem is good*", and "*Ve'hisaneg al Hashem – Find Pleasure in Hashem*". This can be built up by adding *Kedusha* to our lives, seeking a deeper connection with *Yiddishkeit* in general, and through learning Torah with enjoyment. Torah is like water, and **we can't put out a fire without water, even if we know it burns**. We can try to hook up with a new *chavrusah* or add a shiur to our daily/weekly schedules. See the Torah section of our Kosher Isle for more ideas on how to add Torah to our lives, and for links to many great websites of Torah audio and video shiurim.

We can also seek "oneg" (pleasure) in Mitzvos like Shabbos and Yom-Tov, through singing zemiros and spending quality time with our children. These things are also included in "*Ve'hisaneg al Hashem*" because *oneg* that is connected to Mitzvos has a *kiyum* (lasts). Yes, even good food on Shabbos can be a spiritual experience, as opposed to forbidden pleasures which leave us feeling empty inside (and that's why we want it again so soon afterward).

Other ideas to help us start living "outside of ourselves" and feel more fulfillment in general, could include *Chesed* projects or involvement in the community in various ways. If you are a *Bochur* in Yeshiva, you might try and get the job of organizing the *Otzar Haseforim*, running a canteen, providing dry cleaning services, haircuts, etc... If you are not learning and also unemployed, **try to find a job!** The main thing is to keep busy, reconnect to the world around us and find

fulfillment in a variety of ways that will counteract the "false fulfillment" that the addiction tries to provide us with.

Rav Wolbe Zatza"l in his Sefer "Psychiatry and Religion" (Pg. 82) suggests cultivating a combination of religious and social fulfillment to help our youth beat this challenge. He writes:

*The difficult phase of adolescence is fertile soil for feelings of guilt, especially for religious youth. Masturbation is a serious prohibition. Yet almost all youth stumble in this and are unable to find the strength to overcome this in any way. The result is feelings of guilt. This is where wise guidance from Rabbanim and Mechanchim becomes so necessary. As is known, a Rav is not licensed to "forgive sins" and surely not to permit the forbidden. However, he can guide, calm and bring the youth to acceptance of himself. And together with that, to cultivate an intensive social life and help bring the youth into the vast wealth of Torah, which can arouse in him a deep thirst to acquire and grow in Torah. As our sages have said, "Torah is good with Derech Eretz, for the toil in both makes sins be forgotten". In other words, the toil in Torah together with the toil of cultivating a thriving social life, brings to a situation where, over time, one forgets to sin. Instead of a constant battle, which is hopeless, through the **positive** hard work in Torah and a social life, slowly but surely, the youth will recover from masturbation. This is the conventional path of Chinuch that is accepted today. Yes, Torah life needs intensive chinuch. Without chinuch, there is no escape from youth sinking into feelings of guilt and despair.*

Tool #6 Physical Activity

When we talk about recovery and emotional health, our physical body is a critical factor in the equation. Getting enough sleep, good nutrition and especially exercise, add a whole lot more to our "spiritual centeredness and emotional well being" than most people give it credit for. As the Pasuk says, "*Venishmartem Me'od Li'nafshoseichem* - and you shall vigilantly guard your wellbeing".

Often our addiction is fed by underlying emotional imbalances. If we are depressed, anxious or stressed, then as addicts, we will escape to our "drug of choice" - lust. Physical activity and exercise can be very beneficial in easing anxiety, stress and depression, which scientists tell us is often produced by an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain. Exercise not only impacts endorphins (our feel-good hormones), but it also increases levels of serotonin and dopamine, creating more balance. This produces the famous "runner's high," decreases anxiety, and provides an overall feeling of calmness.

We've all heard of the famous "12-Step" program for beating addictions. Exercise has been called by some experts "the 13th step". At all levels of the struggle/addiction, it is very beneficial to engage in exercise and physical activities on a regular basis, at least a few times a week. Experience has shown that a consistent exercise regimen can be very helpful in combating addictive behaviors, and especially in dealing with the irritability and stress that are common withdrawal symptoms.

Exercising every day has been proven to positively impact an addict in many other ways as well. For example, in active addiction we can easily lose structure and meaning in our days. Regular exercise fills time and keeps the mind busy. It has been shown to boost self-esteem and self-confidence. We will also find that the self-discipline required and learned through regular exercise spills over into other areas of our life and will help us change our bad-habits. Exercise positively affects sleep, cognitive function and reduces cravings. It improves the mind-body connection and reduces symptoms of illnesses and disease. Exercise provides a healthy release for our frustrations, disappointments, anger, and negative energy, and makes us feel happier overall. People who exercise are more optimistic and happy than those who lead sedentary lifestyles. Research also suggests that burning off 350 calories three times a week through sustained, sweat-inducing activity can in many cases reduce symptoms of depression just as effectively as antidepressants.

Any form of exercise can help us boost our immunity to addictive tendencies, whether it's running, biking, walking or working out in a gym (make sure it's a kosher gym, or it can turn out to be more detrimental than beneficial to us).

Often we convince ourselves that we are too tired, or that we don't have the energy to make a commitment to start exercising regularly. The only way to overcome this mindset is through action. Start moving your body and let the details get worked out later. We may not feel like walking or jogging, but if we force ourselves to get out the door and hit the pavement, before we know it we'll be back home, breathing hard and feeling invigorated. In other words, we're not going to feel great some day and decide to go jogging or walking - it's the other way around. We have to get out there and do it, despite how we may feel, and then we will be able to look back and see how our new routine has energized our lives and made it easier for us to stay clean.

Tool #7 Making Fences

The addiction is more powerful than us, and if we try to fight it **head on** we will almost always lose. Once we are standing at the edge of the cliff, we are very vulnerable to falling off of it. Instead, we must stay as far away from the edge of

the cliff as possible. Therefore, one of the most powerful tools in this struggle is making good fences.

One great way to make "a fence" is to create a list of things that we will do before allowing ourselves to fall. The list can be made up of various items, such as "call mother", say a *Kappitel Tehilim*, take a 20 minute walk, etc... Just pulling out the list and looking at it may already be enough to dissuade us from acting out!

Vows

In order to ensure that our fences are strong, we can use a very powerful tool called *Shvuos* or vows. Normally making vows is frowned upon by our sages as with someone playing with fire, but when it comes to girding oneself from this temptation, we find that making vows is praised by the Torah and by Chazal, as the Mishna says in Pirkei Avos: "*Nedarim siyag la'prishus – Nedarim* are a fence for abstinence". And as the Pasuk says, "*Nishbati Va'akayeima, lishmor Mishpatei Tzidkecha* - I have vowed and will uphold it, to guard your righteous laws". And also it says "*Nishba Lehora Velo Yamir - oseh eileh lo yimot le'olam* - He who swears to prevent bad and does not nullify... he will never falter". And Chaza"l also say that Bo'az swore to guard himself from transgressing when Ruth came to him in the silo at night, as it says "*Chai Hashem, Shichvi ad haboker* - In the name of G-d, lay here until morning". (See also the Ohr Hachayim in the beginning of Parshas Matos where he claims it is a Mitzva to make *Shvuos* regarding fences of Arayos).

However, as important and helpful as vows can be in fighting addiction, they are also spiritually dangerous. **The addiction is very often more powerful than vows.** Therefore, it is vital that we learn **how** to make vows in a way that will work and be spiritually safe. Instead of fighting the addiction head-on through the vows, we can make vows that will help us "**walk around**" the addiction. **Do not** make a make vow that you will not act-out or look at inappropriate material. Many addicts have tried this and failed miserably, because when under a lust attack it is very hard for our *yiras shamayim* to stop us. Rather, we can make a vow (for just a week at first) that before we give in, we will first have to do a list of things. For example:

I swear - for one week - that before I am motzi zera livatala I will do two things: (1) call a friend or family member and shmuz for at least 5 minutes and (2) take a 15 minute walk.

Alternatively, we can make a vow that **if we give in** we will have to do something **after** we fall, for example:

- go to the Mikva
- take a half hour walk
- give a donation to Tzedaka.
- do 100 pushups

Here are examples of two vows that we helped someone set up. After making these Shvuos he testified that he felt a new freedom in his life!

1) I swear for one month that if I am intentionally motzi zera livatala while fully awake, or if I intentionally obtain adult sexual material of any sort, digital or printed (i.e. DVDs or Magazines), or if I intentionally go to - or search for - any websites or web pages, pictures, videos, chats or forums, for the purpose of viewing adult sexual content or messages or facilitations of sexual encounters, or if I initiate contact with - or respond positively to - any woman other than my wife for a sexually related purpose, or if I partake of any illicit sexually oriented services of any kind, then I will donate \$500 to GYE and tell _____ (a close friend) what I have done, for each day on which I do any one - or more - of these things. If I forget that I made this Shvuah and do one of these things, I will only donate \$100.

2) I swear for one month that if I have any sort of sexual encounter with any person besides my wife, then I will donate \$2500 to GYE from my next month's salary and I will tell _____ (a close friend) what I have done, for each day on which I do this sin.

See the "TaPHSiC method" below in Tool #10 for an even more powerful method based on this idea.

Bein Hazmanim

Vacations and *Bein Hazmanim* are situations that can be bigger tests for us, since there is more free time available and less structure. Such situations may require a more detailed set of fences and safeguards than usual. We can try to draw up a "Battle Plan" in advance, to plan for some structure in our days - as much as possible. We can set specific times for particular activities, such as learning with a *chavrushah* or other things that can keep us busy. We can even draw up emergency plans of various activities that we can do, for times when we might start feeling bored or vulnerable, (examples might be to "read a book", "ride my bicycle", etc...)

We can also draft a special "*Bein Hazmanim*" list of fences in advance, to help us avoid having to fight the *Yetzer Hara* head-on. Some of the fences could include:

- Setting up a filter on our home computers.
- Not using the computer when alone in the room (or *at least* if no one is home).
- Setting ourselves time-limits on the computer (at least for non-work related activity).

- Making a list of websites that we are allowed to visit - and *not visiting* any other sites (at least when alone).
- Avoiding certain triggering places that we used to "hang out" at.
- Avoiding movies.

The secret to success in this area is learning where we are vulnerable and preparing fences in advance. We all need to learn our Yetzer Hara well, as it says in *Mishlei* (12:10): "***Yode'ah Tzadik nefesh be'hemto - The Tzadik knows the nature of his animal.***"

Tool #8 Cutting Down

If you've tried the steps above and you still find that the addiction is controlling you and causing frequent falls, it could be helpful to apply the battle-tactic of conquering and securing **one territory at a time**, instead of trying to conquer everything at once.

As discussed in tool #1, our sages have said: "***There is a small organ in a man, if one feeds it - it is hungry, if one starves it - it is satiated***". This is a very important Yesod to keep in mind, and it shows how much our Sages understood the nature of this addiction. The more we cut down, and the more distance we put between ourselves and the addiction, the easier it gets.

We can make ourselves red lines at first, and try to cut down as much as possible. If we would act out every day until now, we can try - **for starters** - to cut it down to only once every two days. If it used to be twice a week, we can try cutting it down to once a week. Or we can try making a strong resolution for a period of time, that besides for - say, one particular day of the week, we will not even *consider* acting out, no matter what. As we do this and learn to cut down more and more, we will find that "***the less we feed it, the less we need it***".

This tactic also teaches us not to use the addiction as an "escape mechanism" anymore. Very often, the subconscious reason that we became addicted in the first place was that we began to use the addiction as a kind of "escape" from the harsh - or difficult-to-deal-with realities of life. We used the addiction to soothe ourselves and medicate our feelings. But once we start to draw red lines and cut down on these behaviors with hard work and determination, we force ourselves to no longer *instinctively* use the behaviors to "escape" into ourselves. This causes a gradual change in our thinking that ultimately makes it much easier to break free completely.

Also, as we work on progressively cutting down, we build up our virtues. In the merit of saying "no" to ourselves thousands of times, Hashem will give us special divine assistance to ultimately find real freedom from the addiction.

The Gemara says: "*Habah letaher misaayen lo - He who comes to be purified, they help him*", and Chazal also say: "*Biderech she'adom rotzeh leilech molichin osoh - in the way a person wants to go, they lead him*". Why does the Gemara speak always in plural form: "*they help him*", and "*they lead him*"? The Maharsha explains that every effort a person makes creates an angel. And when the army of angels gets large enough, it has the power to help one overcome all the obstacles and lead him to where he wants to go!

Every time we say "no" to the addiction, a priceless coin is added to our spiritual bank. Even if and when we do end up falling, we do not lose what we had previously gained. When we have enough "spiritual coins" in our account, Hashem helps us to completely break free. (See Part 2 of this handbook for more on these important principles).

However, it is important to emphasize that these tactics will only be effective if our **goal** is to stop completely over time, by progressively cutting down more and more. But if we allow ourselves to become complacent by simply keeping our addiction "under control", we will remain addicted to these behaviors. And as we often end up learning later the *hard way*, addiction is a progressive disease. It doesn't get better, only worse.

Tool #9 A Leap of Faith: The 90 Day Journey

If slowly cutting down doesn't seem to do the trick, and we find after a while that it doesn't lead to a complete cessation of the addictive behaviors, we need to take a more drastic "Leap of Faith" and try to cut these behaviors out of our lives completely.

There was a recent scientific study that found it takes 90 days to change the neuron pathways created by addictive behaviors in the brain. It was shown that if an addict refrains from their addictive behavior for 90 days, they will find it far easier to stop the addictive thought patterns. Many similar scientific studies have shown that the more distance we put between us and the addictive behavior, the less hold it has over the neuron pathways that the addiction carved into our minds.

Members of the world-wide 12-Step groups (for overcoming addictions) are given a "red" recovery chip when they reach 90 days. We can also find the idea of 90 in Chazal. The *Halacha* is, that if one is not sure if he said "*v'sen tal u'matar*", he must repeat the *Shmoneh Esrei*. However after 30 days, one no longer needs to

repeat Shmoneh Esrei when in doubt, because we assume that his mind has already gotten used to saying it. 30 days is 90 *Shmoneh Esreis!* Chazal knew that it takes 90 times of doing something to get the mind used to it. (The Hebrew letter "Tzadik" – which symbolizes a Tzadik who is morally pure, also equals 90 in Gematria).

We should be aware though, that this 90 day journey may not be easy. An addict will almost always experience withdrawal symptoms, and we may feel depressed, down and needy for stretches of time. We may occasionally find that the fight feels unbearable, to the point where we even feel a taste of "death". But these feelings never last for more than a few hours at a time. They come and go like waves. And no great feat can come without some *Messiras Nefesh*.

Knowing in advance that we may experience withdrawal symptoms will make it easier to deal with them when they occur. And if we believe, like so many of us have found to be true, that after 90 days we will feel much freer from the addiction, we can find the inner strength to hold out no matter what it takes! Indeed, so many people have reached 90 days already on our network, and they have experienced great subsequent success in finding freedom from their addiction.

The 90 days need to be taken "one day at a time". We can't eat or sleep today for tomorrow, and we can't stay sober for tomorrow either. One addict who is already sober for 20 years likes to say, "***Just for today, I won't act-out even if my backside falls off!***" (And guess what? It never did! :-).

A key motivator to making it to 90 days is to realize the painful alternative. If we keep falling, we may be struggling for the rest of our lives. On the other hand, if we make it to 90 days without any falls, although the challenge will never go away completely, it will be so much easier afterwards. Isn't it better to struggle for the next 90 days than to struggle for the next 90 years?

GYE created a 90 Day Chart system on-line, to help us track our progress. We sign up and put in our first day clean, and then we have to update our status at least once a week - otherwise our name becomes red on the chart. If we don't update for two weeks, our name falls off the chart. As we progress through the 90 days, we advance in levels and receive "virtual rewards" and e-mails of encouragement. This system is a huge motivator and is helping many people discover that they truly *can* live without lust! Check out the 90 Day Chart on our website and see for yourself how many people are currently on their way to 90 days. Join the success by signing up today, or print out the 90-Day Chart to keep track of your progress off-line.

We also have a special chart called "The Wall of Hashem's Honor" for those who have already made the 90 day journey, and thank G-d it is growing all the time as well.

Also, to help us on this journey and provide a framework of **group support** for the duration of the 90 days and beyond, we set up a special "Wall of honor board" on our forum where we can post a log of our journey, every day (or every few days).

There are even 90-Day "Accountability groups" on the forum, where between 5 and 10 members get together and take the 90-Day journey *together* (using a special "group count", being separate from our own personal counts).

By using the forum for our 90 day journey – and beyond, we will get tons of *chizuk* and be an inspiration to everyone else in the community as well. It also helps us track our progress over time and provides a certain amount of accountability among the other warriors, whom we quickly come to view as our "spiritual family"; after all, we don't want to let them down! Also, by joining the community on the forum, we obtain the ability to strengthen others as well, which *in itself* is a big factor in recovery (see tool #14 below).

Tool #10 Extra Strong Fences: The TaPhSiC Method

The farther we have fallen into this addiction, the more extreme measures we will need to take to break free of its clutches. TaPHSiC stands for "The Physical & Spiritual Combo" Method. ("Tafsik" also means "Stop!" in Hebrew). This tool has worked well with many Frum addicts in helping them stop these destructive behaviors completely. It may not work for high-level addicts or for people with no *Yiras Shamayim*, but for most frum addicts this method has worked wonders, and it has freed many people from the obsession.

We often feel like two different people. After each fall we ask ourselves, what repercussions will it take to finally stop me? Do I have any hope? How can it be that I am a frum Yid in all other areas besides for this? Do I have *Yiras Shamayim - or don't I?*

Part 1: What Doesn't Stop Us?

The first thing we need to do is to face the truth about ourselves.

"Abstract" spiritual repercussions don't generally stop me, even though I believe that:

- This is one of the most serious aveiros.
- I am destroying my soul.
- I am creating other destructive souls.

- I am losing *Siyyata Di'shmaya* in all of my life (as the pasuk says, “*ki yireh becha ervas davar veshav me'acharecha*”).
- I am cutting off my connection with Hashem.
- I am desensitizing myself to spirituality.
- I am making it ever harder to do Teshuvah.
- It is making me feel like a hypocrite in all other Mitzvos I do.
- I am destroying the “Yesod – foundation”, of my entire spiritual structure.
- My kids and wife can likely ‘sense’ that I am not sincere in my Yiddishkeit, overall.
- These behaviors may likely spiral into worse aveiros.
- I am/will likely end up cutting myself off from the World to Come.
- Moshiach is coming soon; how will I face him?

In spite of the above, my *Yiras Shamayim* will generally NOT stop me from:

- Looking at shmutz
- Being *Motzi Zera Livatala*
- Even if I would make a *shvuah* to stop/avoid it, I'll end up breaking it sooner or later; the desires are just **too** powerful.

Don't feel bad that your *Yiras Shamayim* is not strong enough to stop you. It doesn't mean you don't have any. When Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai blessed his students before he died he said, "May your fear of heaven be equal to your fear of man". And his students asked him: "Rebbi, is that all?". And he answered: "*Halevai!*". And even Rabbi Akiva wasn't able to stop himself when faced head-on with a powerful lust. See Kidushin 81/a where the Gemara tells how Rabbi Akiva started climbing up a tree to sin – until the Satan himself had to stop him from sinning. Imagine! This is the same Rabbi Akiva who cried 'Shma Yisrael' with joy as they combed his flesh with iron combs! (See principle 2 of part 2 of this handbook for more on this idea).

The non-spiritual “SHORT TERM” repercussions don’t stop me either, even though:

- It makes me depressed.
- I lose time from work.
- I lose sleep.
- I lose money.
- I lose a close connection with my wife.
- I feel distant from my children.
- I don't have time for anyone but “me”.
- My whole life revolves around my next “fix”.
- I feel like a slave to my desires.

The non-spiritual “LONG TERM” repercussions don’t stop me, even though:

- My behaviors may be found out.
- I can lose my good name.

- I can lose my job.
- I can lose my marriage.
- I can lose my children.
- My children may have a hard time with shidduchim as a result.
- My children may need therapy one day for the trauma they may go through.
- My behaviors will likely get worse.
- I can end up in jail.
- I can catch diseases.
- I can end up suicidal or dead.

Part 2: What *Would* Stop Us?

Now that we have faced the truth about ourselves, we need to ask: What spiritual and non-spiritual repercussions *WOULD* stop us?

Spiritually speaking, what *WOULD* stop me?

- I would not be Mechalel Shabbos to view shmutz, no matter how bad I wanted it. I would be able to wait 24 hours.
- If the only way to get my fix in the coming 24 hours was by eating a Ham sandwich first, I probably would hold out and not do it for 24 hours.
- After I finish fully giving in to my desires, I don't want to throw the rest of my Yiddishkeit away. I feel bad about it and I really do want to "come back" to Hashem. If I had a choice to push a "**Stop These Aveiros Forever**" button, I would press it then.

