

Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by KiviYVY - 15 Mar 2011 16:15

[This is a lengthy dialogue, but Guard encouraged me to post this with the hopes of others contributing and gaining more clarity]

Dear Guard,

First, a tremendous thank you for all I've gained from your site, your forums and your 12 step phone calls. They've absolutely changed my life and I'm greatly indebted to your program.

At the same time I'd like to voice a concern. I've read a little of buzz about this on the forums, but I just wanted to email you directly so the problem is addressed.

This is what happened: I had gained a lot from your site and had some serious conversations with my wife about your site. She was very understanding, Tzadekes that she is, and was sold on the GYE mission. Of course we're normal and we had our share of high emotions and crying, but Baruch Hashem we were able to sort things out favorably.

Being sold on your mission, my wife thought to suggest the site and the women's phone conference to people she knew who were suffering from lust addiction. After some further (painful) research she realized that the phone conference is really only for spouses of real hard core addicts.

For the record, I am technically not a hard core addict, B"H (about Level 3 in the "GYE Program in a nutshell"); I've never hit rock bottom, I suffer from a mild addiction which I suspect is quite common among men in my culture, and my wife and I can testify that our marriage has been absolutely wonderful. Not picture perfect, but a marriage that we can be proud of and that grows with leaps and bounds on a constant basis. Not having a full addiction I B"H do not fully relate to everything on GYE, but I have been successful in drawing out the lessons from the site and the 12 steps that have been helpful for my personal struggles.

Innocently suspecting that she was a codependent, my wife decided to join the Forum for

Spouse addicts and she was absolutely shocked and shaken by what she read; particularly this story - <http://www.guardureyes.com/GUE/Stories/FeatureStory.asp> - which is part of the suggested reading for all newcomers. She was also shocked by the intimate details that women shared with each other about their own marriages. She cried a long time after reading all of that and dwelled on the matter for at least a week before we were able to come up with some healthy perspectives.

After this experience and after my wife's discussion with a prominent Rav and Rebbetzin in our town we came to the following conclusion: Your site is very helpful for real addicts. It's a life saver - no question. However, when it comes to those who are not addicts, in many cases it's better that they do not join your 12-step calls. The Rav told my wife that there are a number of men (and women) that he knows who were encouraged by someone else to avail themselves of your services. These men were not real addicts, just normal men with normal lusts, and the site convinced them that they were addicts, that their disease was for life, and that they needed to do the 12-steps. It's possible that such men might be going down a road which is overkill for them and cause risks to their emotional well-being and their marriages. I, BH, have a good amount of Seichel and have been able to glean from the site what is helpful for my situation. Others may not be as fortunate.

When it comes to women, the risks are far greater. BH my wife was able find closure on this matter by speaking to a Rav and Rebbetzin, but others are not as assertive about the matter, do not consult with the right people, and end up taking risks that there's no need for them to take. Women take these matters very personally and are from the start at risk of not handling this matter with the proper Seichel, with the healthy approach that's necessary. Pushing such women into the 'addiction track' can cause much unnecessary pain.

You will soon be launching an international campaign for your site upgrade and publicity, which is absolutely wonderful. I wish you much success and I completely support your cause. At the same time, it's important that people are directed to the resources that are appropriate for them and not convinced that they need to take more drastic measures than are appropriate. Your "Program in a Nutshell" is a step in the right direction, but at the moment the site does not naturally follow the course outlined in that piece. I read discussion on the forums of setting up the site in a way that is appropriate for non-addicts (Prevention), while real addicts are directed to a special section to login and address their issues (for Treatment & Recovery). This is also a step in the right direction. My wife and I picture the ideal site to be one that fits this model. We picture a site that speaks to people similar to the way a Rav or Rebbetzin would - validating the normal struggles that people go through and providing a Torah Hashkafa for men and women to gain a healthy approach to Male/Female Tayvah, Triggers, Tznius, the Yetzer Hara, and send normal couples on their way with tools for a healthy marriage.

Undoubtedly you have put much thought to this exact issue already and that you are consulting Gedolim on how to best approach it. My intention is only to highlight the severe importance of addressing this. What I've heard from Rabbonim regarding your current site is that it's a wonderful site, addresses an very important issue in our community, *but it's not for everybody*. Your hope is to make your site for everybody so please do your best to address the greater public as is most appropriate and helpful.

Much Hatzlacha!

Here is my followup to Guard's response (Guard is in quote boxes).