What does this all show me? That I still do have a holy spark within me, and that my Yiras Shamayim is still **existent**. It may not be enough to stop me in general, but it is strong enough to make me want to get rid of these behaviors AFTER the act. And even *before* the act, it is strong enough to enable me to hold out for a while - when the spiritual repercussions are BIG (like Chillul Shabbos or eating Treif). What we can see from this is that there ARE spiritual repercussions that *would* stop us, if they were only BIG enough, and especially when we're not under the spell of lust.

Now let's look at the non-spiritual side of the coin. What *WOULD* stop me?

- If I was about to act out and someone walked into the room, would I continue?
- If every time I acted out, I would become racked with pain, would I continue?
- If there was an electronic eye following me, and every time I acted out, my wife or Rebbe would see me doing it, would I continue?
- If every time I acted out I would feel sick and I would have to take a bus to the hospital, stay there for 2 hours, and get a shot to return me to normal, would I continue?

What does this all show me? It shows that there ARE repercussions that would stop me, if only they were BIG enough.

To sum up: Although the “normal” repercussions, both short term and long term, are not enough to stop me, there still do exist both spiritual and non-spiritual repercussions that WOULD stop me, if they were big enough and *immediate* enough.

Part 3: Finding the Perfect Formula

So all we have to do now is find the perfect formula; a **combination** of spiritual and non-spiritual repercussions that ARE big enough to stop us.

We have seen that AFTER the fact (when the desires have been quieted), we are much more willing to do what it takes to stop the NEXT occurrence. And we have *also* seen that we are able to hold out better when the spiritual repercussions are BIGGER.

So let's try this:

If we made a *shvuah* in the name of Hashem (and actually pronounce Hashem's name) that AFTER we act out (on our bottom line behaviors) we will do x,y or z – **would we keep this *shvuah*?** Most frum addicts would. After all, it is AFTER the acting out. The desires have already been silenced and we feel bad. We don't want to throw away the rest of our Yiddishkeit. So would we not keep a *shvuah* that we made in the name of Hashem? Will we transgress one of the 10 commandments “*Lo sisah es Shem Hashem Elokecha lashav* – Do not swear in G-d's name in vain” (and as the pasuk continues, “for Hashem will **never cleanse** he who swears in His name in vain”)?

We have to make the *shvuah* to do something hard and painful. Not too hard that we might come to even break the *shvuah* in Hashem's name c”v, but hard enough to make us not want to act out next time. Something we know will hurt, but something we know we can keep.

For example, one guy wrote that he vowed to give \$200 to tzedaka after every fall. Within 4 falls, he was free of his addiction. Another person (in Israel) wrote that he succeeded breaking free by making a vow for one year that every time he fell, he would have to take a trip by bus to the Kotel and stay there for 90 minutes. This ultimately helped him to stop completely, because each time he felt that he was about to give in, he would remember what he would have to do and be deterred.

Some other examples might be: “***I swear in the name of Ado-nai – for one week, that if I am motzi zerva livatala, then within the following 24 hours, I will:***

- ***tell my Rebbe***
- ***tell a close friend***
- ***fast the following day from “alos hashachar” until nightfall. (If it’s Shabbos or Yom Tov, I will fast the day after.)***

At first, these *Shvuos* should be for short periods of time, as in the example above. If we see that this is working well for us, we can extend the *shvuah* for longer periods of time. If we see that the deterrent turns out not to be strong enough for us, we might need to find something a little more painful. (See Tool #7 - “Making Fences” above, for an example *shvuah* that we helped someone set up. If we make that same *shvuah* in the name of Hashem, we are taking this fence to a higher level).

Part 4: The Double-Fence TaPHSiC Method

An even more powerful form of the TaPHSiC method is to make it into a **double fence** by using it for both before *and* after the fall.

When under an attack of lust, we feel we need it NOW – and the lust makes us act compulsively. In such moments, it is important to realize that lust comes in waves, and after the initial peak the intensity subsides - sometimes even within minutes. If we could somehow distract ourselves with something else, we will often find that the attack will pass and our sanity and composure will return.

When properly applied, the double fence TaPHSiC method makes acting-out compulsively **not even an option** anymore. Our Yetzer Hara himself will agree with us that it is simply not worth it to act-out NOW, but rather to distract ourselves and wait before acting-out.

For example: Make a list of things to do **before falling**, such as taking a half hour walk, reaching out by phone to a friend from GYE for help, etc. Then, make the *shvuah* that if you act out **before** doing (one or more of) the things on your list, you will have to do something **very** painful (say, give \$500 to Tzedaka). But if you act out **AFTER** doing the things on your list, you will only have to give \$50 to Tzedaka. In this way, you will feel obligated to do the distractions before giving in, because you know that once you give in and the lust has past, you won’t be able to ignore the *shvuah*. The genius of this is, that by the time you are finished doing the things on the list, the lust attack will usually have dissipated. And often **before** giving in, even thinking of the things you will have to do will make you drop the whole idea in the first place. This double-fence TaPHSiC method has been shown to be one of the most powerful ways for frum addicts to break the addiction for the long term.

A member shared on our forum how the double-fence TaPHSiC method works for him:

I made a commitment that if I wanted to look at shmutz online I would first do one of 4 things, (1) talk through how I'm feeling with my wife, (2) go for a 30 min run or exercise, or (3) learn Torah for 30 min, or (4) read about the holocaust for 30 min. Then I made a shvuah that if I did anyone of these 4 actions before looking, then I would only have to give \$75 to Tzedakah. But if I did not do any of these 4 actions but just went right ahead and looked, I would have to give \$750 to Tzedaka. I am unemployed now (so a lot of time on my hands), and so taking a \$750 hit is just not possible for me right now. When the Yetzer Hara gets us in the moment, he makes us forget all consequences. With this method, it's just much harder to forget the consequences. B"H I haven't looked at any shmutz online since I made this commitment. It helps me a lot and I hope it can help you too.

We can keep making minor adjustments as we go along. That is why it's best to make the vow only for a week at a time at first, and then maybe a month... (We must make sure to renew the *shvuah* BEFORE it expires. Often the addiction convinces us that we're doing OK, only to catch us off guard when we suddenly realize that the *shvuah* has expired!). Once we are confident and comfortable with the vow and see that it really works for us, we may need to make this vow only once a year!

It's a delicate balance, but with careful thought and *siyatta dishmaya*, most Frum addicts can find a formula that really works for them, over time. And once we have found it, we will know. There will be a sudden feeling of joy – a tremendous new freedom in our lives. We will feel like we have literally been freed from the self-imposed “prison” that we have been living in for so many years!

Part 5: Step by Step Guidance for Making a Double Fenced TaPHSiC Shvuah

Getting Started:

Before we can use the generic TaPHSiC shvuah *Nusach* (below) by simply filling in the blanks, we have to first decide for ourselves 4 things:

- 1) Until when are we making the Shvuah? (*In general we don't suggest making the shvuah for more than a month at first, so we can adjust it if necessary*).
- 2) What distractions will we impose upon ourselves before we allow ourselves to fall? (See below for some examples of "Distractions". You can choose one or more of the suggestions, or make up your own).
- 3) What "Normal Knas" will we give ourselves if we fall AFTER doing the distraction/s that we imposed upon ourselves? (See below for some examples of "Normal Knas").

- 4) What "Heavy Knas" will we give ourselves if we fall WITHOUT doing the distractions that we set for ourselves? (See below for some examples of "Heavy Knas")

Once we have decided these 4 things, we can jump straight to the Nusach below and simply fill in the blanks!

Examples for Distractions Before Falling (you can use one or more):

1. I listened to a Shmiras Ainayim phone conference. (There are over 200 recorded shiurim on our system. Each one is about 20 minutes. Call 209-647-1999 any time and enter the PIN: 616701#. Then put in any number between 2 and 200 to listen to a shiur).
 2. I went for a 20 minute walk
 3. I called my partner, sponsor, or a fellow GYE member who knows me, and I told him that I feel I want to fall, and I stayed on the phone with him for at least 5 minutes.
 4. I did exercise for 15 minutes (sit-ups, push-ups, jumping jacks, etc).
 5. I spoke with people who know me, by phone or in person, for at least 10 minutes
 6. I scrubbed the toilets at home/work and picked up the garbage around the home.office for 15 minutes.
 7. I put away sefarim in the beis-medrash/shul for 15 minutes.
 8. I said Tehilim for half an hour.
 9. I learned Gemara for 20 minutes.
 10. I was Mavir Sedra for half an hour.
-

Examples for 'Normal Knas':

1. I will donate \$50/100 to Tzedaka (GYE)
2. I will take a cold shower with no warm water at all.
3. I will go for an hour walk.
4. I will take a bus to the kever of the Tzadik/Kotel and stay there for at least an hour.

5. I will clean the floors of my home, scrub the toilets, and put away clean laundry.
 6. I will fast from dawn until nightfall (in the coming 3 days).
 7. I will say the entire sefer Tehillim.
-

Examples for 'Heavy Knas':

(Warning: It must be something you are 100% sure you CAN and WILL do if you have a fall c"v)

1. I will donate \$1000/2000 to Tzedaka (GYE).
 2. I will take a bus to the kever of a Tzadik/Kotel and stay there for at least 6 hours.
 3. I will fast from dawn until nightfall for two days in a row (within the coming 7 days).
 4. I will tell my Rav/wife that I had a fall.
-

Once we have decided the 4 things above, we can just fill in the blanks below:

Generic Nusach for the Double-Fenced TaPHSiC Method:

Ani Nishba (I swear), beshaim Ad---- (in the name of G-d) that until _____ [Fill in the end date we decided above]

If I have a fall, which is defined by one of the following things:

Either

(a) I intentionally *motzi zera livatala* (masturbate) while fully awake

or

(b) I intentionally obtain in any way adult sexual material of any sort, digital or printed (including magazines, DVDs, etc.)

or

(c) I intentionally go to any websites or web pages, pictures, videos, chats or forums, for the purpose of viewing adult sexual content (including any type of adult oriented images, drawings, videos, audio, or erotic reading material) and I actually viewed or listened to inappropriate content (for more than 5 seconds)

or

(d) if I initiate contact with - or respond positively to - any woman other than my wife for a sexually related purpose (including by e-mail, chat, webcams, etc.)

or

(e) if I partake of any illicit sexually oriented services of any kind (including calls to adult phone lines, massages)

Then, if _____ [*Fill in Distraction 1 that we decided above*]

Or/And _____ [*Fill in Distraction 2 that we decided above. This is optional*]

Or/And _____ [*Fill in Distraction 3 that we decided above. This is optional*]

within the 90 minutes proceeding my fall, then
within the next 36 hours (*or other time frame*) I
will _____ [*Fill in 'Normal Knas' that we decided above*].
for each day (*or 3 hour period*) in which I fall.

If I did not do any (*or all*) of these things in the 90 minutes proceeding my fall,
then
within the next 36 hours (*or other time frame*) I
will _____ [*Fill in 'Heavy Knas' that we decided above*].

Some disclaimers to say immediately after making the *shvuah (Toch Kidai Dibur)* :

- If I had to do [*'Normal Knas'*] more than 3 times, the shvuah should no longer be binding on me.
 - If I had to do [*'Heavy Knas'*] even once, the shvuah should no longer be binding on me.
 - If I had a fall without remembering that I made this shvuah, I will only do [*'Normal Knas'*].
 - If I am honestly not sure that I had a fall, I will not have any *KNAS*.
-

Advanced Tip: If you find a specific situation to be a major stumbling block (for example, if you found a loop-hole in your filter which is tempting you to fall more than anything else) you can use the TaPHSiC shvuah to help you make this particular loop-hole **not even an option** in your mind, by adding the following words in bold (at the end of the Shavuah above):

If I did not do any (*or all*) of these things in the 90 minutes proceeding my fall, **[Or if I use 'a given loop-hole' to fall]**, then within the next 36 hours (*or other time frame*) I will _____ [*Fill in 'Heavy Knas'*]

By making the consequences of your particular stumbling block into a 'heavy knas' **regardless** of what you did before falling, it makes this particular method of falling no longer an option in your mind.

Cautionary Notes:

Although the TaPHSiC method is very powerful, finding the perfect formula is delicate and dangerous business. If we vow to do something *too* painful, we run the risk that we'll break our vow, which besides for the serious sin, can lead to deterioration since the person can *chas veshalom* feel that if he has transgressed this sin, there's no hope for him anyway! On the other hand, if it's not painful *enough*, there's always the risk of continued falls. Feel free to send your *shvuah* ideas to us at gye.help@gmail.com before making them, for advice.

It is important to write up a list of the vows for our records, and also to enable us to review them carefully before making them each time. In addition, having a list of the vows will help us refine them as we discover the ones that worked for better or for worse, and we can then use this refined list to make the vows again for progressively longer periods of time.

It is also important to understand that the TaPHSiC method is like putting an electrified fence at the edge of a cliff. If you come close to the edge, you will be "shocked" and back away. However, it goes without saying that if someone continues to walk alongside the edge of the cliff, the repeated shocks will start becoming very painful. At some point, he may just turn the electricity in the wires off, which will lead to a fall soon after. Or at some point, even the electricity won't help and he'll stumble and fall through the fence.

Therefore, in conjunction with this method, it is vital to put up other fences as well; fences that will keep us far away from the "edge of the cliff". This means installing a good filter, as discussed in previous tools. And on top of that filter, we need to install an "Accountability system" as well, such as eBlaster or Webchaver which sends reports of our internet usage to someone we would be ashamed to disappoint. This makes the repercussions all the more real, and keeps us far from even *trying* to find loop-holes in our filter.

The bottom line is, that although this method is like putting a strong electric fence at the edge of the cliff to stop us when all else fails, we need to continue to use the many tools of the GYE handbook to keep ourselves safely away from the edge.

Tool #11 Accountability

The tools we have suggested up until now in this handbook, focus mainly on our own private struggle with the addiction. If we haven't been successful yet with the tools above, it is time to bring the struggle to the next level and introduce *others* into the picture. **We won't go it alone anymore.** Our own strength has proved insufficient in dealing with our addiction. We need to start exploiting strength from **outside** ourselves to help us succeed.

The Pasuk in Mishlei (18:1) says: "**Le'taava yevakesh nifrad - Desire seeks isolation**". Being isolated causes us to go after our *Taavah* - our lust. The addiction wants us to withdraw into ourselves and disconnect from life. A partner in this struggle can do wonders in helping us reconnect to the world around us and ultimately break free. Going into detail with someone else about what we've done, is also known to be one of the best ways to get out the shame, guilt and remorse, and move on.

In addition to the above, simply telling over our feelings and thoughts to a friend or mentor, has tremendous power to help us break the insidious power of the addiction. As the *Tzetzel Katan* of the great Chassidic master, R' Elimelech of Lizentzk states:

One should relate before one's teacher, who instructs him in the way of HaShem, or even before a good friend, all of one's thoughts that are contrary to the Holy Torah that the Yetzer HaRah causes to arise in his mind or heart... And one should not withhold anything because of shame. He will find that by relating these things, he will gain the power to break the strength of the Yetzer HaRah so that it will no longer be able to overcome him other times. This is in addition to the good advice that he will receive from his friend in the ways of Hashem. And this is a wonderful remedy.

We see from the above, that simply relating ones struggles to a friend or mentor has the power to **break the strength** of the Yetzer Hara.

Aside from the fact that the very act of talking it out already lessens the struggle, the main purpose of a partner is that it introduces the vital element of "accountability" into the equation. As Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai blessed his students, "May your fear of heaven be equal to your fear of man". And his students asked him: "Rebbe, is that all?". And he answered: "*Halevai!*".

The truth of Rav Yochanan Ben Zakai's blessing is pointedly illustrated by the story of *Rav Amram Raban Shel Chassidim* (*Kidushin 81/a*) that we bring in the second part of this Handbook (principle 2). We may ask, if Rav Amram had so much Fear of Heaven that he was determined enough to call out "Fire!", why couldn't he just have stopped himself? The answer is, that Rav Amram knew that unless other human beings would be introduced into the equation, he was powerless to stop himself from the power of the lust. This amazing story shows us the **immense value** of "human" accountability.

Is there anyone among us who will say he is stronger than Rav Amram? We are faced with these desires every day, in the privacy of our homes and only a mouse-click away! We **must** have accountability to succeed in breaking the addiction. If the fact that Hashem watching him was still too "abstract" to stop Reb Amram Chasid from the power of lust, it is surely too abstract to stop us

when we are faced with lust. We need someone - in the flesh - who will hear us scream "***Fire!***" when we feel weak, and someone we can feel accountable to.

We can try to find a close friend or a Rabbi we respect, to whom we can confide about our struggles. And even more importantly, we need to make sure to keep *in touch* with them about our progress and give them **honest** updates every few days. Obviously for this to work properly, we must remain **completely** honest and open with our accountability partners, at all cost. If we fall, the shame we will feel in reporting it will be atonement in itself, as well as providing a strong incentive to remain clean next time.

We can also hook up with someone else who is struggling like us and give each other *Chizuk*. When feeling an attack of lust, it is very helpful to call our partner and talk it out. Although this partner may occasionally experience falls himself, he can see much clearer than us right now because he is not caught up in the lust as we are. His *Chizuk* will often be exactly what we would have told ourselves, but because we are blinded now, we need to hear it from someone else. Also, by nullifying our own mind and accepting to do whatever our partner suggests, we will often be able to get "out of our heads" and out of our own destructive desires.

Even when not under an attack of lust, it may be helpful to be in touch with our partners on a daily basis at first, either by phone or by e-mail. As we progress, the updates can be less frequent, but they should still be at set intervals which can be decided in advance.

If our wives know about our struggle, they can be one of the best accountability partners. We will feel their pain when we are slipping even more acutely than with others, and this will be a big incentive for us to remain clean. (Although it's never good to go into too much detail about our struggle with our wives). If our wives do not know, it may be extremely helpful in the long term for them to find out. **However**, this should be done only once we are taking serious steps to recover and are seeing good progress. Also, it should best be done with careful preparation and preferably in the presence of a therapist or Rabbi that can help her understand the nature of the addiction and offer guidance on how to cope. Although it is often very painful for the wife to find out about our struggles in this area, in the long term it generally does more good than damage. Aside from the strong "accountability" that this provides us with, a couple can ultimately grow much closer together when there are **no secrets** between them.

It is most effective if our partner or mentor is indeed someone we know. This adds an element of personal honor, which boosts the efficiency of the accountability. However, if this is not an option for us at this stage, Guard Your Eyes provides a framework to help everyone find an accountability partner or sponsor from our network. See the GYE partner program on our website. Once you are in the database, the system will help you find a partner or sponsor that matches your gender, marriage status, location and other constraints which best

match your situation. You can choose whether you want to be in touch with your partner by e-mail, chat, or even by phone. Using Google Voice, you can receive an anonymous phone number to use for calling and receiving your partner's calls. See our website for more info on GYE's Partner/Sponsor program.

From 'day one' of our journey, we can already be a partner to receive and provide accountability, understanding, chizuk and hope with another struggler. However, to be a sponsor on our network, we must have at least 90 days sobriety.

If we feel inadequate or unequipped to provide others with chizuk, we can use this Handbook, (both parts 1 and 2), as a basis for great material to discuss with our partner. Alternatively, we can read and discuss the many tips on the website or material from any of the hundreds of past chizuk e-mails sent out.

Those who join 12-Step groups (discussed in later tools) will be able to find a sponsor in the group who will serve both as an accountability partner as well as a guide to help them work through the 12 steps. As one group member beautifully summed up the power of accountability and of having others help us in our struggle:

*I have had enough of the silent suffering, the hiding, the lying and the living a double life. Today, I talk to people in my program every day, besides going to meetings twice a week. **The whole truth about me needs to be on the outside, with safe people.***

Tool #12 Group Support

Since one of the most powerful tools for breaking addictions is **getting out of isolation**, we need to increase our interaction with others in the same situation as much as possible. If a single partner or sponsor still does not give us the strength we need to completely stop acting out, there is nothing more powerful than group support to help addicts break free from addictions. Rabbi Avraham Twerski consistently stresses this to people who seek his council on dealing with this struggle.

On the Guard Your Eyes network, there are a few group support options. Firstly, we can join the forum and post there frequently. We quickly come to view the fellow warriors there as our spiritual "family". We get tons of support and are able to share chizuk with so many others. This is very helpful for our own recovery. We no longer feel alone in our struggle, and we watch how others, perhaps even worse off than us, make great progress.

Besides this, Guard Your Eyes offers many phone conference groups throughout the week where we can share anonymously with a group of Yidden like us, and get chizuk from the various programs and from each other. See our website for more info on the various phone groups.

One of our phone conferences recently started a great new feature. Everyone who was interested shared and exchanged phone numbers (anonymous numbers are available from Google Voice) and e-mail addresses with each other - through the moderator. He then sent the group "Call Roster" to all those who had participated, and encouraged the members to call each other and stay in touch regularly, **especially** when feeling weak. This new feature proved to be very helpful to the members of the group, and we recently expanded this idea on GYE by creating the GYE Phone Community, a special database of members' phone numbers available to anyone who wants to join. (See the Partner Program on our site for more info).

One of the previous Slonimer Rebbes had a Chassid that embarked on a business trip. Being away from the comfort and protection of his home, he was tempted with the Nisayon of Yosef Hatzaddik. In a moment of cheshbon hanefesh he said to himself: "when I come back, my Rebbe will see that I sinned". But then he thought: "I will avoid my Rebbe". Then he thought to himself, "but my friends will notice on my behavior that I sinned, and can I live without my friends? NO, I need my friends!" And that is what helped him overcome his Yetzer Hara. When he got back, his Rebbe told him: "What even a Rebbe can not accomplish, having good friends CAN".

I would like to quote from a letter written by an older Bochur (who is clean already for over a year):

Yes, it is possible to be shomer habris, both before marriage and after. How did I make it this far? At the time it seemed impossible but, Baruch Hashem, I have a few friends who realize the importance of this mitzva as well. The six of us are unmarried bachurim, currently learning in a prominent yeshiva. Together with my friends, we formed a group based on the idea that this is an important focus of our lives. We meet once a month to stress the importance and beauty of what we have undertaken, and also to make some pledges. The rules of this group require that if one falls chas v'shalom, we are required to inform all other members of the group and to pay a fine of 200 dollars to the tzedaka of our choice. The number is arbitrary and serves as a number that is a significant amount, yet doable. The members have managed to be shomer habris from one month to six months, as of today, Baruch Hashem. Your amazing website guides many aspects of our group. It all starts with accountability. If you have someone to answer to, and especially to a group, it will be that much easier and it becomes that much more real.

If we know even one or two friends who also struggle in these areas, we can

perhaps start our own little group - which would meet at set intervals to discuss the importance of these matters, and would serve as a forum for chizuk and accountability for one another. As time goes on, the group may grow to include additional members.

To make this work even better, there could be a separate count for the "group" (besides our personal "clean-day count"). If one of the members of the group experienced a fall, the "group" count would have to be reset (and perhaps everyone would have to give a set amount to Tzedaka as well). This would provide a very strong incentive to the members of the group not to be the one to cause the "group count" to be reset! Also, each time someone fell, he would need to discuss with the group what steps he will take to ensure that he does better next time. This would help everyone in the group become strengthened as well. Obviously, these ideas would only work if every member of the group is committed to being 100% honest. (And that should perhaps be the first condition to being accepted into such a group: a commitment to complete honesty).

GYE offers online Accountability Groups on the forum that follow this basic format. (See the "Accountability Groups" Board).

If you are a Bochur learning in Yeshiva, you could start a revolution (discreetly, of course) and earn unfathomable reward in the next world if you can find the inner strength to overcome your natural feelings of shame, and try to begin a discreet group of serious Bochurim who would meet at set intervals, as discussed above. To make it easier to sell to your close friends, you might just call it a "Shmiras Ainayim Chizuk group". The group can start with even two boys, and gradually it would grow as word would spread from ear to ear (no posting 'signs' of course). Imagine the merit you would have for such an undertaking! Not only would this help you tremendously in your own struggle, but it would help countless others, especially if the idea continues even after your time in the Yeshiva is over, for perhaps many years to come! And who knows? Maybe in your merit, this idea would even spread to other Yeshivos as well! What an unbelievable opportunity this could be to do something great for yourself, for Klal Yisrael and for *Hakadosh Baruch Hu!*

(For the most powerful form of face-to-face group support, see Tool #16 - 'Live 12-Step Groups' - below).

Tool #13 Talk to the Experts

If we are at a loss on how to continue our journey, or if we feel that all the steps we've taken until today still don't seem to do the trick for us, we can pick up the phone and call the **GYE Expert Hotline** to discuss our addiction with someone who understands us and can give us advice on how to proceed. This can be

either a therapist who is trained in these areas, or someone with personal experience and long-term sobriety. Alternatively, you can also send an e-mail to the **GYE E-Mail Helpline** to get expert advice.

In general, the experts on our hotline and e-mail helpline have worked with the 12-Step program in face-to-face groups and they are the most suited and experienced people to guide us on our journey by sharing with us what **worked** for them and what **didn't work** for them. They can also provide us with much insight into the nature of this addiction, so we can learn to recognize what we are going through and discover the proper perspective on how to deal with it. Another benefit of contacting someone personally is that the advice they give us will be more tailored to our specific situation.

The **GYE Hotline & E-Mail Helpline** are also ideal for mechanchim and parents, as well as for anyone who struggles in these areas, to get basic guidance on how to get started.

GYE Hotline: 646-600-8100
GYE E-Mail Helpline: help@guardyoureyes.com

Tool #14 Helping Others

The last of the 20 steps to *Teshuvah* of *Rabeinu Yonah*, and the last of the 12 Steps to breaking free of addiction both talk about helping others who are struggling with the same issues we struggle with. As David Hamelech writes in Tehhilim 51 (the famous *Kappitel* of *Teshuva* after the story of *Bat Sheva*): "**alamda poshim dirachecha, vechataim eilecha yashuvu - I shall teach sinners your ways, and sinners to you will return**".

But this is not just about *Teshuvah*, and it's not even just about helping others. This is about our *own* personal recovery. There is no better way to assure our own long term sobriety than to be in constant contact with the Guard Your Eyes community and to be helping others every day. Whether it is by being an accountability partner or sponsor for someone else who is struggling, or whether it is through posting on the forum, we are needed out there - and **we need** the others out there *even more*.

It is interesting to point out that the addicts of AA often found that if they did not make the purpose of their recovery to help others as well, they could do everything else in the 12-Step program, but sooner or later the addiction would relapse. The reasoning behind this is that if our whole recovery is only self-serving, we can easily get it confused with doing what **we feel** like doing, which is also self-serving. However, if we are continuously thinking of others, it keeps **us** on the right track as well.

And this is one of the secrets to understanding the importance of the Mitzva of "***ve'ohavto le'reiecho kamocha - loving your fellow man as yourself***" which Rabbi Akiva called a "***klal gadol ba'Torah - a great cornerstone of the Torah***". When we are not just living a "self serving" existence but rather living for others, we can learn how to truly do the will of Hashem for ***His*** sake. Indeed, Rav Chaim Volozhin is quoted as saying (by his son in the *hakdomo* to *Nefesh haChaim*) that the entire purpose of our existence is to do for others.

Before we even discuss the various ways that we can try and help others, there is one powerful thing that we can all do **right now**. There are probably thousands of other Jews around the world who unfortunately struggle in these areas too, suffering in shame and silence, who never even *heard* of Guard Your Eyes. It is clear that we can merit much divine help in our OWN struggles if we help spread the word so that others can be helped as well. Contact us at help@guardyoureyes.com to get a standard e-mail that looks like a "chain e-mail", and either you or we can send it out to your contact lists.

What else can we do to help others? Even if we are just starting out on our journey, we can try to find someone else to partner with and share chizuk. The accepted rule in the GYE community is that if we are clean for more than 90 days, we can already be a "sponsor" for someone else as well. But regardless of whether we are a partner or a sponsor, we can share experience, strength and hope with others, and help them along on their journey.

One of the best ways to strengthen others is on our forum, where hundreds of Yidden post about their journeys; their struggles and their victories. Also, as we discussed above, we can sign up for a partner/sponsor on our website.

Not only is helping others a great therapy for our own struggles, but also "*Midah kineged Midah*", the more we help others heal and spread the GYE message of *Teshuvah* and hope, Hashem will surely help us in ways we never imagined possible! We can also help others by strengthening GYE's holy work (see donation options on line).

Tool #15 **12 Step Anonymous Phone Conferences**

Most experts in addiction will tell you that the two most powerful methods in finding freedom from addiction are:

- (1) Group Support: Get out of isolation and connect with others who are going through what you are - and succeeding!
- (2) Work the world's most proven and powerful method of all time: the 12 Step program.

What is “The 12-Step Program”? The 12-Steps were developed back in the 1930’s by a group of alcoholics. These people had tried everything in the world, and yet they could not stop their addiction to alcohol even though it was completely destroying their lives. Somehow, Hashem opened their eyes to a simple spiritual program of 12-Steps that began helping even the worst cases to recover. The success of this program slowly spread, and today there are thousands of 12-Step groups throughout the world for every type of addiction, whether it’s alcohol, gambling, over-eating, narcotics, or sexual addiction. This simple program has helped millions of people to recover from even the strongest cases of addiction. The 12-Steps work best when worked together as a group, and with a sponsor. Here is a summary of the 12-Steps:

1. We admitted that we were powerless over *lust* - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, we promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to others with similar problems, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Guard Your Eyes provides many different anonymous 12 Step phone groups to help Jews connect with other addicts and work together to break free from the grasp of this insidious addiction. Besides for the immense power of group support that these phone conferences provide, we also learn the tools of how to find freedom from this addiction this life-saving program with an experienced sponsor. Rabbi Avraham Twerski indeed suggests to people that they try the GYE phone groups before deciding to join a live 12 Step group (which is the next tool of this handbook). See our website for more information on the many different phone conferences that GYE offers throughout the week.

GYE also offers phone conferences for the wives of addicts, to help them learn to deal with what they have to go through. There is a special forum for spouses of addicts as well, where they can give and receive support and chizuk to each other. This network of support has saved many marriages.

Learning about the 12 Steps

To begin internalizing the power of the 12 Steps, we can click through the recommended reading choices in the 12-Step section of our website. Particularly recommended are the Big-Book of AA and "The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions". We also highly suggest reading the 'White Book'. It is a wonderful supplement to the Big Book for people who suffer from lust addiction. All of these books are available for purchase in hard copy or can be downloaded in PDF format from our website.

Reading the literature can help us become acquainted with the steps and the profound philosophy behind them. By reading the many true stories in the "Big Book" we can see how the 12 Steps helped people turn around their lives to G-d and break free of the powerful grip of addiction.

You can also study the Big Book together with a group on our free and anonymous phone conferences, as mentioned above. A typical cycle through the 12-Steps can last a few months.

Introduction to the 12-Step Program

David Hamelech says in Tehillim (13): "*Ad ana ashis eitzos binafshi - until when will I try different tactics?"..."ad ana yarum oivi alai*" - until when will my enemy rule over me?"... "Habita aneini Hashem Eloki, ha'eira ainai pen ishan hamaves - look and help me, Hashem my Lord, enlighten my eyes lest I sleep the death".

If we feel like these Pesukim were written for us because:

- we've tried every tactic in the handbook till here, yet we still keep falling back into the same pattern,
- we see we cannot do this alone anymore,
- and lastly - but most importantly, we feel that we will "sleep the death" as Dovid Hamelech says, if we don't succeed;

then we have "hit bottom" and we are at the first of the 12 Steps, which states:

"We admitted we were powerless over the addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable".

The 12-Step program, if internalized properly, has consistently proven to be the most powerful approach to breaking free of addictions, all over the world. The 12 Steps are a spiritual program to overcoming addiction that is based on three core principles: (1) Trusting G-d, (2) Cleaning House and (3) Helping Others.

The 12 Steps are built on spiritual principles that are fundamental to ALL religions. Some religious Jews find it hard to accept that they will be learning from non-Jews how to give their life over to Hashem. But this *Pasuk* in *Koheles* 7:29 perhaps says it best: "*asher asa haElokim es ho'odom yoshor, veheima bikshu cheshbonos rabbim - G-d has created man straight, yet they have sought many complications*".

The 12 Steps are the ABC's of being a human being, created in the image of G-d. And we can learn these ABC's from any human being who has lifted himself up above the level of "animal" and seeks to be a humble servant of G-d, regardless of the nuances of the particular religion he may follow. One religious long-time 12-Stepper uses the following metaphor: Often as frum Yidden who are keeping Torah and Mitzvos while acting out in our addiction, we are like someone riding an 18-Wheeler truck that is careening out of control! Instead, we need to get off the 18-Wheeler and get back onto a tricycle again; simple, slow, safe and **real**.

Technically, the meetings are secular; spiritual but *not* religious. The program doesn't teach us anything at all about G-d. Instead, it teaches us about **ourselves**, and somehow that helps us to **let G-d in**.

At the Agudah Convention in New York (in November of 2009), Rabbi Twerski spoke about the 12 step programs, saying "they work" and denied that they have a Christian component. Each of the steps they entail, he said, "is in Chazal". We once asked Rabbi Twerski why the 12-Steps work even in place of where mussar didn't help. Here was his reply:

Years ago, a person in recovery requested that I develop a recovery program based on our sifrei mussar. I wrote the book "Self Improvement? I'm Jewish!", which is such a program. At the end of the book I say, "Now turn the page and read the 12 steps." The two are essentially identical. However, instead of the phrase "G-d, as I understand Him" we would say Hashem.

- I have attended many mussar shiurim. Everybody understands the importance of mussar, but I doubt if many people walk away with the feeling, "If I deviate from this, I'm dead!" A person sincere in recovery realizes that his very life depends on following the program, not theoretically, but very practically. If people would accept mussar that way, it would work.

*- No one in any mussar shiur I attended has ever spoken up and said, "I tried to do things **my** way, and I fell right back into my old ways." That helps bring home the message that one's life depends on following the program.*

- I don't recall anyone in a mussar shiur being so touched that they began to cry. It happens often in the 12 step program.

- No one in a mussar shiur shares strength, hope and courage.

These things are what makes the difference.

There's also a great article called "Addiction & Recovery Through Jewish Eyes" by Carol Glass, which compares the 12-Step program to the Teshuvah Templates of the *Rambam* and *Rabbeinu Yonah*, finding remarkable similarities.

Many religious Jews who have joined this program have achieved not only recovery from their addiction, but amazing success in *all* areas of their lives.

Understanding the magic of the 12 Steps

We will discuss here briefly the secret power behind the 12 Steps, and what it is about this simple program that has enabled millions of people around the world since the 1930's to break free of the most severe cases of addiction.

The first three steps are the core of the program:

- **Step 1.** "We admitted we were powerless over lust - that our lives had become unmanageable". This step is about "Hitting Bottom" and admitting defeat. We admit powerlessness, i.e. that we have a mental imbalance, at least as far as lust is concerned. (We will discuss more below what "hitting bottom" means). Our lives are unmanageable and we know that we **must** stop, yet we simply **cannot**. We are between a rock and a hard place.
- **Step 2.** "We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity". We cannot do this alone. Belief in a higher power is easy for frum Yidden, since we always believed in Hashem. But we need to strengthen that belief, and make it more real to us. We can use our 12-

Step group and our sponsor at first, as a way of learning how to use the help of a power outside of ourselves and greater than us.

- **Step 3.** "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of G-d as we understood Him." This is the core of the program, where we completely surrender our lives and will over to our Higher Power. "**Let Go & Let G-d**". We internalize that we are completely dependent on Hashem - a "life and death" dependency, like a one day old baby is dependent on its mother. And we give our lives and will over to His hands, and trust in Him fully to take the addiction away from us and care for us as we heal.

The rest of the 12-Steps are really about *how* to do Step 3 properly. No one ever succeeds in completely giving their lives and will over to Hashem, but through the other steps of the program, we consistently grow in that direction. And an amazing thing happens as we grow in our 3rd step and begin to live a life of humility, honesty and integrity in all our affairs (through the other steps). No one understands exactly how it works and science can't explain it, but we miraculously find that we no longer have to overcome the addiction. Instead, Hashem does it for us, as it says: "**Hashem yilachem lachem, ve'atem tacharishun - Hashem will fight for you, and you shall be still**". We learn to leave the entire issue of our Yetzer-Hara / disease completely for Hashem to deal with, and instead we focus only on living our lives as a servant of Hashem to the best of our abilities. And when we do this right, a miracle seems to occur and Hashem gives us a "Free Pass" from the addiction, one day at a time.

This sounds impossible. But it is documented in thousands of cases. We can read some of the stories on our website, the stories of the Big Book and join the 12-Step groups to hear for ourselves how the most hardened addicts were able to make a complete transformation through this program. As Bill W. writes in the Big-Book:

My friend sat before me and made the point-blank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known!

Had this power originated in him? Obviously it had not. There had been no more power in him than there was in me at that minute; and this was none at all.

That floored me. It began to look as though religious people were right after all. Here was something at work in a human heart which had done the impossible. My ideas about miracles were drastically revised right then. Never

mind the musty past; here sat a miracle directly across the kitchen table. He shouted great tidings.

I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil.

I finally realized that it was only a matter of being willing to believe in a power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would! Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

While Step 3 is about "**letting go and letting G-d**", it is important to realize that "letting go" is really all about changing ourselves from within. For this, we need the rest of the steps. As we learn to "**let go**" of the familiar setting of our inner attitudes and reactions to what we feel with our hearts more and more, the "**let G-d**" flows more and more naturally. That is the main work and fruit of the program.

As long as we remain the **same** people inside, we will just keep fighting ourselves. Through the rest of the steps, we learn to behave differently - i.e. that we should not have to resort to acting out with lust when stress, pride, fear, and **life** (with its many bumps) hits us. The other steps assure that we don't remain the same people that we were before. "Knowledge" we have already. Instead, we need an **inner change**. As we fix our spiritual condition and learn how to do Hashem's work rather than *our own*, Hashem gives us a reprieve from our insanity, one day at a time.

Dov, who is sober in a 12 step program for 14 years (see his story below) writes:

*"The 12 Steps help us recognize that we are sick and cannot afford to struggle with lust at all. Instead, we learn to change our focus from a "struggle" to simply doing Hashem's will for me today, by being **useful to others and to Him**. Lust is viewed simply as a distraction from **focusing outwards**, that's all."*

More about the program

We mentioned above that for Step 1 of the 12 Steps to truly work, we have to "hit bottom" first. But let us clarify this. It doesn't mean we have to wait until we are suicidal, divorced or bankrupt. All that is necessary to "hit bottom" is to know that the addiction is too strong for us and that we cannot break free alone.

See the section called "Hitting bottom while still on top" on our website to read terrible stories of where this addiction can lead, such as the story of the religious man whose life was ruined and he was imprisoned for chatting inappropriately with minors, or the serial killers who blamed their evils on the influences of their lust addiction, and the horrible stories of divorces and suffering of the wives of addicts.

Once we recognize that this is a progressive disease that will cause us not to be able to lead a normal marriage, hold down a steady job and progress in ruchniyus, and especially once we recognize the dangers of where this can lead, such as imprisonment and even death c"v, then we don't have to actually experience the self-destruction ourselves before being able to "Hit Bottom". And this is indeed one of the goals of the Guard Your Eyes network: to help people "Hit Bottom" while still "On Top", and get proper help while their lives are still intact.

The 12 Steps are a set of fundamental moral principles so basic, that even non-Jewish "drunks" are able to use them and ultimately become men of G-d. They are the ABC's of what it means to be human beings created in the image of G-d, as opposed to being animals who don't have free choice. They are such basic foundation blocks, that they come before Judaism, before Torah and before Mussar, as Chazal say: "**Derech eretz kadma la'Torah**". We have to learn the Alef-Beis first, before we can continue on to learn Torah and reach ever higher levels.

Unfortunately though, many of us never internalized these basics. It is often ironic, that only when a man is desperate, is he finally forced to learn the real ABC's of being a **mentch**. As addicts, we are forced to learn these important moral principles, and through them, we have the potential to become much greater people than average! And that was what Hashem was waiting for all along. That is perhaps **why** he gave us such a seemingly insurmountable addiction in the first place.

It's interesting to note that steps 2 through 12 (of the 12 Steps) do not even mention drinking/acting out. Instead, they are all about learning how to live right and think right, so that we do not get uncomfortable enough in our lives that we feel the need to medicate ourselves through acting out. The 12 Steps teach us how to trust in Hashem and live with **His help** instead of relying on our **own** strengths. They are about living in the **solution**, not in the **problem**.

On GYE we do not push anyone to join a 12-Step group. The 12-Step philosophy proliferates through "Attraction" and not "Promotion". One cannot be forced or pushed into this life-changing program. There must be a sincere desire to change, that comes from deep inside of us. We have to know that we MUST stop, and yet we know we CAN'T. Then, and only then, is there indeed hope that

we will be able to internalize the “spiritual experience” that the 12 Steps can awaken in us.