Thank you for reading my long email and taking my concerns to heart. I've understood from your site and it has been confirmed by your response that you approach your mission thoughtfully and sincerely and always seek out the most appropriate course of action Al Pi Torah. Please see my comments and responses below:

Guard Eyes wrote: Thank you for your well thought out and respectful letter, from the heart. Your concerns are very important, and we are indeed addressing them as best we can in the new website design, which will be based on the "Program in a nutshell" from the start. Your letter has helped us gain even further clarity on this issue, especially in regards to Miriam's CODA call which is indeed only for the wives of real addicts.

Thanks for saying this. It's encouraging to know my voice is being heard and is making a difference. As you said, Miriam's CODA is only for wives of real addicts. My wife did call in once to listen in and her heart goes out to these women. She was struck by what seemed to be a "tough love" approach, the labeling, and the exposure to sordid details.

If I may ask just a few questions. 1) What level of addiction do you see yourself in regard to our

"Program in a nutshell"s 8 levels? (see attached).

Level 3. I reached my 1st 90 days rather easily, without much help from the Forum and without the 12 step calls. After 90 I fell and struggled for 2 months or so, peaking at a month. Entering a mini cycle of falling I felt a more desperate need to do something concrete and I read the INCREDIBLE GYE handbook (printed out a pocket size copy I could pull out to read 5 minutes here and there) and started listening in on the 12-step calls periodically. Duvid Chaim encouraged me to start participating in the calls, which I was very hesitant to do, but now I share my voice on the calls from time to time.

2) Do you think that for your level, the 12-Step calls of Duvid Chaim may have been too much? In other words, do you think it might have been Yatza Secharo Behefsedo for you? If yes, what particular aspects of the approach do you feel might have been the hefsed?

I think I mostly gained from the calls, but as I said - I think I have a good dose of Seichel and self-esteem about these things. I know that others might not approach the matter with as much Seichel, label themselves as addicts, and find themselves treading in the shark infested waters of labeling themselves as hard core addicts and treating their pneumonia with chemotherapy. I don't think I lost much of anything from the calls, except for time out of my hourly-waged work day.

3) What shook up your wife so much in the "Feature Story"? That guy didn't even use the 12-Steps at all.

It was the exposure to the intimate and unsavory details of his life. She feels there was no need for her to even know about these things, and other things she read on the forums, and it only made her more nervous about things like protecting her son from the issues the writer of the article faced. As just one example, it's certainly unproductive for her to be nervous about her son taking a bath! The truth is that what's described there likely comes with a background of abnormal domestic issues, maybe abuse or trauma of some sort, and should not be framed as something that "can happen to anyone."

4) Did you see yesterday's chizuk e-mail #980? Coincidentally (I hadn't even read your letter yet), it deals with how to tell the wife, and what to say and do...

I read it and I completely agree with it. You can see my personal notes on my own discussions about this matter here - www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=3231.msg86326#msg86326 . I also once wrote you a thank you note, the "we felt newly married" note that you published in the Chizuk email recently.

GYE has no "hidden agenda" at all, and I don't mind you posting this on the forum because it may help others gain clarity as well, but maybe let's wait until you answer the questions above, and then we can include some of your answers in the letter you post as well, to help people have more clarity on where you're coming from...

Thanks for your easy-going'ness about this. "GYE has no "hidden agenda" at all" really says it all. Your sincerity with this project is really rare and I believe it has been a driving force behind your success. May Hashem continue to give you this strength of character and grant you much success in reaching all those who are crying internally for the help they so desperately need.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 15 Mar 2011 18:29

[Me3 wrote on 15 Mar 2011 18:24:](#)

Yes of course, I realized.

Sneaky guy

I'm not sure there is a big disagreement here. Most people agree and on this site we do not advise non-addicts to join SA groups or phone conferences. Dov is probably the most vocal about non addicts not joining.

And in terms of working the 12 steps on your own not in a group setting, I don't see the concern, unless you feel somebody is going to drill Step 1 into his mind that his life has become unmanagable, stop there and destroy his life. Which while it may be a minute risk, I dont think we need to have precautions for every idiot (no offense to Tzaddik90).

What do you propose, by the way? That we warn non addicts not to join SA groups? Or something more?

Yeah - we are in agreement. The issue is mostly about guiding people according to the advice of Dov that you mentioned and according to the GYE Nutshell. The site has to do it's best to avoid increasing peoples emotional temperatures to the point where they don't make the appropriate decisions.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by MovingUp - 15 Mar 2011 18:57

YVY, here are some ideas that might you might consider helpful toward realizing your goal...not that i necessarily agree or disagree

The site has to do it's best to avoid increasing peoples emotional temperatures to the point where they don't make the appropriate decisions.

One way to do that might involve changing the name of this entire forum from "Internet Addiction Forum", which pretty much says that if you're here, you're addicted to something a little more pareve.