Can we really be free of lust one day?

By working the 12 Steps properly, we will find that we no longer have to run and hide from the world. We no longer will feel that we are walking a tight-rope every time we go down the street or go shopping. We will be able to live normal lives “out there” in the big world, and still remain serene and sober.

As the Alcoholics wrote back in 1939 in AA (p. 101) about how they felt after recovering through the 12 Steps:

Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all.

We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his spiritual status. His only chance for sobriety would be some place like the Greenland Ice Cap, and even there an Eskimo might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything! Ask any woman who has sent her husband to distant places on the theory he would escape the alcohol problem.

In our belief, any scheme of combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure. If the alcoholic tries to shield himself he may succeed for a time, but usually winds up with a bigger explosion than ever. We have tried these methods. These attempts to do the impossible have always failed.

Tool #16

LIVE 12-Step Groups

Because the 12 Steps are truly a life-changing set of principles as we discussed above, often they can be internalized properly **only** through joining a live face-to-face group. Trying to give up our will to Hashem is hard, since He is abstract to us. But by learning to give up our will in the group, and learning how to share honestly with the group and our sponsor, we are able to learn how to give up our will and be honest with Hashem as well.

Through the group, we learn how to work the steps into our lives, and we are able to see what others do to break free and follow their example. We get to hear

the real-life stories of others who were even worse off than us, and watch as they miraculously recover. We share hope, strength and experience with the rest of the group and feel a strong sense of “accountability”. And we get a sponsor (from the group) who has good sobriety, and we work closely with him on implementing the steps into our daily lives.

One addict, who is sober in a 12 Step program now for many years wrote:

I didn't get sober until I was desperate to stop and reached out frantically for help. A drowning person does not quit until they feel safe again. B”H for me it wasn't just a moshol (parable), I really felt I was dying, so I didn't give up.

I was told to go to meetings to meet other people and be introduced to the real me by looking at them. The support was tremendous.

*Still, many come to meetings and do not get sober. They leave after two or three meetings and stay out there. The next thing I needed was **faith in the steps** - at least temporary faith, so I'd give it a shot. Nothing else worked, so I had nothing to lose and everything to gain, for I saw that the way things were going I was about to lose it all.*

*And I have not yet turned my back on the knowledge that I am **just** as close to losing it all today, too. And if that ever becomes “just words”, I believe I'll be lost for good. I don't think I'd be able to hold onto that **reality** without at least **some** live in-person connection.*

Trying to learn the 12 Steps without a group is similar to learning brain surgery from a book. Anyone who wants to become a professional surgeon must participate in hundreds of real-life surgeries before they may be qualified to practice surgery on their own.

Rabbi Avraham J. Twerski, who provides guidance for our network and is a world-renowned expert on addictions, has always advised those who contact him for help on this issue that the live 12-Step groups are the surest way to break free of any addiction. They have a very high success rate with even the most hopeless cases. Here is what Rabbi Twerski wrote to one religious person who had been struggling with the addiction for 20 some years, thinking that he simply had a much larger Yetzer Hara than most other people:

Your case is not unusual. I say this because I can tell you what works and what does not work. Sexual compulsions come in a variety of ways, but the common denominator is that the person has a compulsion which he finds very difficult to resist. He tries all kinds of ways (like you did) but nothing works, including marriage. This kind of compulsion is essentially an addiction. The only thing that works, in my experience, is participation in a 12-step recovery

program for sexual addiction. They have meetings everywhere, including Israel.

There are many excuses for not attending meetings. What happens if someone sees me? The bottom line is, if a person wishes to be cured from cancer, he'll do anything. If one wishes to overcome a destructive sexual addiction, nothing should stand in his way. Psychotherapy is the frosting on the cake, but the 12 step program is the cake. When you attend 12 Step meetings, you may be able to find the name of a competent therapist. Be aware though, that many psychiatrists and psychologists have not been trained in addiction.

The particular type of sexual compulsion does not make much difference. A beer drinker can be as alcoholic as a whiskey drinker. The core problem is the inability to restrain one's self from doing something that one knows he should not be doing but appears powerless to control it. Quite a number of religious people have been able to do with the 12 step program what they were not able to do with mussar (religious ethical texts). Perhaps this is because of the group support. We may learn mussar together, but we don't practice it together, which is what happens in a 12 step meeting."

See also our website for a page of correspondence from Rabbi Twerski where he answers many people's questions about these groups.

The 12-Step groups are very zealous in protecting the anonymity of all their members. "Your secret is **everyone's** secret". In spite of this, Rabbi Twerski suggests that it is preferable to try and internalize the 12 Steps first through GYE's anonymous 12-Step phone conference groups that we discussed above (in tool #15). Going to live groups is not recommended for low level addicts and may prove harmful.

However, for those of us who did not find the phone conferences to be sufficient, we will need to take our recovery to the next level and seek out a live group in our area. For information on finding a live 12-Step group, contact the GYE helpline at help@guardyoureyes.com or call our hotline 646-600-8100. We also plan on having a live 12-Step group referral system on our website shortly.

There are a number of types of 12-Step groups that deal with sexual addictions (SA, SAA, SLAA, SCA, SRA, PAA). However, for religious Jews, Rabbi Twerski agrees that the SA program is best suited. SA works on "lust addiction" and nothing else, and their definition of sobriety is the closest match to the Halachic guidelines of our Sages. Also, SA is also predominately male, while other groups (like SLAA) are often mixed.

Even if the group meetings are held in side rooms of a church building, Rav Shmuel Kaminetsky rules that the behaviors we are trying to break free of are by

far more severe, and one should not hesitate to join a 12-Step group because of this (barring the main sanctuary).

For spouses of addicts, there are S-Anon and CODA groups in many cities, where the spouse (usually the wife) learn how to live with an addict. These groups are very helpful for spouses, and besides for learning to understand the nature of addiction, they also receive much needed guidance and support. GYE has special CODA and S-Anon phone conferences for spouses as well. Contact us for more info.

Dov's Story

Dov, who is the head moderator of our forum today and runs a virtual 12-Step group and phone conference on GYE, is sober in SA now for over 14 years. When Dov first found our network, he posted his story and shared his experience. We can all gain a lot from reading what he shared:

For years and years, I had thought I was just plain “bad”, at best pitied by, at worst despised by, Hashem. I was, in fact, doing severe aveiros (sins) and failing miserably at being an eved Hashem (servant of G-d). I knew that life was not supposed to be this way, but I always seemed to fall into trouble and act on my compulsions. As a result, my *emunah* (faith) that *avodas Hashem* (divine service) was really possible for me, was very low. That continued for over ten years.

Then I got married and it got much, much worse for yet another ten years. I went to a few different therapists and spoke with a few Rabbonim, usually under the pretense of “having marriage problems”. The real problem was, of course, that I had a double life and it was driving me crazy. Some of those people were a little helpful to me, some quite the opposite. I even called Rabbi Twerski (in 1991 or '92) who told me exactly what you report here on your website: that I probably need a 12-step group. I couldn't do that though (I thought), because my wife would find out (I couldn't hide going to weekly meetings!!). Also, I felt that the whole complicated recovery thing would “cramp my style”. I resigned myself to thinking that the best I could hope for, would be to die at a ripe old age with a big, giant, ugly secret in my safekeeping.

About six years later, I finally hit bottom. It became clear to me that I was getting only worse, never better, and that if I would take even one step further down – which I felt I HAD to do – I'd have to leave everything behind; my family, my self-respect, my community, the Torah and mitzvos, and even give up on any struggle for a connection with Hashem... In short, everything I defined myself and life by, was “up for grabs”.

I saw no way out and was terrified. I had been terrified many times before (usually by getting caught or fearing getting caught), but this was different. I knew

it had nothing to do with getting “caught” by anyone. Even alone with myself “uncaught”, this life became unbearable.

I went to a therapist the next week and told her my story, and she suggested I go to SA meetings. Having no choice I took her advice, and after doing the first of the 12-Steps (admitting powerlessness) and sharing my story with others, it became clear to me that I was actually very ill. I have been going to SA meetings ever since and have been helped directly and indirectly by Hashem – Who I now know as my Best Friend – to stay sober so far. My *davening* (prayer) and learning went through a long cold period (for about 3 years) soon after getting sober, but with lots of help and a few years of patience, it finally turned a corner, and now, like my marriage and my life in general, the davening and learning are better than I had ever dreamed they’d be. I often have some awareness that I am really, comfortably, living with Hashem.

Of course, I still have plenty of problems and have ups and downs, but they aren’t as big a deal as they used to be, and there is always this “background music” of hope, telling me it’s going to be alright.

Here is my point: The traditional AA approach saved my life. By this I mean, the AA message that I have a mental illness of addiction (to lust), a spiritual disconnect from Hashem and from people, and a physical allergy (to lust) that will eventually kill me. Immoral lusting in any way, makes my life completely unmanageable and makes me useless to others. Many other people appear to be able to use lust a little without suffering as I do. For them it is just a “moral failing”, while for me it leads to a downward spiral of insanity and failure, just like alcohol for an alcoholic.

In my case, focusing on my struggle as having to do with my normal “*Yetzer Hara*” (evil inclination) was a sure recipe for failure. It made me simply try harder and use new tricks, which never worked. The message of AA to me (through SA) was not about any of those. It was about accepting the fact that I am fundamentally different from non-addicts, and accepting that I am not a BAD person getting GOOD, but rather a SICK person getting WELL – with help from Hashem.

I had to accept that this disease had me completely beaten, just like cancer or diabetes. You don’t struggle against a disease, you get the treatment. Plenty of people don’t, and they die as a result. The standard “*Teshuva*” (repentance) thing did me no good at all, simply because it is not structured for crazy people. This was not just a “*Ruach Shtus*” (spirit of folly), it had become my standard of living.

I needed to first learn to get honest with myself and others. That took me about a year and a half of frequent program calls, regular meetings, work with my sponsor, and the 12-steps. And my recovery was still clearly a *neiss* (miracle). Just like Hashem cures people from cancer and other illnesses when the patient takes his or her medicine/treatments, I had to do the same, and He did the same

for me. And Hashem continues to do it each day, because I believe that I would still use my addiction and continue to ruin my life, should I just get uncomfortable enough with living. Putting the steps into action every day, keeps me comfortable and sane (at least it has so far!).

I think that some *frum* (religious) people, especially those who feel strongly about either beating the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) themselves as a supreme *kiddush Hashem* (divine sanctification), or who feel that the answer must be in the Torah if they only look hard enough, may have a hard time with my approach. But I doubt they would use a "Torah" approach with any other disease. For me, it was too confusing to mix *mussar* concepts with the 12 steps, particularly early on. It was toxic, actually.

Yes, I know that lust – i.e. using and acting on lust, is not exactly like alcohol, as it involves *aveiros chamuros* (serious sins), while drinking alcohol is not an *aveira* per se. Nevertheless, hanging onto the purely religious approach would have left me as I was for twenty years: looking for the answers with broken eyeglasses.

The way I read them, the 12 steps are about getting my eyes (mind and body) fixed and THEN getting *frumer* (more religious), not about getting *frumer* in order to stop. In fact, I got very *frum*, but the *frumer* I got, the sicker turns my addiction took! I grew quite disgusted with myself along the way, to put it mildly.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying that any other approaches are wrong, I'm just sharing what worked for me. Even though the principles of the 12-Steps are Torah-based, AA, in my experience is a sanity-building tool, not a religious one.

Because I am a Jew though, after I started to gain sanity and some freedom from the compulsive acting out and lust-thinking, I was able to start growing, thank G-d, into the Jewish man that Hashem wants me to be. And the steps are a tool that I use to stay on that path now as well, one day at a time.

Tool #17 Therapy

Very often the addiction stems from underlying issues, such as a difficult childhood, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and so on. We used the addiction as an escape mechanism to run away from emotional pain, or as an attempt to fill a void that we felt in our lives. And once we got hooked, we couldn't stop. Often these issues are deeply rooted in our psyche and began back in our childhood. From our youth, we used the pleasure to medicate our feelings of inadequacy or the void we felt in our lives that may have stemmed from childhood trauma, abuse, or even from social isolation, like just not "fitting in". An addiction therapist, preferably one who is trained in dealing with lust addiction, can help us explore the underlying causes of our addiction and discover where

the root of our behaviors may stem from. This is important for the long term, because even if we learn how to fight the addiction, if we do not deal with the underlying causes the disease will often relapse at a later stage.

Besides for the importance of the therapist being *trained* in addictions, it is best if the therapist we choose has also dealt with an addiction in the past - and broken free. As they say, "*it takes one to know one*". The mechanics of all addictions are very similar, so it doesn't really matter which particular addiction the therapist may have dealt with.

Choosing a therapist who is not trained in addictions and does not understand the **nature** of addiction, will often cause much frustration and waste a lot of time and money before we realize that they are not really helping us. They may try to help us find the underlying causes, but an addiction is a disease, and understanding where it stems from alone is not enough to enable us to break free. Just like understanding a broken leg won't heal it. All the understanding and "self-knowledge" in the world can't take away an addiction - which is a physical disease accompanied by a mental obsession.

A good addiction therapist will be able to teach us how to start living *real* life instead of fantasy, how to reconnect with the world around us, how to "get out of our heads" and stop living a self-centered existence, how to admit powerlessness, and how to "surrender" the addiction and turn our lives over to our Higher Power (often using the 12-Step method). They will teach us how to let go of the need to "control", which underlies all addictions, and how to start trusting in ourselves, in the world around us and in G-d, without resorting to the escape mechanisms and the "need to control" that the addiction provided us with.

There are also techniques such as CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) and the techniques of Patrick Carnes, which many therapists trained in treating lust addiction use.

Also, a good addiction therapist will often encourage us to join a 12-Step group, either in tandem with the therapy or as a follow up, and they may be able to help us work through the 12-Step program themselves.

Although we may be religious, it is **not** necessary to choose a religious therapist in order to be helped, just like the doctor who fixes our broken leg doesn't have to be religious to heal us. All that *really* matters is that the therapist understand the nature of addictions well, and is trained in dealing with them. As Rabbi Avraham J. Twerski answered someone on our network who wrote to him for advice about going to a non-religious therapist:

Because Freud was an atheist who was anti-religion, psychology got a bad rap years ago (which was well deserved). Modern psychology is

generally not anti-religion. A good sex-addiction therapist is not going to lead anyone off-the-derech. A person who is sexually addicted is, in that area, off-the-derech already, and getting help with the addiction can actually enable him to strengthen his Yiddishkeit. Of course, I cannot vouch for all therapists. But if he has a good reputation, that should be OK.

See our **therapist referral section** for a database of therapists worldwide, searchable by country and city. Also, when you attend 12 Step meetings, you may be able to find the name of a competent therapist by asking around.

Tool #18 Medication

If our therapist determines that our addiction may be connected with underlying causes such as depression, anxiety, obsession, OCD, or even hyper-sexuality (which is a common condition in lust addicts), he may send us to be evaluated by a psychiatrist for medication that can help us significantly in these areas.

As a side note of interest, one good therapist said that he never puts a client on medication for depression before having them try a rigorous regimen of exercise for about three months. In most cases, the depression disappears as a result of the physical activity, and exercise routinely outperforms antidepressants in controlled studies.

If medication turns out to be necessary, this is nothing to worry about, as millions of people around the world take medications for these type of issues. The medications can truly make a difference in the long term, and with today's medical advances, the side effects are often negligible. Rabbi Twerski wrote to someone who contacted him through our network:

In order to have both physical and emotional health, we require proper nutrition. If we lack certain essential vitamins and/or minerals, we develop "deficiency syndromes". For example, lack of iron and B vitamins may cause depression. If a child was raised by abusive parents, who, in addition to being unkind to the child, deprived him of proper nutrition, he may be very depressed as an adult. A physician who examines the person may diagnose the nutritional deficiencies and prescribe the missing vitamins and minerals. The person may say, "How are those going to remove the pain of the abuse?" The answer is that the vitamins and minerals will remedy the deficiencies, and he will have to get therapy to deal with the consequences of the abuse.

There is a special section of our website that provides some medical ideas that can help us in this struggle, ranging from "alternative" medications which can be

purchased over the counter or in health food stores, and down through the more conventional medications that often require a psychiatrist's prescription.

SSRI medication can sometimes be useful in this struggle, since our addiction is often connected with OCD or other compulsive behaviors (even if we don't experience this in other areas of our lives). These type of drugs can help take off the "edge" of the obsession and help us deal with the "void" and depression that is often felt in withdrawal. Often these kinds of medications can be like holding on to a lifesaver, while swimming in the stormy sea. While we still have to do the swimming ourselves, the medications can help keep us afloat.

In many cases, we can slowly get off the medications as we make more progress. A period of eight months to a year on these kinds of medication is often enough to help us break the cycle of addiction for long enough to continue maintaining our sobriety without them. However, getting off the medications requires close follow-up and approval from the psychiatrist. These kinds of medications can never be stopped suddenly, but rather in gradual increments.

There are also times when certain medication can prove to be counter-productive. Therefore, while on medication we should be undergoing therapy and close follow up.

Tool #19 Rehab

If we've tried everything and still can't break free, perhaps we need some time to get away from society completely to be able to **focus fully** on recovery for a period of time. Just as in drug and alcohol addiction, often the withdrawal symptoms are simply too hard to bear. The only way to break free is to be under supervision and be in a place where we simply cannot access our "drug" **in anyway**, for a while. Here are a few ideas that the GYE network has put together:

- 1) The **Meadows** (www.themeadows.org) is a multi-disorder inpatient addiction treatment facility specializing in the treatment of a broad range of addictions.
- 2) The Experiential Healing Center of Tennessee (www.ehcmemphis.com) offers group therapy and a trauma healing workshops.
- 3) Torah & The 12-Steps (www.torahtwelvesteps.org) is a rehab option in Florida, run by a religious Jew who developed a 12-Step Torah approach to recovering from addictions. He currently deals mainly with other types of addictions, but he is interested in expanding his work to include sexual addiction as well.

4) Sexual Recovery (www.sexualrecovery.com) is based in Los Angeles and treats clients from all over the world, providing intensive programming that works to eliminate compulsive, addictive or offending sexual behavior. Their 5 and 10-day Intensive Programs (IOP's) offer focused daily psycho-education and individual therapy, as well as structured social support and spousal involvement and are a well-established, functional treatment alternative for those who cannot afford the time or money for a 4-5 week residential stay. (Patients can stay in a local recovery house or with friends).

5) See www.GentlePath.com (Dr. Patrick Carnes) to discover more rehab options in the U.S.

6) Retorno in Israel is a center for treatment of addictions. It is run by religious staff and has seen much success in treating the religious community for a wide range of addictive behaviors. For more information visit the website: www.retorno.org, or contact:

United States: Pinny Shreiber, E-Mail: Pinny@retorno.org, Tel: 718-285-9815
Israel: Gil Braverman, E-Mail: gil@retorno.org, Tel: 972-52-244-3641

Be in touch with us through our website or hotline for an updated list and more options.

Tool #20 **The Very Last Resort**

If all else has failed G-d forbid, and the addiction continues to ruin our lives, for example:

- If we are plagued by fantasies day and night and can find no peace, and none of the tools above were able to help us.
- And especially if the addiction is harming the lives of others or causing us to act in illegal or harmful ways.

In such cases, there are medications or shots that can reduce our sexual drive to the point of chemical castration. If the addiction is harming the lives of others, this should be done as soon as possible - **before the next victim is claimed**. We will need to be evaluated by experts in this field before these procedures can be carried out. Usually the drive can be brought down to zero over a period of a few months by receiving a special shot once a month.

See contact information below of professionals who deal in this area, in both Israel and the U.S. These shots are often requested by law officials for sex offenders and pedophiles, before the court will agree to release the offender from jail.

Sometimes this method can be helpful for a compulsive addict. By reducing the ability to act on his obsessions, he is given some time to **think** before acting. Instead of getting a thought and feeling that he must immediately act on it – as he had always done, the shots allow him a moment to try and use the tools (that he learned in the 12-Step groups, such as picking up the phone and calling his sponsor) before acting on his obsession, and hopefully stop himself in time.

However, if the addiction is not harming others, we do not suggest this method unless one has truly tried everything else and can not bear it anymore. As opposed to all the other tools mentioned in this booklet, **this tool** is not a solution, but rather a cop-out. It is like closing the door on a room full of garbage, but leaving the garbage inside. And as soon as the addict is off the shots, all the garbage returns to destroy their life once again. We were sent down to the world to work on ourselves and grow, and not to just have the *Yetzer Hara* chemically removed. (Unless of course there is no choice, in which case, this is likely what Hashem expects the person to do).

Note that one can not have children while on this treatment, and it will obviously interfere with marital relations as well. And although there are ways to find a balance where the patient may still be able to be with their wives somewhat, the balance is difficult to ascertain and may take many months to perfect.

To be assessed for this treatment in New York (marketed as Trelstar):

Dr. Richard B. Krueger, M.D. / Tel: 212-740-7330 / Cell phone: 917-750-1596
Email: rbk1@columbia.edu / Website: www.paraphilias.com

To be assessed for this treatment in Israel (known as Decapeptyl):

Prof. Eliezer Witztum / Tel: 02-6734150 / 4 Revadim St., Talpiot, Jerusalem
Prof. Ariel Ressler / Tel: 02-6418033 / Kadish Luz 3/1, Ramat Sharet, Jerusalem

PART 2:

ATTITUDE

30 PRINCIPLES FOR MAINTAINING THE PROPER ATTITUDE AND PERSPECTIVE ON PURITY STRUGGLES

**PART A:
21 ATTITUDE PRINCIPLES FOR LUST STRUGGLES**

**PART B:
9 ATTITUDE PRINCIPLES FOR WHEN THE
STRUGGLE HAS REACHED ADDICTION LEVELS**

Table of Contents for Part 2: Attitude

Part A: Attitude Principles for Lust Struggles

1. Fixing the foundations of ourselves & of the world
2. Fear of Heaven can't always stop us, but it can PUSH us
3. You are not alone
4. Determination is completely up to us
5. No pain no gain
6. Making it a top priority
7. True fulfillment vs. false fulfillment
8. "With cunning make your battle" (Mishlei 24:6)
9. Learning to love Hashem through this struggle
10. Redirecting the power in our souls
11. Dealing with thoughts and fantasies
12. Catching ourselves as we slip
13. Every Little Bit Counts
14. It's never all or nothing
15. Hashem looks at our efforts, not the results
16. Getting back up after a fall
17. Don't dwell on the past
18. Guilt vs. Shame
19. We don't lose past gains after a fall
20. Experience is built out of failures
21. There's always hope

Part B: Attitude Principles for Addiction Levels

1. Understanding what we are up against
2. Accepting that we need help
3. Believing that we CAN be helped
4. Hitting bottom while still on top
5. Breaking the Cycle
6. "One day at a time"
7. Giving the fight over to Hashem
8. Overhauling our character traits
9. Why religion alone isn't always enough

21 Attitude and Perspective Principles for Lust Struggles

1. Fixing the foundations of ourselves & of the world

The struggle with lust is a struggle with the deepest human emotions. And therefore, **fixing these emotions fixes a person deeper than anything else.** That's why the Zohar calls this Yesod. Hashem is not just telling us not to be dirty. Rather, he is telling us to **build ourselves** with the things we **don't do**. The foundation of a building is underground and no one sees it, but it holds up the entire building. *Shemiras Habris* is the hidden part of a Jew, it's the **real you**. And if the foundation of a Jew is weak, his whole spiritual structure is fragile and in grave danger of collapse.

It is brought down from the Baal Shem Tov that if a person succeeds in subjugating this particular desire then he is automatically able to subjugate all other desires, as the *Mekor Mayim Chaim* writes (*Baal Shem Tov, Lech Lecha*), "For it is from the strength of **this desire** that man is created, and a person has 365 sinews--parallel to the 365 negative commandments, and by subjugating this he therefore nullifies [the desires for] all 365 negative commandments". The *B'nei Yissachar* also writes (*Derech Pikudecha*): "We have a tradition from our fathers that the Yetzer Hara desires more than anything to attack the person through these sins, because included in this lust **are all the others.**" Perhaps this is why R' Nachman also writes that these temptations are a man's main test in life.

It says in the *Korbonos*: "*Zeh Ha'isheh asher Takrив LaHashem – This is the fire that you should sacrifice to Hashem.*" **Isheh** means fire, but it also spells **Ishah**, which means "a woman." The biggest sacrifice that a man needs to make in his life for Hashem is **zeh Ha'isheh** – this desire for women and the fire of lust.

By working on these areas, we ultimately learn to give over our entire heart to Hashem, as the Pasuk says "**Bechol Levavcha – with all your heart.**" And Chazal say "**Bishnei Yitzrecha – with both your inclinations.**"

And not only are we fixing ourselves deeply through this struggle, we are also fixing the world. Every generation has its tests, and this is likely the test of our generation. There has never been a time in history where promiscuity and licentiousness filled the world in every corner, to the degree that it does in our time. In the generation before Moshiach's time, we are cleaning out the filth from the very bottom of the barrel. We are doing the final work before the great days that are to come.

Only great souls with immense potential were given this difficult job. So if Hashem gave us this struggle, it means he trusted us with a great mission. This alone should bring us joy and motivation to substantiate His trust. And of course, if we succeed, we will be in the front lines to greet Moshiach!

2. Fear of Heaven can't always stop us, but it can *PUSH* us

Often we are aware of how serious these sins are, yet our “Fear of Heaven” alone isn’t always enough to stop us when faced with an attack of lust. It’s not that we don’t fear Hashem, but will power alone is often not sufficient when dealing with these extremely addictive behaviors. Not only that, but lust is so powerful that even the greatest Tzadikim who feared Hashem with all their hearts, sometimes felt powerless when faced head-on with lust. See what happened with *Masya ben Charash* and *Rav Amram, Rabban Shel Chassidim*. In both these cases, these great Tzadikim had to take extreme measures to ensure they didn’t stumble.

The Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (Vayechi) tells this story:

Once the Satan fixed his sight on Masya ben Charash who was a big Tzaddik, and said to himself: "Is it possible that this man does not sin?" Then the Satan went and asked G-d: "How do you view Rabbi Masya Ben Charash?" And G-d replied: "He is a perfect Tzaddik". The Satan said to G-d: "Give me permission to put him to the test". G-d told the Satan: "Go".

The Satan appeared to the Rabbi as a beautiful woman, the likes of which had never been in the world. When the Tzaddik saw her, he immediately turned his face away. Then the woman quickly moved to the side where Rabbi Masya had turned his face to, and again he quickly turned his face away. Then the Tzaddik said: "I am afraid that my Yetzer Hara will overpower me and cause me to sin". What did the Tzaddik do? He called a student that was with him and ordered him to bring him fire with nails. The student brought him nails and the Tzaddik put them into the fire and then to his eyes and became blind. When the Satan saw this, he trembled and fell on his back.

At that time The Holy One Blessed be He called the angel Raphael - for he is in charge of healing - and told him: "Go and heal Rabbi Masya Ben Charash". Then Raphael came in front of the Rabbi and the Rabbi asked him: "Who are you?" and he replied: "I am Raphael the angel, I came for G-d sent me to cure your eyes". Rabbi Masya replied: "Leave me alone, what is already done is done". Raphael returned before the Holy One Blessed be He and said: "Master of the World, thus spoke Masya". G-d said to Raphael: "Go back to him and tell him that I will personally guarantee that the Yetzer Hara will have no power over him". Immediately Raphael went and cured Masya. From here our Sages said: "All those who are careful not to look at women, the Yetzer Hara has no power over them".

The Gemara in Kidushin 81/a tells this story:

Some women who had been taken captive were redeemed and brought to Nehardai. They were kept in the attic of Rav Amram the Chasid and the

ladder was removed. At night, a beam of light reflected off one of the women, revealing her beauty. Rav Amram was seized with lust and he moved the ladder (which normally needs 10 people to move it) to ascend. As he was halfway up, he screamed "There is a fire in Rav Amram's house!" and the Rabanan (Rabbis and students) flocked to his house. After they saw that there was no fire they said to him, "You embarrassed us (with your behavior)!" Answered Rav Amram: "It is better to suffer embarrassment in this world than in the next".

What we can learn from the two stories above is that, although *Yiras Shamayim* is not always enough on its own, it should push us to take **EVERY step we can** to break free of these pitfalls (see Part 1 of this handbook to learn the steps you can take).

With this in mind, let us explore a few aspects about these sins that can help strengthen our Fear of Heaven to make sure that we indeed take every step we can to break free:

Chazal (Niddah 13a) write that HZ'L is as if one has spilled blood or worshiped *Avodah Zorah*, and that those who do it are *chayev misah biday shamayim*. The Zohar even goes so far as to say that it is the worst sin in the Torah. Another terrible result of these sins that is brought down in the holy books, is that they desensitize us to spiritual connection. The more we sin in these areas, the more desensitized we become. This is a commonly experienced phenomenon, where people slowly lose their yearning for spirituality and they start to feel ever more disconnected from Torah, Shabbos and Mitzvos. Unfortunately, this also makes Teshuvah all the more unlikely, as one becomes more and more disconnected.

Also, these behaviors require hiding, lying and living a double life. This cuts us off from the world around us and doesn't let us feel the tremendous kindness of Hashem that fills our lives. It blinds us to the goodness in the world around us, to our souls and to Hashem. We begin to lose appreciation for our own wives and children. We are unable to find inner peace; we can't stop lusting and we remain closed up within a shell that no one can penetrate.

It is also brought down in Kabalistic texts that every drop emitted in vain causes souls to be created, and these souls are snatched up by the forces of evil and become demonic forces that cause much suffering in a person's life. The souls themselves also suffer in misery with no hope (unless we fix ourselves), and after we die they stand as terrible accusers against us.

But do not let all these dramatic revelations cause you to despair. Teshuvah was created even before the world was created, and Hashem knew that we would stumble in these areas. Hashem has infinite patience and He understands us far better than we understand ourselves. Chazal say that Hashem even brought

David Hamelech to stumble with *Bas Sheva*, only to show us the incredible power of *Teshuvah*.

Also, it is brought down in the Holy books that, through a sincere *Teshuvah*, all the souls that we created through our sins actually become uplifted, and they change from being “accusing angels” to “defending angels” instead.

So never despair! Although the standard *Teshuvah* model may not always work well when dealing with these addictive behaviors (see part B where this is discussed more in depth), by learning the proper perspective on this struggle and by taking the steps we can to break free, we are doing **exactly** what Hashem intended for us to do all along. *That* is our *Teshuvah*.

3. You are not alone

Almost everyone struggles with lust on some level, and a high percentage have stumbled in these areas as well. Rav Wolbe Zatza”l in his Sefer “Psychiatry and Religion” (Pg. 82) writes: “*The difficult phase of adolescence is fertile soil for feelings of guilt, especially for religious youth. Masturbation is a serious prohibition. Yet almost all youth stumble with this and are unable to find the strength to overcome this in any way.*” (See tool 5 in part 1 of this handbook for more of what he suggests). Even Tzadikim of previous generations struggled in this area (as they mention “the sins of their youth”), so you can imagine that those who seek purity in a generation such as ours are truly from Hashem’s greatest warriors! In the GYE community, you will find thousands of religious Jews like yourself, struggling in these areas. On our lively and vibrant forum at www.guardyoureyes.org/forum, people like yourself exchange questions and tons of Chizuk, post logs of their progress and share experience and hope. And you can also read the many stories on our website to see what others have gone through and how they have succeeded.

4. Determination is completely up to us

The Vilna Gaon says that what a person says they want, and even what they *feel* they want, has no relation to what they *actually* want. The Yetzer Hara was given permission to make a person feel they want something they really don’t. And the same goes for what a person *feels* they can or cannot do. This has no relation to what they can or can’t do **in reality**. So believe you will succeed, even if you feel you can’t!

The biggest obstacle to succeeding is not believing you can succeed. The first impediment to overcoming this struggle is not in your genes, your childhood or your environment. If you believe you can succeed and are willing to make the effort, you will find the way out. Absolutely **NOTHING** stands in the way of a true

RATZON. You can read the recovery stories on our site to see that many people even worse off than you have successfully broken free of these behaviors.

We must truly want to break free of this *Mitzrayim*. Chazal say that those who didn't want to leave *Mitzrayim* died in the plague of darkness. Already at the outset of our journey, we must be determined that we will **never give up** and always keep trying, no matter what.

R' Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin writes (*Tzidkas Hatzadik* 154): "Just as one must believe in Hashem, so too, one must believe in himself!" Hashem wants us to **BELIEVE** in our strengths, our capabilities, and in our ability to overcome evil and achieve greatness.

Although we might feel stuck, **determination** is completely up to us. The trick to ultimate success is only to **want enough**. So let's be honest with ourselves. If we find that we don't want to let go fully of the lust, let's ask ourselves "why not?" Do we really need the lust? What is it doing for us? There are so many **far more important things** in life! When we try to hold on to the poison of lust, we are acting like little babies who kick and scream when their father tries to take the colorful little medicine pills that they thought were candies, away from them. Lust is poison! If we keep feeding it, it will ultimately destroy our lives. **Let's let our loving Father take it away from us.**

5. No pain no gain

By nature, we go to what feels good and try to avoid pain. In that, we are no different than cows. Animals don't understand that a painful experience can be beneficial. Try to explain surgery to a cow! Pleasure and suffering are both part of life. But we get to choose which pleasures we want and which suffering we want. And the choice is either the false pleasure that lust offers us, or the pleasures that Hashem wants us to have – which are infinitely greater. Do we choose the pain of the spiritual "work-out" or the pain of the Yetzer Hara **getting stronger?**

As we brought in tool 1 of the handbook, the Steipler points out that anyone who keeps away from these forbidden pleasures is promised to receive the pleasures of life **from other areas instead**. And it follows that those who accept upon themselves the suffering that breaking-free entails, will save themselves much suffering in other areas of life.

If we decide that no matter how painful it is we won't give in - even if we feel like we are dying, Hashem takes away the pain from us and it becomes much easier.

6. Making it a top priority

Nothing worthwhile comes without hard work. One of the greatest obstacles stopping a person from changing is the notion that it can be done without a lot of investment. We live in a generation of instant results, and we come to expect that whatever needs to happen should happen quickly. We tend to forget that our whole purpose on this world is to grow and improve. We tend to look at any weakness that we have as an "inconvenience" that needs to be gotten out of our way (or ignored), while in reality it's Hashem's personal message telling us exactly what He sent us to this world for. As it is brought down in the Sefarim (such as Tzidkas Hatzadik #49 and #181), that the things we struggle with **the most** in life are the very things that we came down to the world to fix.

The Vilna Gaon (Sefer Yonah 4:3) talks about *Gilgulim* (a *Gilgul* means that the soul comes back to this world after a previous life). And he explains that every soul has one major job to fix on its return to this world, in the one major area that it messed up last time. The Vilna Gaon asks, how we can know what the purpose of our soul's *Gilgul* is? He answers that we can figure it out by observing what sins we stumble in the most, and which sins we have the most intense desire for.

So if this is what we indeed came down to the world for, **let us make our growth in this area the most important thing in our life.**

7. True fulfillment vs. false fulfillment

The Yetzer Hara's job and goal is to cause us damage, and to do this he was given permission to use pleasure and "*Sipuk*" (fulfillment) as a bluff to be able to harm us. Otherwise, how could he possibly do his job? We would tell him to get lost! But we must understand that his seductions are like a terrorist offering us a piece of cake to ensnare us. We know he doesn't mean the cake, he means to use the cake to damage us somehow. Only pleasure that is tied with truth has a *Kiyum* (lasts) because it can make a *mitzvah* complete; for example, eating meat on Yom Tov or the enjoyment we experience on Shabbos. But pleasure that is tied to *Sheker* has no *kiyum*, which explains why when the pleasure is over, we don't feel any fulfillment. And we also don't talk about it with those who love us, with those who want the best for us, because we know that it was just there to damage us. And that's also why we want it again not long afterwards, even though we just had it. After all, if it was truth, why isn't it there anymore? Because we feel a void, and so we look again to fill this void with another false *Sipuk* (fulfillment).

8. “With cunning make your battle” (Mishlei 24:6)

We are unlikely to succeed if we try to fight the *Yetzer Hara* head on. As the *Ohr Hachayim* writes (Parshas Acharei Mos), the only way to succeed in this struggle is to diligently guard our eyes and thoughts. Once we are thinking about these things, and especially if we see the temptations before our eyes, it will often be too late and we won't be able to control ourselves.

There are a series of stories recorded in Gemara Kiddushin (80a-81a) where Hashem demonstrated the power of the *Yetzer Hara* to some of the Tana'im who had belittled its influence. The Gemara relates that the Satan presented himself to R' Akivah as a seductive woman in a treetop. He became so inflamed that he was unable to resist, and he started to climb the tree to sin. Halfway up the tree, the woman turned back into the Satan and said: "If it wouldn't be that it had been said in the Heavens to respect R' Akivah and his teachings, I'd take your life!". A similar story is recorded with R' Meir swimming across a river to sin with a woman, and upon reaching the halfway point, the woman turned back into the Satan, rebuking him with those same words. We can learn from these stories how it is almost impossible to overcome these tests when a person is faced head-on with powerful lust.

Therefore, to succeed in this struggle, we need to avoid fighting it head on. Just like terrorists are often successful because they don't try to fight a big army head on, we must also learn to apply **guerilla warfare** and pre-empt the *Yetzer Hara*. Fighting him head-on is a sure recipe for failure. Instead, we need to make careful fences to avoid him. To learn what fences we need to make, we have to start asking ourselves how the evil inclination has been so successful until today? How does he get us to fall? How do our minds work in the various situations we find ourselves in? In what habitual ways have we learned to scan our surroundings? How is our mind used to thinking and processing information? Which scenarios most trigger our lust? What moods are we in when it happens, and in what situations do we begin to slip?

When we study ourselves honestly (and sometimes it helps to view our behaviors as if we were a different person watching ourselves from the outside), we can learn how the evil inclination works with us. Then we can pre-empt him and **prevent him from fighting us head-on**. Ultimately, we must learn to try not to even get into discussions with him at all. Instead of fighting him directly, we must learn to walk **around** him.

9. Learning to love Hashem through this struggle

This struggle is the fertile soil that our “true” selves will grow out of. And through it, we learn how to give our hearts over to Hashem. And hopefully we will be able to look back one day and say that it was all worth it. After all, for what did we

come down to the world for, if not to learn how to give Hashem our hearts? As the Pasuk says: "**Ten b'ni libcha li – my son, give me your heart.**" Through this struggle, we learn how to "Let go and let G-d" and how to surrender our will and our lives over to Hashem in a very deep way. And this is something most people never merit to learn, even in 120 years on this world. So in a deeper sense, this struggle is truly a gift from Hashem and a sign of His love for us - **if we only use it correctly!**

No matter how much we have fallen, we must never view ourselves as "despised" by Hashem or imagine that Hashem is annoyed and frustrated with us. Instead, as we learn to give over our will to Hashem we will begin to feel that Hashem is truly our closest and most eternal friend.

As we progress and mature, we begin to view our relationship with Hashem on a much more intimate level. We begin to perceive how the lust is trying to get in between "us and Hashem" and interfere with the greatest love that can possibly exist!

To learn how to redirect our love to Hashem through this struggle, here is one helpful approach from the Holy Sefer, Noam Elimelech from Rav Elimelech of Lizensk (Parshas Bishalach):

Yakov Avinu A"H, used to serve Hashem with his midah, which is "Tiferes" (meaning "Awesome Beauty"). And from everything he used to see, hear, do, or eat, he took from it awesomeness of the Creator--Blessed Be He. For example, if he would eat something tasty, he would think in his mind: "This food is but a creation. Who put the good taste into this food? Was it not the Creator--Blessed Be He? And if this food is so good in taste, is it not obvious that all the good and pleasantness is to be found in the Creator--may his name be blessed--without any limits or boundaries?! And so he would think with each thing. And with this is understood the Pasuk, "and Yaakov kissed Rachel".

How uplifting and beautiful it is to try to apply this midah of Yaakov Avinu to ourselves. Whenever we see something that turns our hearts to these desires, we need to tell ourselves, "If this is truly so good and I desire it so much, how much more desirable it must be to connect with Hashem, for in *Him* lies all beauty, comfort, security, love and pleasure. (After all, if He didn't have it all within Him, could He have created it?) All of us have a "G-d hole" that we are trying to fill. Hashem gave us a deep subconscious need to seek Him out, for He is the source of **all that we need**. Our physical minds are simply messing up the signals of our soul's yearning. The beauty we see in this world is but a fleeting shadow of the real thing!

The Baal Shem Tov also speaks a lot about how these desires are “fallen love” that really have their roots in the upper spiritual world of “Ahavah”. As is written in Parshas Lech Lecha:

Everything (in this world) is a projection of Hakadosh Baruch Hu through his attributes of love and fear, as is known. But the love is in exile, clothed in the physical, such as in a woman or in food... One should say in his heart, if I love this, which is only a ‘fallen and broken love’ dressed in a putrid drop (which is where we all come from), how much more should I love the Holy one Blessed Be He!