Additionally, the generic introduction package template (Welcome to our community! Once you've arrived, there's no turning back. Everyone here will just grab a hold of you and pull you up, up, up!...) should probably be modified.

The word "addict" appears 9(!!) times, which is a really strong (excessively so?) message to someone who may just need some chizuk with shmiras einayim. As of now, advice to join the 12 Step Calls is included in this introduction, and l'kichaoscho, should probably be removed, or at least have a clarification about whom the Calls are for.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by MovingUp - 15 Mar 2011 19:01

[David/Rage wrote on 15 Mar 2011 19:00:](#)

[MovingUp wrote on 15 Mar 2011 18:57:](#)

l'kichaoscho

i lolled

le'sheetascho

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 15 Mar 2011 19:05

[David/Rage wrote on 15 Mar 2011 18:44:](#)

Typo FTW. That made me laugh too. Impressive typo, even by my own horrific standards
[kosher wrote on 15 Mar 2011 18:08:](#)

the risk that by associating with people that have much bigger problems

i have not found that to be the case...like i heard once on this site, we each have our own mishigasim...i never in my life heard of a massage parlor until i walked into an sa meeting...i meet people that have done crazy stuff...but none of it has caused me to want to do it...when i was falling, it was with the good ole prons...i feel the same about being with gay members on GYE or SA...i have no fear that i will start lusting that way because that is not my particular mishigas...

That's not how I understood Kosher. What I thought he meant was associating with people and therefore thinking that you're one of them, that your addiction is as progressed as theirs - not that you'll actually engage in the activities that they did. I agree - I have not been tempted to try any of the expressions of lust that I have read about here.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Rising Up - 15 Mar 2011 19:09

shit

I had to test it out

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Rising Up - 15 Mar 2011 19:10

fuck

this too

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by MovingUp - 15 Mar 2011 19:11

LOL. I was trying to figure out how I mangled typing that word so badly. I figured it's just cause
im a worthless piece of kichsa

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 15 Mar 2011 19:13

[David/Rage wrote on 15 Mar 2011 19:08:](#)

[MovingUp wrote on 15 Mar 2011 19:01:](#)

dont be so hard on yourself...there was a guy on gye once that used to cuss all the time and it kept the mods so busy they wouldnt have time to attend dc's calls so the powers that be at gye decided that every time someone typed in sh-t it would automatically convert to kichsa...and so you get l'kichsaoscho...since that guy was me i always get a kick out of seeing it backfire...

Impressive typo, even by my own horrific standards

LOL!! I've noticed that kichsa a few times in your posts and wondered what it was. I just love your forwardness Rage (after the censors, of course..). Never give it up even after you finish your Ivory Soap Sandwich.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Rising Up - 15 Mar 2011 19:21

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Me3 - 15 Mar 2011 19:42

[David/Rage wrote on 15 Mar 2011 19:08:](#)

[MovingUp wrote on 15 Mar 2011 19:01:](#)

dont be so hard on yourself...there was a guy on gye once that used to cuss all the time and it kept the mods so busy they wouldnt have time to attend dc's calls so the powers that be at gye decided that every time someone typed in sh-t it would automatically convert to kichsa...and so you get l'kichsaoscho...since that guy was me i always get a kick out of seeing it backfire...

Impressive typo, even by my own horrific standards

OMG! It was you? I always thought it was Kedusha!

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by geshertzarmeod - 15 Mar 2011 21:07

Wow this post was very informative! besides for the main subject, which i have been grappling with for the past month. I now know what kichsa is! ;D

You guys had me rolling! thanks!

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 15 Mar 2011 21:14

I don't think the 12 Steps is the problem.

It is more the way inexperienced Sponsors push others into proclaiming they are addicts.

They think that everyone who comes to GYE & complains, must be secretly complaining of being VERY VERY bad, w/o having ever said so

Some guys come here & state that they are rock-bottom - but they are referring to what 'rock-bottom' means in THEIR minds! which can be an improper website once a month - because that is *geferlach* for a Torah'dig Jew.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by geshertzarmeod - 15 Mar 2011 21:37

I dont think we should blame the sponsors. I dont think its malicious. Everyone interprets things from their own perspective. Maybe there need to be different kinds of sponsors for different kinds of problems, allowing them to respond appropriately to the needs of each person.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 15 Mar 2011 21:42

You will notice that when someone post requesting that a Sponsor vollunteer to guide him he will usually get no responses.

The Sponsors I was referring to are those who are not operating under the official capacity.... They are just acting like Sponsors..... They give advice without knowing to whom they are advising what.

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