Those who struggle with these desires can use it as a spring board to Ahavas Hashem. And when we successfully do this, we are uplifting the greatest physical desires and turning them into a great love for Hashem! This is a very high level of Divine service. We can also see this midah at play when Yaakov Avinu met his son Yosef after 22 years and, as Chazal tell us, he turned his love to Hashem by saying *Kriyas Shema*. We can grow in this direction if every time we feel unhealthy desires we daven to Hashem and say, “*Hashem, please help me find in You what I am looking for in lust*”.

The sefarim speak about how the highest desire a Jew can have is to be *dovek* - attached to *Hashem* and to the *ziv* of the *Sh'chinah*. It is actually *supposed* to be a ‘lust’ of some sort, as the Rambam (Maimonides, Mishnah Torah, "Laws of Repentance", 10,3) writes:

What is the proper love that we must have for G-d? It is to love G-d with an exceedingly great and intensely powerful love until the individual is constantly enraptured by it; he must be stricken like a lovesick person, whose mind is at no time free from his passion for a particular woman, with the thought of her filling his heart at all times, whether he be sitting down or rising up, whether he be eating or drinking. Even more intense should the love of G-d be in the hearts of those who love Him, and this love should constantly absorb him, as we are commanded to love the Lord "with all your heart and with all your soul." Solomon expressed this allegorically in the verse, "for I am sick with love." (Song of Songs, 2:5) Indeed, the entire Song of Songs is an allegorical description of this love.

10. Redirecting the power in our souls

We have often discovered that we were trying to fight only the Yetzer Hara, rather than building and changing **ourselves**. For true long term success, we must learn to fight the **cause** of the bad behaviors and not just the symptoms.

The Medrash says that if you did many **chavilos** (bundles) of sins, do **chavilos** of Mitzvos instead of them. The *Beis Aharon of Karlin* explains that **chavilos** is a

language of *hiskashrus* - connection (as it says "Yaakov **Chevel** Nachalaso"), and he explains that in order to fix what we did in the past and break free from the "other side," we need to use the same ***hiskashrus*** and enthusiasm that filled our mind and limbs during the times we sinned, and instead do the *Mitzvos* in the same all-consuming and enthusiastic manner.

In general, those who struggle a lot with these issues, have a great deal of emotional and spiritual energy inside them. It is they who actually have the capacity and potential for the most intense spiritual connection with Hashem. We just need to learn how to channel the energy of our souls in the proper ways.

It is also known that people with particular character traits, such as creativity, love for people and spiritual sensitivity, are more prone to seeking alternate expression for their inner strengths through a stronger than usual lust drive. That is why it is so important to learn how to channel the strengths we have in the proper ways. Heightened lust is actually a symptom of a deep subconscious need that, for some reason, has still not reached fulfillment.

Our Sages have said (Sukkah 52a, discussing the desire for lust): "Whoever is greater than his friend, his Yetzer is greater as well". It is important to understand that, in a psychological sense, the Yetzer Tov and the Yetzer Hara are really the same inner force. The greater a person is, the more his soul's strengths require expression, and these strengths will ultimately burst forth and find expression in either a positive or negative way.

As Rav Tzadok (in Tzidkas Hatzadik #44) writes, if a person has major temptations, he should not be saddened about blemishes in his soul; on the contrary, he should be glad to realize that he has special strengths that need to be properly channeled. This, he explains, is what Chazal meant by "One who is greater than his friend, his Yetzer is greater as well."

Later on, Rav Tzadok explains (based on the Zohar) that the *Dor Hamabul* and the *Dor Hamidbar* who received the Torah, shared the same souls. And he explains that the reason is based on the above principle. The *Dor Hamabul*'s major sin was spilling seed, as is well known from all the kabalistic oriented *seforim*, and the *Dor Hamidbar* were *Zoche* to receive the Torah. Rav Tzadok explains that the spiritual energy is one and the same. The fake desire for lust is the flip side of the same coin of a true desire for Torah and spirituality. And he explains further, that this generation will appear once again in the days before Moshiach, where the spiritual *Kochos* will once again succeed in overpowering the *koach* of lust.

So let us direct our spiritual vigor into our prayers. We will be amazed at how uplifting they can become! And let us start doing the *mitzvos* with enthusiasm and learn Torah with passion! We were given a gift by Hashem because the

struggles we experience are really just the vibes of our souls, striving for **genuine expression** and a true connection with the Almighty.

Our Divine service can be so much **more than average** if we use the struggle in the way it was intended by Hashem, as a spring-board for growth. Spiritual progress that might take other people many years of intense Divine service to achieve, we can attain through this struggle in a very short time if we use it right!

It can also be very helpful to seek alternative ways of connecting to Hashem to find inner fulfillment. We can seek out Chesed projects, Torah projects or study new areas or techniques in Divine service. For that is what our souls are really yearning for: a meaningful connection with Hashem, and to fulfill that which we came down to the world to accomplish.

It is also important to point out that instead of running frantically away from the Yetzer Hara in fear, we can learn to run instead **towards** Hashem with joy. If we do this, the Yetzer Hara falls away by himself. As the Sefarim say: "**Sur merah.**" How? Through "**Aseh Tov!**"

11. Dealing with thoughts and fantasies

Everyone has these fantasies. Some people more, some people less. We are human beings and not angels. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created the world in such a way that men and women are attracted to one another and, because of this, people get married, have children and populate the Earth. If it bothers you that you struggle with these thoughts, that is already something to be proud of. If we get down on ourselves about fantasies, we become sad, and the sadness brings even more fantasies, and this becomes a vicious cycle that is difficult to break away from. However, the moment we start to look at ourselves in a positive light, we will see that the fantasies will come much less often.

The *Ba'al Hatanya* (Chapter 27, abridged) writes about those who subdue these bad thoughts:

The Zohar (p.128) extols the great satisfaction before Hashem when the sitra achra (the other side) is subdued here below. For then the glory of Hakadosh Baruch Hu rises above all, even more than is possible through any praise, and this ascent is greater than all else.

*Therefore, no person should feel depressed, even should he be engaged **all his days** in this conflict, for perhaps because of this he was created, and this is his service -- to constantly subjugate the sitra achra.*

They tell a story of a *Ba'al Teshuvah* who once came to one of the Chassidic Masters with a question. Having done *Teshuvah* for his past evil ways, he found

that he was still plagued by bad thoughts and fantasies. The Rebbe gave him a parable:

There was once a Jew named Moshkeh who owned an inn where he used to sell wine and spirits to the gentile peasants of the area. After a while, he became disgusted in dealing with the drunken gentiles and decided to go into another line of business and he closed down the bar. That evening, there was a banging on the door. "Moshkeh, Moshkeh, open up! We want some wine and spirits!" "Sorry," Moshkeh replied, "from now on, the inn is closed." The gentiles had no choice but to leave disappointed. For days, and even weeks afterwards, Moshkeh would keep getting knocks on the door, but as the word slowly spread that the bar was closed, the knocking became less and less frequent, until the gentiles stopped coming altogether.

The same goes with these thoughts, explained the Rebbe. After doing *Teshuvah*, the thoughts keep trying to get in. But, if we keep the store closed and refrain from our past behaviors, the thoughts too will stop coming to us after a while.

Practically, we *can* control our own minds to an extent. For some people, the following technique works well: Think of a "clean" pleasurable image of a place you've been or an experience that you enjoyed. Concentrate on this image for a while with your eyes open or closed. Feel the feelings, see the picture and hear the sounds all around you. Now, every time an old image or fantasy comes up in your mind which you want to get rid of, simply replace it with this good image (Google "NLP Swish technique" for more info).

Others suggest focusing on your breathing as you inhale and exhale deeply for a couple of minutes. This exercise has the power to divert our awareness from our thoughts as we focus on the breathing in our body. It is also relaxing and releases the tension and pressure built up by the lust we experience through the fantasies.

One person wrote on our forum:

You can't wrestle with a pig and not get dirty. The thoughts will come - accept that. It doesn't mean anything. Worrying about them or doing something with the express purpose of getting rid of them just won't work - you're wrestling with a pig. It's like trying not to think about a green elephant, that will only make you think of a green elephant more. When the thoughts come, try to just acknowledge that they popped into your head, wish them a friendly 'shalom aleichem!' and then move on to try and do something else.

In the Chassidic literature (see Likutei Moharon 27:8) it is brought down that getting bad thoughts and fantasies is actually a zechus. They give a person the opportunity for teshuva and proper tikkun for past aveiros. So many people get down when they get these thoughts and feel bad about themselves. But these

thoughts are there in order for a person to chase them away and merit true teshuva. The thoughts come to a person so that they should uplift them. Kabalistically, the thoughts have somewhat of a life of their own and actually WANT to be uplifted! So just realize that your current challenges are intended for you to attain teshuvah shleima. Knowing this can prevent unnecessary hindrances and should invigorate us for continued growth.

Teffilah is a very powerful tool in this struggle as well. When feeling under attack by lust, say: "*Please Hashem, save me from lust! I want to love You, not flesh and blood*". Or say; "*Ribono Shel Olam, I know that it is my fault that I have these thoughts. I don't want them. Help me to distract myself to something else and leave them be.*" Even short "foxhole" type prayers can work wonders like: "*Hashem, Help me. I can't do this alone.*"

See our website www.guardyoureye.org and sign up to the chizuk e-mail lists, to learn many more great techniques on dealing with persistent fantasies and lustful thoughts.

12. Catching ourselves as we slip

Even if we started to slip, we can achieve the greatest levels of *Kedusha* by stopping ourselves from sliding further. The Sefarim write that the *Nachas Ruach* we give to Hashem by holding back even when we feel that "we already blew it", is even greater than when we successfully avoid the tests in the first place.

Perhaps the greatest illustration of this is Yosef Hatzadik. The Gemara (Sotah 36b) says that Yosef actually came to Potifar's house to sin (as Rashi brings). And the Gemara goes on to say that he actually spilled some seed at the time, thereby losing ten *Shevatim* that were supposed to come from him. And when after all that, he still held back from sinning, he became the great *Yosef Hatzadik!*

R' Tzadok explains that this is what really constituted the great test. The Satan said to Yosef: "Don't you see that you already messed everything up? Don't you realize what a goner you are? Your brothers hate you and sold you to *Mitzrayim*, nobody cares about you anymore. You're lost and cut off from this world and the next. And now you've failed so badly. Face the facts, **it's over!**"

But *Yosef Hatzadik* said "No! I don't care about anything - not even about being a Tzadik. The only thing that concerns me is: What do I need to do at this very moment? What does my Father in Heaven want from me **right now?**" And it was in that *zechus* that he merited everything. And Chazal say that even the splitting of the *Yam Suf* was in Yosef's merit!

So, if we want to split our own personal *Yam Suf*, this is one of the greatest Yesodos to keep in mind!

13. Every Little Bit Counts

We must believe that coin after coin are added to our “spiritual bank” every time we say “no” to the Yetzer Hara, no matter how insignificant it may seem to us at the time. Even if someone is sure that they’ll fall in the very near future, they should know that for every second they hold back, they are earning reward that no person or *malach* can fathom! And when a person has enough “coins” in their “spiritual account”, they will succeed beyond their wildest dreams!

The Gemara says: "*Habah letaher misaayen lo – He who comes to be purified, they help him,*" and Chazal also say: "*Biderech she'adom rotzeh leilech molichin oso – in the way a person wants to go, they lead him.*" Why does the Gemara speak always in plural form: "**they help him**," and "**they lead him**"? The Maharsha explains that every resolution and every effort that a person makes creates an angel. And when the army of angels gets large enough, it has the power to help one overcome all the obstacles and lead him to where he wants to go!

14. It's never all or nothing

The notion that we must always succeed actually turns us into easy prey for our Yetzer Hara. He uses our good qualities, such as our constant yearning for perfection, and he turns it against us by trying to get us to feel down when we experience a fall! In this struggle, it is never “**all or nothing**”. When an army goes out to battle, do they always win? Are there never casualties? People injured? The Pasuk says: “*There is no Tzadik on earth who does only good and never sins*” (Koholes 7:20).

Rav Hutner once wrote a letter to a *Bochur* who was despondent over his personal spiritual failures. In the letter, Rav Hutner explains that what makes life meaningful is not basking in the exclusive company of one's Yetzer *Tov*, but rather the dynamic struggle of one's battle with the Yetzer *Hara*. Shlomo Hamelech's maxim that “*Seven times does the righteous one fall and get up*” (*Mishlei*, 24:16), continues Rav Hutner, does not mean that “even after falling seven times, the righteous one manages to gets up again.” What it really means, he explains, is that it is only and precisely *through* repeated falls that a person truly achieves righteousness. The struggles – even the failures – are inherent elements of what can, with determination and perseverance, become an ultimate victory.

If you were watching a fight between a man and a lion, who would you be inclined to reward more, a man with a gun who shoots the lion in one fell blow, or the man who needs to use his bare hands? In the latter case, there is a huge fight and sometimes the man is down and the lion is winning, yet he manages to push off the lion again and again and finally overpowers him and wins the fight!

Hashem wants to reward us with infinite Divine delight, and He gave us a beast inside us to slay. He could have made us mighty as the *Malachim*, but it is only through human beings who fight with their bare hands in the darkness of this world that Hashem's Divine presence is uplifted and is able to brighten the darkest places.

The Zohar in Parshas Tetzava writes:

For there is no light besides that which comes out of darkness. And when the "other" side is subjugated, the Master of the World is elevated and his honor is increased. And avodas Hashem can only be through darkness, and there can be no good, only though bad. And when a person goes into a bad path and then leaves it, the Master of the World's honor is elevated. And therefore, the "Shleimus" (completion) of everything, is good and bad together - and then to leave to the (side of) good. And there can be no good but that which comes through bad, and from such good, Hashem is elevated. And this is called an "avodah shleimah" (a complete service of Hashem).

15. Hashem looks at our efforts, not the results

Hashem doesn't seek great successes and big achievements from us. Whether we succeed in a big way or not, is ultimately *His* business. All He asks from us is that we try to get a little stronger every day and do what we can at **this point in time**. Our struggle with the *Yetzer Hara* is even more precious to Hashem than our ultimate success in breaking free. Hashem has enough great and powerful *Malachim* in *Shamayim*, but only humans struggle with the *Yetzer Hara* and can give Hashem *Nachas Ruach* through that.

It is brought down in the sefer *Menucha v'Kedusha*, written by a talmid of R' Chaim Volozhiner, that even a person who sins his whole life can still be considered a Tzadik, as long as he never gives up and always continues to fight. We like to think of success in terms of **results**. But Hashem looks at our efforts, not at the results.

16. Getting back up after a fall

If we experience a fall, we must never let it get us down. Getting depressed is exactly what the *Yetzer Hara* wants, and it leads to a vicious cycle of continued falls.

The truest test of an *eved Hashem* is *davka* when Hashem takes everything away from him, such as when he falls and feels no inspiration, no emotion and no *Hislavus*. That's the **moment of truth** where a person can ask himself

honestly, “am I an eved Hashem because it's my nature and/or because it keeps me emotionally happy, or do I serve the Almighty because that's His will and nothing else?”

The *Lechevitcher Rebbe* (a student of R' Shlomo of Karlin) once went as far as to say that even if a person just killed someone and the knife is still dripping with blood, and he feels unable to stand up and daven Mincha (the afternoon service) with all his strength and heart, then he has not yet tasted from the waters of Chassidus!

The Be'er Mayim Chayim says that in the army, when they would want to test a great soldier to see if he's fit to be a general, they would put him on a wild horse that was impossible not to be thrown off of. Although no one could stay on that horse, the test was only to see how fast he would get back up after he was brutally thrown down and wounded.

17. Don't dwell on the past

Although the spiritual damage we cause by acting out is very great, we must accept that Hashem brought us into this situation and that it is not all our fault. Let us never dwell on how it happened, or on past falls. This will cause us to feel down and lead to future falls. The *Chidushei Harim* (in *Likutei Yehudah*) tells his followers never to look back, claiming that if we look back, we remain in the mud. Everyone has dirty laundry. We don't have to be ashamed of our laundry, unless we let it pile up and never clean it.

We must also realize that we didn't always have free will in the past. This is clear from various Sefarim and in various places in Chazal. To quote one of the foremost *baalei mussar* of our times, Rav Shlomo Wolbe, [zt"l]:

The great [Jewish] philosophers established bechira as the cornerstone for the whole Torah.... But from this resulted a common misperception among the masses; that all people actively choose their every act and every decision. This is a grievous error. (Alei Schur, Vol. 1, p. 156)

What, then, is *bechira*? To answer this question, Rav Wolbe refers us to Rav Eliyahu Dessler's "phenomenal essay on *bechira*" (*Michtav MeEliyahu*, Vol. 1, pp. 111-116). In this essay, Rav Dessler describes how the “*nekudas habechirah* – the point of free choice” is different for different people and in different situations. He explains that *bechira* is not a theoretical concept that can be applied to any circumstance where a person can hypothetically choose between two options. Rather, it only applies to moral conflicts where the two opposing forces are of approximately equal strength, the person is aware of the internal conflict, and he makes a conscious decision in one direction. When a person does something over which he does not experience conscious conflict, or if the

compelling force on one side is significantly stronger than the other, the fact that he is theoretically able to decide either way does **not** qualify his act as an expression of *bechira*.

"Ain Hakadosh Baruch Hu ba beterunya im habriyos – Hashem doesn't come with complaints to his creations." As the Pasuk says: *"He created together all their hearts and understands all their deeds,"* and he knows that almost all men stumble in this sin at some point in their youth.

There's a well known adage that if Hashem gave us a test, we must have the ability to overcome it as well. R' Tzadok HaKoehn says though, (in *Tzidkas Hatzadik*) that this is not as simple as it sounds. It is true that we all have free choice to do what Hashem expects of us in this world, over the course of our lifetimes. However, in the process of our journey, there are many times when a person is considered an *onus*.

After the sin of the golden calf, the *Midrash* says that Moshe said to Hashem, if a father gave his son gold and sat him down on the doorstep of a *Beis Zonos* – **"ma ya'aseh haben velo yecheta? - What can the son do and not sin?"** In other words, we find in Chazal that there are times when a person may not have full *Bechira*.

See also the *Rambam Hilchos Issurei Biyah* 1:8 – *"for the Yetzer and human nature forced her to want,"* and see *Tosofos* in *Sanhedrin* 26b where they discuss how someone suspected of illicit relations may still be a Kosher witness, since it could be that his desires simply overpowered him. And see the Gemara in *Brachos*, 32b: *"Asher Hari'osi"* where *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* acknowledges to Eliyahu Hanavi that He was the one who had turned the Yidden's heart away from him.

The Steipler too, in regards to a specific behavior that someone had difficulty controlling, writes: "He is not a *Ba'al Bechira* now in this area, and the only thing he can (and should) do, are *Tikkunim* that will help him **over time**."

Once we understand that we didn't always have free will in the past, we will prevent the guilt from dragging us down into a vicious cycle of despair and continued falls. And guilt can be even more dangerous than the falls. As they say: "It's not the one cookie you ate that broke the diet. The diet ended when you felt bad about that one cookie, and then went on to finish the entire BOX!"

And even if we may have had some freedom of choice at the time we fell, it could be that we had **very little**. The sins we did are only judged according to the circumstances and the level of free will that we had at the time. Only Hashem knows if we could have done better or not.

But when we talk about the **present moment**, we can never know how much free will we have and we **must always** try our very best.

18. Guilt vs. Shame

It is important to understand the difference between *charata*: healthy guilt & regret, as opposed to *yiush*: shame & despair.

To quote Rabbi Avraham J. Twerski:

We generally use the words “shame” and “guilt” interchangeably. One may say, “I am ashamed of what I did”, meaning “I feel guilty over what I did.” Technically, however, the two terms are different. Guilt is about what a person did, and it can be a constructive feeling in that it can lead one to Teshuvah, to take corrective action. Shame, however, is what one feels he *is*. In other words, guilt is “I **made** a mistake”, whereas shame is “I **am** a mistake”. If one feels that he is inherently flawed, that he is made of “bad stuff”, there is nothing he can do to change that. With guilt there is hope of improvement, but not with shame.

Every person should feel he is a child of Hashem with a holy Neshama. Hashem doesn’t make defective goods. There is never room for despair or shame. However, healthy “guilt” is important. As the Nesivos Shalom writes in Parshas Noach, the guilty feelings we have are a gift from Hashem that come from the inherent good inside every Jew. Indeed, he writes, a Jew who does *not* have these feelings anymore, no longer has much hope.

A person who gives in to the Yetzer Hara only because the Yetzer hara has tempted him strongly and he can’t hold back, is still not “bad” in essence. With sincere Teshuvah, Hashem will forgive him. But if one doesn’t feel guilt anymore, that means that the bad has taken him over totally and there is little hope.

The Nesivos Shalom ends by saying that “guilt” is actually a Tikkun for every Jew to be able to break free of the bad. Even when one falls, they should make sure that the fall does not become part of their essence. By continuing to hold on to Hashem and feeling guilty when we are far from Him, then even in the case of the worst sins *chas veshalom*, we still have hope and will be forgiven.

There’s a simple test we can do to know whether we are being motivated by healthy guilt/regret or by shame/despair. If we see that we want to get right back up and find ways to strengthen ourselves again, then it’s a sign that our “bad” feelings are those of healthy guilt and positive regret. If, however, we feel that we just want to give up, then it’s a sure sign that we are experiencing despair and shame, and we must quickly find a way out of these harmful feelings before they lead us to a vicious cycle of continued falls.

How indeed can we remain happy after a fall? Let's read on...

19. We don't lose past gains after a fall

If we were trying to stay clean and had a fall, we must realize that we haven't lost anything that we gained until now. We simply have to get up and continue from where we left off. The Steipler once told someone who complained to him about how difficult this struggle was, that the times we fail are erasable, but every time we pass a test is a *Kinyan* that's ours to keep forever. Even if we are successfully *misgaber* (overcome) only once in a while at first, this initial *hisgabrus* will ultimately lead us to break free completely.

The *Ba'al Hasulam* says a beautiful parable:

A king once had a good friend whom he hadn't seen in many years. When this friend finally returned, the king was so happy to see him that he told his treasurer to take his friend - who happened to be a pauper - to the royal treasury, and to give him one hour to take as much money as he wanted! So they brought him into the treasury and gave him a bag, which the poor man proceeded to fill with gold coins until the bag could hold no more. Full of gratitude and happiness, the poor man began to leave, but as soon as he stepped out of the door, the guards gave the bag a big kick and all the coins spilled onto the floor. The man was distraught, but he looked at his watch and saw that he still had plenty of time until his hour was up, so he quickly returned to the treasury and began to refill the bag with coins. But when it was full and he tried to leave, once again the guards gave the bag a big kick and everything went flying. The man was at his wits end, but seeing that he still had more time, he refused to give up and went back again to refill the bag.

The same scenario repeated itself over and over. The guards kept kicking the bag of coins and causing everything to spill, until the poor man was sure that he was simply wasting his time.

Finally the hour was up and the guards dragged the poor man out of the room with his bag barely half full.

*But suddenly the poor man looked up and he saw a wagon overloaded with gold coins standing before him. And as he stood there wondering for whom all that money is intended, he saw the king coming to greet him with a big smile. The king told him that the entire wagon load of gold coins belongs to him, explaining that all the coins he had gathered and thought he had lost were saved for him. The king had commanded the guards to empty the bag again and again only so that he would manage to gather up **so much more** in the one hour that he had!*

The lesson is clear. Even if we fell and it feels like we lost everything and are starting again from scratch, we should know that Hashem does this only so that our “vessels” should be empty once again, to enable us to fill them up yet another time with even more achievements. But the attainments from the first vessels that we filled were never lost. They were already deposited into our “spiritual bank account”.

So if you were doing great for a while and had yet another fall, don’t despair! Trust that Hashem had much *Nachas Ruach* from your spiritual successes, but he wanted you to take it **to the next level** and therefore he gave you these pitfalls, even though he knew you would fall. What makes a person great is his ability to get back up, despite his falls. And *davka* by having to renew our determination from the ground up, we are rocketed into a much closer *Kesher* with Hashem than we ever had before!

Instead of getting down on ourselves after a fall, let us reflect back on how many times we *did* manage to say “no” to the *Yetzer Hara* before he won us over now! Let’s recall the many tens - if not hundreds - of times during the past clean-streak that we didn’t give in to him! We definitely have **the upper hand** in this war. He is determined to make us feel down so that we should continue to slip. But let us focus on the overall picture. Even though we may have lost a battle now, we are still winning the war. Let’s rejoice about our successes and get right back up for the next round, where B’Ezras Hashem, we will do even better!

20. Experience is built out of failures

The saying goes: “The man who never did anything wrong, never did **anything**.” Experience that makes a man ultimately successful is always earned through his initial failures. The difference between a successful person and a failure is not the number of times they fell, but rather the number of times they got **up** again. The successful person got up just **one time more** than the failure did. Our Sages said: “*The Torah cannot be upheld, only through one who has stumbled in it first.*” The falls are part of the struggle. And through them, we learn how to make better fences, try better strategies, and ultimately become much greater human beings.

21. There’s always hope

Rav Yisrael Salanter said: “As long as the candle is lit, one can still fix.” And Rabbi Nachman said “There’s absolutely no such thing in the world as giving up.” There is **always** hope, even from what seems to be the deepest depths of sin and despair. Rabbi Nachman also said: “If you believe you can destroy, **believe** you can fix.” There is no such thing as a sin that can’t be fixed, or a situation that is completely hopeless.

As we brought above, the *Zohar* says that there can be no light if it doesn't come **first** through the darkest darkness. Even in a state of deep darkness, we must recognize that Hashem is with us, loves us, and is hiding Himself only so that we will ultimately be able to appreciate His light so much more. Hashem is always ready to help us, as soon as we are ready to *let* Him.

9 Attitude Principles for when the struggle has reached addiction levels

1. Understanding what we are up against

These behaviors are very addictive. To quote Rabbi Avraham J. Twerski in a recent talk:

You have no idea as to what category of people have fallen victim to internet pornography. We would not think that these type of people would be capable of it. Hopefully nobody who's a Yirei Shamayim is going to go look for that kind of trash and that kind of filth. However, it is perfectly possible that while monkeying around with the internet, you hit a button and there's a pop-up of a pornography scene. You weren't looking for it, but it happened. You have exactly 3/10ths of a second to turn it off. And if you avoid it for 4/10ths of a second, you may become addicted. That's how severe it is. It's one of the most powerful addictions. Day after day after day - I get letters and calls from people who say, "what can I do to save myself?"

If we find that we keep falling into inappropriate behaviors that go against our conscience and better judgment, and we have tried countless times to stop in the past but always seem to fall back to them in the end, then we are probably struggling with **an addiction**. As Rabbi Avraham J. Twerski says:

The ultimate distinction between man and animals is not that man is more intelligent, but that animals are creatures that have no choice over their behavior. They must do whatever their bodies demand. They cannot choose what they should do. Man has the ability of self-control, to choose one's behavior, even in defiance of physical urges. If a person loses one's ability to choose and is dominated by urges one cannot control, one is indeed an addict.

We may have tried to do Teshuvah many times in the past, but the standard model of Teshuva (*Azivas Hachet, Charata* and *Kabbala al Haba*) doesn't always work for us very well anymore. Addiction is a type of disease, and our Sages understood the nature of addiction, as the Gemara (*Avodah Zara* 17a) says in

relation to the story of "Ben Durdaya" who had been with every prostitute in the world, "*Kivan dehava adik be'aveira tuvah, ki'minus dami* – since he was entrenched in the sins a lot, it was similar to heresy". Rabbi Twerski points out how the word "adik" is very similar to the word "addict". Also, *Rebbe Asi* said: "The Yetzer Harah in the beginning is compared to a strand of a spider web, and in the end like a rope that is used to tie cattle". Our Sages recognized that once a person repeats a particular sin a number of times "it becomes to him as if it is permitted". Even more so, in this area where our Sages have said: "The more it is fed, the hungrier it gets". Therefore, the standard Teshuvah techniques are not usually sufficient in our case anymore. Once these behaviors have progressed to addictive levels, will power alone is rarely effective in dealing with them and it is no longer just a "Yetzer Hara" issue. Addiction is a spiritual and psychological disease. It is important to understand that we are not simply dealing with a "stronger than usual" Yetzer Hara, and we are not just "weak-willed" people who can't control ourselves. The *Sefer haChinuch on the Mitzva 387* "*Do not stray after your heart and eyes*", compares lust to alcohol addiction, describing how the more it is fed, the more it wants and the harder it is to break free of it. The nature of the addiction is analogous to someone standing on the railroad tracks while he watches the train bearing down on him, and yet he can't move himself out of the way. And as Rabbi Twerski puts it in his book "Addictive Thinking": We place our hands on the stove, get burned, and yet we feel compelled to do it again.

How do these behaviors lead to addiction? It's simple neuroscience. Just like with any pleasure, the pleasure sensory is stimulated in the brain. Whether its cocaine, alcohol, or pleasure one might get from inappropriate scenes viewed during a movie, the serotonin levels spike and the dopaminergic pleasure pathways are activated in the standard "addiction" pattern. As a matter of fact, these behaviors have been shown to be MORE powerfully addictive than most drugs, in one study. It's not a big wonder why that would be. It's an intense pleasure stimulation, even more direct than a hard drug. And upon repeated exposure to certain types of stimulation, one tends to seek out even more perverse and intense stimulation, leading to that vicious self-destructive cycle that is typical of addictions. What was enough yesterday to achieve a 'high', is no longer enough today to achieve the same effect.

The addiction didn't appear overnight. We developed the addiction slowly over time, by accustoming ourselves to arouse lust in our minds, whether through viewing inappropriate material or through self-pleasuring and fantasies. And we did this many thousands of times. And every time we did this, yes, every single time, we were blazing neuron pathways in our brain that kept getting stronger and stronger. And today, these pathways are deeply ingrained in our minds.

Also, there are many levels of this addiction. The fewer times we acted out on lust, the less defined the neuron pathways will be in our minds, and hence, the addiction will be at a less advanced stage. This is vital to understand and should serve as a powerful incentive for us to do everything in our power to stop these

behaviors **now**. Because **every single time** we act out on lust, we are making the addiction worse, and harder to deal with for the long term.

The symptoms of this addiction are twofold. Firstly, we have accustomed our minds to crave the chemical rush that lust gives us, in the same way that an alcoholic craves alcohol. We have often learned to use lust as a drug for self-soothing purposes. We crave to ‘lose ourselves’ in lust to ‘medicate’ our feelings of inadequacy, guilt and depression, or even simply as an escape from the realities of life. The second symptom of the addiction is that stimulation triggers a much stronger arousal for addicts than it does in normal people. We have become hypersensitive to stimulation, to the point that we feel powerless when faced head-on with lust. This is actually a medical/psychological condition that can be tested through scientific devices. In the mind of someone with this condition, the dopaminergic pleasure pathways in the brain are triggered much faster and more intensely than in normal people.

It is important to understand that as an addiction, this is not something we can remove by simply talking ourselves out of it. A therapist may be able to help us discover **why** we became addicted in the first place, but that alone is **not enough**. Now that we have these pathways engrained in our minds, all the understanding in the world won’t change the fact that we have this problem, in the same way that understanding a broken leg won’t heal it. It is also important to understand that once the addiction has advanced to a certain level, it will likely be there for life, as the saying goes: “*Once an addict, always an addict.*” What that means is that once we have trained our minds to use lust as a type of drug, we must learn to keep **far away** from lust. And no matter how much progress we might think we’ve made in this struggle, once we let ourselves take that first “drink”, we will feel powerless all over again. In the 12-Step literature, the addiction is compared to an allergy. If someone has an allergic reaction to peanuts for example, they can’t get close to them without getting an allergic reaction. And even if they haven’t had peanuts in 20 years, the moment they ingest peanuts again the allergic reaction will return in full force!

As one of the 12-Step pamphlets says:

Lusting, for us, is like riding a roller coaster. Once started, it is nearly impossible to stop. Therefore, lust must be stopped where it begins, with the first drink. Getting out from under the influence of lust, therefore, requires us to avoid getting on board in the first place.

Our addiction to lust is like the alcoholic’s problem with alcohol. Just as the alcoholic cannot tolerate one drink of alcohol, we cannot tolerate even the smallest drink of lust. Lust always leads to more lust, eventually making us drunk with it. Once drunk, the urge to act out is impossible to resist. Just a little lusting simply doesn’t work for us.

But as scary as all this may seem, it is **not really so bad**. Someone who has a chronic iron deficiency can still lead a perfectly normal life, as long as they take his daily iron pill. Someone who has diabetes can also be fine, as long as they take their insulin. So too with us; we may have a type of disease but there are many techniques that can be used as our "medication" every day, to keep the addiction in check.

Instead of the standard Teshuvah model, we need to begin to change our entire attitude. We learn the tools and techniques of how to **sidestep the lust instead of trying to fight it head on**. And we learn how to give our will over to Hashem and live with His help, instead of trying to use our own strengths to fight something that is stronger than us.

2. Accepting that we need help

The first key to recovery is "acceptance." We need to accept that we have a problem and that we **need help**. Otherwise, we will read through the Guard Your Eyes website and Handbook and say: "*they aren't talking about me.*"

One member of our forum wrote to a newcomer:

*I am considered by many people to be a Talmid Chacham. I tried every **eitza** there is, both with **mussar**, **sifrei yirah** and **divrei chizuk**. I tried to punish myself and I almost drove myself crazy in driving myself crazy, and in agonizing over how low I was. And the only solace I found was to sit in front of the computer and continue feeding my addiction. Listen up my good friend, you have come to the right place and you will be helped. And it will cost you a lot less than seeing a professional, and you might even be lucky enough to save your good name. But having said all that, you will only be saved if you admit you are an addict! I know it hurts. It hurt and it hurts me too. Yes, I am an addict. Yes me, the father, husband, Talmid Chacham and neighborhood Askan, is an addict. It still hurts me to write you these words. But we must admit it in order to be helped. If you want to keep on riding on the **Teshuvah / Nefilla** roller-coaster, be my guest. But you will just continue making more addictive behavior neuron pathways in your brain, which only get harder to reverse.*

Some people are willing to "say" they have an addiction, but coming to terms with what that **really** means - and acting like they are ill and need **help** is another matter.

To quote the Big-Book of Alcoholics Anonymous:

"Acceptance is the key. The addiction is a disease and sobriety is not a matter of willpower. When we stop living in the problem, and instead live in the answer, the problem goes away by itself."

Truly accepting that we have a problem may sound like a difficult step to take, but it is actually **freeing** to finally face the truth about ourselves and know what we are up against.

There is a common misconception among unmarried young men that marriage will solve the problem. As Rabbi Twerski always tells people, marriage does not solve the problem of addiction to lust; *if anything it makes it even worse*. Not only that, but once someone is married and doesn't deal with this addiction, it can ultimately destroy the lives of many people instead of just one. When Chazal say that our wives help save us from sin, they are not referring to sins we brought with us into the marriage; sins that are already engrained in our minds from beforehand. The problem we have is not just a desire that needs to be calmed, but rather stems from what has developed (through our addiction) into a skewed attitude towards the act of procreation. When Chazal say our wives save us from sin, they are referring to normal people who also get attacks of lust once in a while. For such people, having a wife can save them from sin in such instances. But for addicts who have learned to use lust to fill a deep inner void and as a solution to all of life's difficulties, their wives will never be enough for them.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (75a) tells the story of a man who was so love-sick for a woman that he became mentally and physically ill. The Gemara asks why he didn't marry her and answers that it would not have healed him once she was permitted, as the pasuk says (Mishlei 9:17), "*mayim genuvim yimtaku vi'lechem starim yinam* - stolen water is sweeter and hidden bread is more pleasurable". This clearly shows us how marriage is not a solution to lust addiction, which is similar to the mental and physical illness that this man experienced. Even if we marry the most attractive person of our dreams, the insanity of lust will compel us to continue seeking more and more "stolen waters" to fill the bottomless cup of the addictive cravings.

Once we know that we are dealing with a **lust addiction** - which even marriage won't solve, we are ready to accept our problem and begin to **live in the solution**, by exploring the methods that really work. In cases of advanced addictions, it will almost never help to simply try "harder" to fight the Yetzer Hara, to learn **more mussar**, or make ever more resolutions. With advanced addictions, there are methods that don't work, and then there are tried-and-proven methods that **do** work. The steps that **work** are outlined in Part 1 of this handbook. There we can learn that it is possible to break free, no matter how far the addiction has advanced.

3. Believing that we CAN be helped

Some people think that if they are unmarried and have no outlet, they cannot possibly remain clean indefinitely. This is patently false. We have helped many *Bochurim* to achieve complete abstinence and we have many testimonials of

Bochurim who were addicted and broke free using the right tools, attitude and determination. In some ways, it is even easier for *Bochurim* to refrain completely from lust since they have no need to indulge in it at all. And as Chazal say, “*There is a small limb in a man, when it is satiated - it is hungry, but when it is starved - it is satiated*”.

Some people today are under the misconception that these behaviors are healthy or even necessary for the body. This is completely untrue. The medical community is in agreement that holding back for long periods of time does not cause anything noticeable to happen. There is no build up of pressure. Our bodies are always reabsorbing and disposing of extra material, including the excess components of zera. It is perfectly natural to keep ‘dry’ for a long period of time. There are no risks or health problems associated with it at all.

We know of hundreds of young addicts who have broken free from this addiction. Many of them wrote about their recovery and you can find their stories on our website. You can see for yourself how people even worse off than you were able to break free.

Having this condition does not let us off the hook. We may have an illness, but we are fully responsible for our recovery. Once we know that we CAN recover, acting out will never be the same.

4. Hitting bottom while still on top

Often a person is not truly ready to admit they have a problem, seek help and be willing to make real changes in their lives unless they have “hit bottom” first. “Hitting bottom” means that one’s life has truly become unmanageable. This can come about through the realization that they are unable to lead a normal life, a normal marriage, hold a job, or if they stand to lose their self respect, honor or good name.

However, one of the goals of the GYE community is to help people **“Hit bottom while still on top.”** What that means, is that we try to get those who find themselves in the early stages of addiction to understand the nature of this disease and where it will ultimately lead them. Addiction is a progressive disease. Without treatment, addictions always gets worse, never better. Once a person recognizes that they have this illness, regardless of the degree to which it may have progressed, they can learn where the addiction will ultimately *lead them* from those who have already “Hit Bottom.” By doing this, we are essentially “lifting the bottom” for these newcomers to hit, while they are still on top and their lives remain intact. They need not lose their direction in life, their marriages, jobs and respect. They can learn from those who already *have* reached that point, and recognize the direction they are heading so that they will make recovery the #1 priority in their life. This is especially important for unmarried young men who

stand to lose less at this point in their lives, and they are therefore less likely to take their recovery as seriously as a married man with children.

See the section called "Hitting bottom while still on top" on our website to read terrible stories of where this addiction can lead, such as the story of the religious man whose life was ruined and he was imprisoned for chatting inappropriately with minors, or the serial killers who blamed their evils on the influences of their lust addiction, and the horrible stories of divorces and suffering of the wives of addicts. Many marriage councilors say that this addiction is either the number one (or the number two) cause of *shalom bayis* issues and divorces amongst young couples in the religious community today.

Once we recognize that this is a progressive disease that will cause us not to be able to lead a normal marriage, hold down a steady job and progress in ruchniyus, and especially once we recognize the dangers of where this can lead, such as imprisonment and even *death* c"v, then we will have "hit bottom" just as surely as the ones who *really* hit bottom, and we will take our recovery very seriously.

5. Breaking the Cycle

We must recognize how insidious the addiction is, how it continues to tell us lies, getting us to act out again and again. Each time we act out, we make it harder to heal from the addiction in the long term. Therefore, we must do everything in our power to break free of the vicious cycle **now**, by taking the necessary steps to break free. As long as we are still caught up in the cycle of addiction, we cannot begin to heal. And the nature of the addiction is such that we cannot **think** our way out, we need to **act** our way into a new pattern of thinking.

Often we thought that if we would only feed the lust a little bit more and give it what it really wants, it would leave us alone. But it is exactly the opposite. *Chazal* understood the nature of this addiction, and they said one statement regarding these areas that really sums it up well: "***There is a small organ in a man, if one feeds it - it is hungry, if one starves it - it is satiated.***" As the saying goes: "***The less you feed it, the less you need it.***" Although it feels hard at first to cut down and we may likely even experience withdrawal symptoms for a while, the more we successfully stop acting out in the short term, the easier it will get in the long term. Knowing this Yesod can make a **huge** difference.

We must realize that the Yetzer Hara/addiction wants our soul, not the pleasure. Otherwise, why is a thousand times never enough? Keep this saying in mind: "***Just once is too much; a thousand times is never enough.***" We cannot bargain with the addiction. Half measures ultimately amount to nothing. Isolated incidents of control are not significant when dealing with addiction, it's the overall pattern. **Staying stopped** is the issue. We must realize that we were acting

insane. It's not sane to repeat self-destructive behaviors. This is, in the most literal sense, a **life and death struggle** for our souls.

6. One day at a time

Take the struggle only "one day at a time." Try never to focus on the future or wonder how we will manage. We must learn to live in the present **only**, focusing on staying "clean" or "sober" right NOW. When we focus on the future, we can easily fall. It's like someone walking a tightrope; if he looks down, it becomes so much harder not to fall. Therefore, when feeling weak we can tell ourselves, "just for today, I will stay clean" or "Just for **this moment**, I will stay clean." The past and the future are out of our hands and belong **only** to Hashem. When we feel that we are about to fall, we may even tell ourselves that we reserve the right to act out tomorrow. We are not making a decision now for life. However, just for today we will do whatever we can to stay clean. In the same way that we can't sleep or eat for tomorrow, we can't stay clean today for *tomorrow*.

One guy writes: When I get up in the morning after saying *Modeh Ani*, I always pray to Hashem in my own words and say something along these lines: "*Hashem, I cannot control this without your help. I am willing not to act out on lust today, but I cannot promise about tomorrow. Just for today Hashem, please help me succeed.*"

This is one of the big Yesodos in the 12-Step program as well. On any given day, if we do what we are supposed to on *our* side to try and stay "sober" and sane, we trust completely in Hashem that He will give us 24 hours of relief - for that day only.

We see this idea in regards to the provisions of the *B'nei Yisrael* in the desert. Hashem gave them relief for one day at a time. Whether they gathered a lot or a little, they only got 24 hours of sustenance and relief.

The phrases "Hayom al l'vovecha – *today* on your heart" and "asher Anochi metzaveh es'chem Hayom – which I command you *today*" in krias sh'ma are both explained by our sages to mean that Hashem's proclamation here is *new* - today is the *first day* we have heard of it! Hashem is telling us to live **one day at a time**. This is an approach to life in krias sh'ma itself. It reminds us each time we say it, that Hashem is concerned with how we do today. Not yesterday, nor tomorrow. So if even Hashem asks for only one day at a time - should we ask for *more*?

Teshuva is only relevant inasmuch as it affects **today's** avodah. The Chovos Hal'avvos says (right at the start of sha'ar hateshuva), that the **definition** of Teshuva is **behaving correctly** right now, even though we have messed up

badly in the past. It is not about fixing anything. (It's *Hashem*'s business to fix us, not ours).

And remember, **today is the first day of the rest of your life!** So let's do our very best to stay clean just **for today**.

7. Giving the fight over to Hashem

Ultimately, only Hashem can overcome the addiction for us. As Chazal say: "*If Hashem doesn't help him, he cannot overcome him*" (*the Yetzer Hara*). But, in order for Hashem to fight for us, we need to know that we can't do it alone, and we need to reconnect with Hashem in a very fundamental way and learn a complete dependency on Him; much as a one day old baby depends on its mother.

Sometimes "Fear of Failure" can actually lead us to falls. Winston Churchill once said: "*The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself.*" And - *lehavdil* - Rabbi Nachman said, "*The main thing is not to fear at all.*" Trying to control our own addiction leads us to fear, because we start to ask ourselves: "Can I really do it?" And when we are attacked by the *Yetzer Hara*, we often fall simply because we fear the addiction and think it is too strong for us.

Instead, the secret to success is to let Hashem do it for us, as the Pasuk says: "**Hashem yilachem lachem, ve'atem tacharishun – Hashem will fight for you, and you shall be silent.**" To accomplish this, however, we need to learn to **completely trust** in Hashem. And those who learn this and give over the struggle to Hashem are amazed to find that Hashem actually removes the lust from them and keeps them "sober". This technique is nothing short of miraculous, but it has been documented thousands of times by the most hopeless cases of addiction in 12-Step groups around the world, since the 1930s.

The *Ohr Hachayim* also describes this miraculous phenomenon. He asks, if someone has already fallen into these things and can't help thinking about them, how can they possibly hold themselves back from sinning? He quotes the Pasuk in Acharei Mos: "**Speak to the Children of Israel and tell them, I am Hashem your G-d. Like the ways of the land of Egypt that you have dwelled in their midst, you shall not do.**" Explains the *Ohr Hachayim*, the Torah is hinting to us that for someone who "**dwelled in the land of Egypt**" and has already accustomed himself to seeing and thinking about these things, the Pasuk starts off with the words: "**Tell them that I am Hashem your G-d.**" This is to teach us that: "**While it is impossible with human strength... with G-dly strength, you shall be able to be victorious over the natural physical drives.**"

When we learn to “**Let Go and Let G-d**,” Hashem does all the fighting for us and we don’t have to “overcome” anything on our own. Our job is just to maintain a healthy spiritual condition and learn to live with Hashem’s help. Of course, we also need to take the steps we can, to ensure that we do not continue feeding our addiction. When we let Hashem do it for us, we have Hashem’s strength and not our own, as the Pasuk says “**Kovei Hashem yachalifu koach – those who hope to Hashem exchange strengths**”. We literally exchange *our* strength with that of Hashem’s.

Learning how to truly give over the fight to Hashem may require joining a 12-Step Group since we often need to learn this first through humans, before it can feel real enough to do with Hashem - who is abstract. For starters though, we can try to internalize this in our daily struggles through short “foxhole” type prayers every time we are tested, such as: “Father, HELP ME!!” or “Hashem, only YOU can do it for me,” or “I depend completely on You Father!”, etc...

The Gemara says that *Chavakuk Hanavi* summed up all of the Torah in one statement, “**Tzadik Be’emunoso Yich’ye – The Tzadik will live in his faith.**” Rashi explains that in earlier generations, people had the strength to concentrate on all 613 *mitzvos*; however, in the later generations we simply cannot. So *Chavakuk Hanavi* gave us the key: Concentrate on *Emunah* (Faith) and **Hashem will take care of everything else**.

8. Overhauling our character traits

The addiction is often a sign that we are missing some of the most basic principles of what it means to be a human being, created in the image of Hashem. Even animals don’t abuse their desires and fall into addictions. In these areas, we have fallen even lower than animals.

Although it may be hard to admit this, the emotional maturity of an addict can often be at the level of a two year old. When we don’t get what we want, we feel like crying, kicking and screaming. We never learned how to deal properly with pain, anxiety, resentment, stress or anger. We have always used the addiction to hide inside ourselves, and we refrained from mature emotional interaction with others. While our peers were growing up and learning about life from the world around them, we were zoning out into our fantasy worlds of self-pleasure and escape. And so we often remained as emotionally immature as a little child.

In order to really begin to heal **at the source**, we must learn the most basic moral principles again from scratch. Fundamentals such as rigorous honesty in all our affairs, an honest personal accounting, complete trust in Hashem, true humility, and a sincere willingness to make amends with those we have harmed, and to surrender our will to Hashem. These principles are so basic, that even the non-Jewish drunks of AA are able to relate to them, and by working through a

program of these principles (The 12-Steps) they often succeed in turning their entire lives around and becoming “Men of G-d.” Besides for step 1, the 12-Steps don’t even mention the addiction (drinking, acting out or whatever the addiction may be). The steps are all about learning how **to think right** and **to live right**.

Rabbi Twerski once wrote as follows about someone who was convinced he could never give up these behaviors:

His conviction that he cannot overcome the addiction is the addiction talking to him, saying, “Give up the fight, it’s useless. You’ll never succeed, so why put yourself through the misery.” Other than just try to stop, what has this young man done to make essential changes in his character? That’s where one should begin.

I attended an AA meeting where the speaker was celebrating his 20th year of sobriety. He began by saying, “The man I once was, drank. And the man I once was, will drink again” (but the man I am today, will not). Alcoholics who have not had a drink for many years but have not overhauled their character are “dry drunks” and will often drink again. The same is true for this addiction.

How does one become a different person? By working diligently on improving one’s character traits. Learning how to manage anger, to rid oneself of resentments, to overcome hate, to be humble, to be considerate of others, to be absolutely honest in all one’s affairs, to admit being wrong, to overcome envy, to be diligent and overcome procrastination. In short, one should take the Orchos Tzaddikim (I’m sure it’s available in English), and go down the list of character traits, strengthening the good one’s and trying to eliminate the bad ones. This does not happen quickly. When one has transformed one’s character and has become a different person, one will find that this “new person” can accomplish things that the old person could not.

9. Why religion alone isn’t always enough

Although all truths can be found in the Torah, we had lost our vision. Even though we may have been learning Torah and Mussar, we were wearing “broken eye glasses.” And so, before we can turn once again to the Torah for guidance, we need to first learn what it means to be a human being. Can someone learn Mussar Sefarim before he knows Alef-Beis?

The 12 Steps & 12 Traditions (p.p. 31-32) discuss why even religious people who always believed they had faith in G-d and had asked G-d for help countless times in the past, were still unable to break free from the grip of the addiction:

This answer has to do with the quality of faith rather than its quantity. This has been our blind spot. We supposed we had humility when really we hadn’t. We

*supposed we had been serious about religious practices when, upon honest appraisal, we found we had been only superficial. Or, going to the other extreme, we had wallowed in emotionalism and had mistaken it for true religious feeling. In both cases, we had been asking something for nothing. The fact was, we really hadn't cleaned house so that the grace of G-d could enter us and expel the obsession. In no deep or meaningful sense had we ever taken stock of ourselves, made amends to those we had harmed, or freely given to any other human being without any demand for reward. We had not even prayed rightly. We had always said, "Grant me my wishes" instead of "Your will be done." At no time had we asked what G-d's will was for us; instead we had been telling Him what it ought to be. The love of G-d and man we understood not at all. Therefore we remained self-deceived, and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity. Belief (in G-d) meant reliance. In A.A., we saw the fruits of this belief: men and women spared from alcohol's final catastrophe. We saw them meet and transcend their other pains and trials. We saw them calmly accept impossible situations, seeking neither to run nor to recriminate. This was not only faith; it was **faith that worked under all conditions.***

As one addict (on our forum) explained the term “Cleaning House” that is used often in AA:

*It is important to realize that our real problem is the pain in our lives that makes us vulnerable to addiction. Addiction is the self-medication for the problem, and not the problem itself. This pain is caused by a "wall" in our relationship with Hashem and in our relationships with many other people in our lives. To remove that pain, we have to remove the walls. The walls are **not** as we had always thought, i.e. the things Hashem has done to us, or the things that others have done to us, but in reality, the walls are made up of our character defects that we have injected into those relationships. And the only way to stop the pain, is to make a true cheshbon hanefesh (personal accounting) on those character defects, accept that we need Hashem to remove the defects from us, and ask Him to do so. Then, and only then, can we begin to repair our character defects with honesty, so that they no longer act as a wall in our relationships (both human and Divine).*

In Conclusion

This area has been taboo in the religious community for far too long. The very fabric of our society is at stake. Families are literally being destroyed. Many husbands, wives and children are being affected. The instant availability and anonymity that the Internet provides makes this perhaps the biggest test of our generation.

As Rabbi Yosef Viener from Agudas Yisrael Monsey said in a recent talk on Family Security:

*"Not a week goes by that I don't have to deal with a Shalom Bayis Problem or a problem in Chinuch Habanim or Banos, or a very fine Bochur who will call me up – or at least what is **left** of a very fine bochur – calls me up crying, begging for help. There is nobody that can claim that either they're not affected, or a family member, or a neighbor, or the chaver sitting next to them in shul, or the chavrusah sitting across from them in yeshiva. If you discounted it until now, you're gonna have to take my word for it when I say that **there is no single problem facing the yechidim in klal Yisrael and communities at large, there is no bigger problem than this. Nothing even comes close. There's a Chov Kadosh to do something now before there's no semblance of Kedusha left in Klal Yisrael.** And I don't say that lightly. Keep in mind, the people who come to me are so frum and so upset about what's going on, that they're willing to talk to their Rav. That means that there are thousands of people who would never even speak to their Rav. I hate to sound pessimistic – but if you have unrestricted Internet in the house – Internet that is not **both** filtered **and** reported, I would say there's a higher than then 90% chance that people have already been Nichshal in your house. And if it hasn't happened yet, there's more than 90% chance it will happen. And if it's not happening at home, it's happening in the office."*

And Rabbi Twerski describes in one of his talks how easy it is to get "addicted" to these things (less than a second) – even when someone was not looking for it, and he bemoans the caliber of people that are falling into this trap today, claiming that Moshiach must be very close.

Guard Your Eyes is helping save lives and marriages every day, helping people retain their self-respect and regain **their sanity** and connection to spirituality, all of which they had given up for lost thinking they had no hope to ever break free. Finally people are finding that they are not alone and that there is true hope in overcoming this addiction.

There is probably nowhere else in the world where one can find such an awakening of *Teshuvah* and closeness to Hashem **within** the religious community. Read the hundreds of testimonials on our website. People write in

countless times how they simply break down crying when reading through the website and forum for the first time, realizing that **they too have hope!**

The Guard Your Eyes network is the only religious network in the world today that deals with this issue in such a comprehensive manner and offering so many tools, such as; a website with hundreds of pages of information, a forum, daily e-mail lists, phone conferences, hot-lines, 12-Step groups, **and this groundbreaking handbook.**

On the one hand, what we have done until now has been a considerable accomplishment, yet on the other hand, it's only a drop in the ocean when considering the many tens of thousands of Jews who are either struggling in this area or who are in serious risk of stumbling into these destructive behaviors.

We are in the process of expanding our "Treatment" options by building the framework to accommodate tens of thousands of Jews who may struggle in these areas. We are also expanding our focus on "Prevention" as well by (a) spreading awareness of on-line dangers through educational campaigns and materials aimed at parents, Rabbanim, Mechanchim, and the general public, and (b) by expanding our "Filter Division" to include 24 hour hotlines and support, to assist and encourage people (in the U.S. and Israel) to install solid filtering and monitoring software for their computers and hand-held devices. See www.venishmartem.com.

The Ohr Hachayim on Parshas Shmos (3:8) writes that before Moshiach's time, the Jewish nation will be subjected to the 50th level of impurity. But he **also** writes there, that before the Redemption the Jewish people will garner the strength through the Torah to enter into the very "mouth" of the Satan and pull out that which he had already swallowed ("le'hotzi boi'lo mi'piv"). And that is what the Guard Your Eyes community is doing today. The *Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh* could not have used a more divinely inspired analogy. We are entering into the mouth of the Satan himself and using the **very power** of today's digital technology to pull out these sparks of Kedusha, these holy souls, that have fallen to the 50th level of impurity!

Please help us spread the word about our work amongst *Rabbanim, mechanchim* and community leaders in your area. If you have a website, please put a link to www.guardyoureyes.org or print out flyers (downloadable on our website) to hang up in your neighborhood *shtieblach*, bulletin boards and the like, or sponsor an ad in your community or neighborhood magazines.

R' Noach Weinberg Za"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Aish Hatorah used to say: Hashem will bring back all his children and all we have to do is simply be there to *guide* our Jewish brothers' hearts back into place. R' Noach used to also ask people if they thought they could change the world. And they would say, "what can I do on my own?". But then he would ask them, "and what if **Hashem helped you**, could you

change the world ***then?***" And they would agree that with Hashem's help, **anything was possible**. And that was Rav Noach's secret to success. He knew that **if this was something Hashem wanted to happen in the world, we just have to be there to guide the plan into place.**

Please pass this Handbook on!

The Chovos Halevavos (Shar Ahavas Hashem, Perek 6) says:

And you should know, my brother, that the merit of the believer, even should he reach the utmost completion in fixing his soul for blessed G-d, and even should he be close to the angels in their good traits and praiseworthy actions, and in the efforts they expend in their service of their Creator, and in their pure love for Him, still do not reach the merits of someone who guides people onto the good path and steers the wicked to Divine service. For his merits are doubled in relation to their merits, for all days and all times.

Think about the merits you will accumulate if others are helped through you!

**Everything on our network is free of charge. Donations are our life-line.
Please help us continue helping others!**

**Online donations at: guardyoureyes.com/donate
(Anonymous recurring credit card donations possible)**

Donations by phone: 718-878-3075

**Checks can be made out to: "GYE Corp." and mailed to:
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P.O. Box 32380
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Tizku Lemitzvos!



Guardyoureyes.org

Maintaining Moral Purity in Today's World

B''H

January 2011 / Shvat 5771

A Letter from the Trustees of the Guard Your Eyes Organization

Dear Friends,

Over the last few months we have become acquainted with the very important and critical work being done by the Guard Your Eyes organization (www.guardyoureyes.org). This organization has been relatively unknown until recently, but with the expansion of its efforts and proven success, it is becoming known throughout the Jewish world today as a critical resource for dealing with the growing problem of pornographic addiction and related behaviors in our communities.

Fueled mainly by the accessibility and anonymity of the Internet, this affliction has spared no class of Jews: from teenagers to kollel members, from office workers to Rabbis, and from single to married men. Many of the social ills afflicting the Jewish community today such as youth-at-risk, broken marriages and even child abuse and molestation can be traced back to this issue. Much of the Jewish community's investment and efforts in education today are being undermined by the strong-pull of these temptations.

The Guard Your Eyes organization has undertaken to stem this tide by utilizing methods which have proved successful in treating other addictions. They have successfully helped wean over a thousand Jews from these destructive behaviors and have helped return them to normal life. Guard Your Eyes also performs a vital function in preventing the spread of this scourge by raising public awareness of its dangers and by offering effective preventive measures to the general Jewish public.

The materials and tools that this program utilizes have been praised by Gedolim and experts alike for their methodology and approach, and they conform to the highest standards of Torah values.

We believe this project is critical to the hatzlacha of the Kedusha of Klal Yisrael and is the only weapon we have at our disposal in dealing with this widespread problem. It is an international project, which can help thousands of Jews across the world and all across the religious spectrum.

We strongly urge you to join us in helping support the wonderful work being done by Guard Your Eyes.



Gary Torgow



Gedaliah Weinberger



Tovia Schottenstein



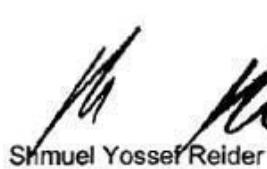
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Avraham Wolfson



Nachman Auerbach



Shmuel Yossef Reider



Moshe Vegh



Frank Menlo



Sol Goldner



"There is an international scourge attacking the Jewish People which threatens to tear apart the fabric of Jewish life. It has spared no class of Jews: from teenagers to kollel members, from office workers to rabbis, and from single to married men. Guard Your Eyes is the only weapon we have at our disposal"

— *Rabbi Aharon Feldman
Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of America*

WWW.GUARDYOUREYES.COM

YOU HAVE NOW READ the most important public service announcement ever likely to appear in Outlook. The above site provides tools for those dealing with attractions to the darker areas of the Internet — ranging from those who have slipped occasionally to those with full-blown Internet addictions.

I will not belabor the dangers of the Internet. In recent years, that subject has been widely discussed in the Orthodox media. Nevertheless, a very high percentage of Orthodox Jews who use the Internet continue to do so without proper filters, or with filters that are easily evaded, and the danger of cell phones with Internet connectivity continues to be virtually ignored in America.

My goal is not to discuss prevention, but to provide hope for those who are already ensnared. At a recent meeting chaired by Agudath Israel's Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, one of America's foremost addiction experts, stated flatly that no addiction can be cured without a support group. And until now, the one support group impossible to assemble was for Orthodox Jews addicted to the Internet and Internet-related behaviors. Religious support groups exist for overeaters, alcoholics, and gamblers. These are weaknesses, and most of us have some weakness. But Internet addiction is different. It seemingly marks one as a total hypocrite, living one life in public and another subterranean life, hidden from everyone else, above all the person to whom one is closest — his or her spouse. No one living such a double life, especially a respected communal figure, could ever risk being exposed at a meeting of others similarly addicted.

Just listening to the testimony of such Jews is a wrenching experience. Last week I read through about fifty pages of testimonials from those helped by the Guard Your Eyes organization, and listened to the personal testimony of a young husband and father describing what it is like to be in the throes of this addiction, delivered at the aforementioned meeting. (Rabbi Aharon Feldman gave an impassioned address about the unprecedented threat to *kedushas Yisrael* from the Internet.) The testimonies completely destroyed my hasty assumption that the victims are primarily drawn from the ranks of teenagers or "adults at risk." Not at all. Most of the letters expressed anguish over the author's former close relationship with Hashem from which he or she now feels severed. Among the writers were rabbis, marriage counselors, and respected teachers.

Dr. Twerski said that until very recently, he had absolutely nothing to recommend to those caught in an Internet addiction or related behaviors. Now he does. The Guard Your Eyes site offers the possibility of joining a support group for Internet addicts, with complete anonymity. Participants never see one another.

For those in need, the required support group is now available.

Harav Binyamin Eisenberger

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