

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 Behfsedo 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 oblum - 16 Mar 2011 14:51

[ur-a-jew wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:49:](#)

I wondered what the "o" stood for. Overeaters Anonymous is a different website.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 16 Mar 2011 14:55

[ur-a-jew wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:44:](#)

(see what I did there?)

It's interesting but the word addict is not used in Step 1 at all: "We admitted we were powerless over _____—that our lives had become unmanageable." Do these same people get a blow to their ego when they read the gemara that says "Yitzro shel odom mesgaber alov bchol yom . . . v'ulmelay HKBH ozro ayno yochul lo." Or how about when they say three times a day in Shemone Esrei "?????" and recognize that He is awesome in that no creation can do good or bad only according to His will.

I'm all for self-esteem but it may be that a little blow to the overinflated ego ain't so bad. Generally it's our ego that gets us in to this mess in the first place. After all why isn't my wife satisfying me doesn't she understand that I am in the mood and if she's not going to or my boss is going to treat me like that I am entitled to a little [pick your pleasure].

I agree, but it's the misunderstanding of the word "addict" that throws people for a loop. It's wrong, wrong, wrong, but it's the Metzius.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 16 Mar 2011 14:59

[David/Rage wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:51:](#)

people really think that we should divide the group further by our own particular mishgasim? i mean, come on, dont you think its hard enough to find enough from western jew to form a chabura? if we were to divide it down by levels of addictions or types of addictions or whatever you wanna call it (i kinda see addicted like being pregnant - you either is or aint) then we will each have our own lonesome forum all to ourselves...i was emailing another GYEer earlier today about how the BEST thing you can do for recovery is get support for others that are also in the ship...we put up with a lot of nonsense in SA and on GYE in order to gain that tremendous support we get from banding together with other people like us...we are a minority of a minority of a minority...why cut us up even further...what does it hurt me of the addict next to me likes men, prostitutes, possums or pink elephants?...we have enough in common to unite us, i think....

This is a really great point. I think you made the same point last night but it got censored (for). The Forum setup might just lend itself to some level of "one size fits all" and it's quite a challenge to shake it. The ideal is individual treatment, but the communal support of a Forum setup appears to sacrifice that for better or worse.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Kedusha - 16 Mar 2011 15:00

[YVY wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:55:](#)

[ur-a-jew wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:44:](#)

good reason...

It's interesting but the word addict is not used in Step 1 at all: "We admitted we were powerless over _____—that our lives had become unmanageable." Do these same people get a blow to their ego when they read the gemara that says "Yitzro shel odom mesgaber alov bchol yom . . . v'ulmelay HKBH ozro ayno yochul lo." Or how about when they say three times a day in Shemone Esrei "???????" and recognize that He is awesome in that no creation can do good or bad only according to His will.

I'm all for self-esteem but it may be that a little blow to the overinflated ego ain't so bad. Generally it's our ego that gets us in to this mess in the first place. After all why isn't my wife satisfying me doesn't she understand that I am in the mood and if she's not going to or my boss is going to treat me like that I am entitled to a little [pick your pleasure].

I agree, but it's the misunderstanding of the word "addict" that throws people for a loop. It's wrong, wrong, wrong, but it's the Metzius.

People simply need to be educated, just like they need to be educated that having an addiction is not an excuse for continuing the behavior, it only means that self control alone will not be enough to stop.

Tool #1 in the GYE Handbook (in the attitude section - p.p. 6-7 in the latest version), contains a very good explanation.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by ur-a-jew - 16 Mar 2011 15:06

[YVY wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:55:](#)

I agree, but it's the misunderstanding of the word "addict" that throws people for a loop. It's wrong, wrong, wrong, but it's the Metzius.

Guard, if you are still listening in, I think we have the solution. Please put a banner on the website with the following disclaimers.

Note: Before reading these disclaimers you may want to take a seat and get a glass of water. If you start hyperventilating after reading the next disclaimer take a deep breath and drink some water. You will be okay.

Note: You may after looking around this site come to the determination that you are an addict. It is nothing to be afraid of. It is not the end of the world. There are many chosuva people in the world who are addicts. You will still be able to find a shidduch and marry of your kids even though you're an addict. And fortunately there is a solution.

Note: Just because you may have looked at porn, you may have masturbated, you may be an addict [yes even you], doesn't mean you should go to a live SA meeting tonight or run tell your wife. Consult with someone more experienced who understands addictions.

Good luck

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 16 Mar 2011 15:10

[ur-a-jew wrote on 16 Mar 2011 15:06:](#)

Guard, if you are still listening in, I think we have the solution. Please put a banner on the website with the following disclaimers.

ROFL!!

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by the.guard - 16 Mar 2011 23:10

[Me3 wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:19:](#)

What I've learned from Step 1 "That I am powerless" is that Hashem control everything in this world. There is no such thing as "Kochi V'Otzem Yadi" I can't do anything by myself. In the same manner that I realize that I can't beat this addiction by myself, the same is true by everything. Addiction is just a tangible lesson a moshol. To everything else.

When I read this post of Me3, I was reminded of a beautiful shiur that I heard today in the car as me and my partner drove to Yerushalayim for a meeting. I was inspired to write it down for today's chizuk e-mail. Thank you Me3!

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by ur-a-jew - 17 Mar 2011 14:40

[guardureyes wrote on 16 Mar 2011 23:10:](#)

[Me3 wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:19:](#)

What I've learned from Step 1 "That I am powerless" is that Hashem control everything in this world. There is no such thing as "Kochi V'Otzem Yadi" I can't do anything by myself. In the same manner that I realize that I can't beat this addiction by myself, the same is true by everything. Addiction is just a tangible lesson a moshol. To everything else.

When I read this post of Me3, I was reminded of a beautiful shiur that I heard today in the car as me and my partner drove to Yerushalayim for a meeting. I was inspired to write it down for today's chizuk e-mail. Thank you Me3!

Their are no coincidences in this world. I "happened" to have someone else's car last night which "happened" to have a shuir from Parshas Vayechi playing and in the 15 minutes I was in the car I heard the following Seforno. The Seforno is bothered by a question, why does Yosef in response to Yaakovs request to bury him in Eretz Yisroel say "anochi" esseh kdvorecha. Why was it necessary to say "anochi". Answers the Seforno that Yosef was saying I can't guarantee that it will happen. I can say "Anochi" I will do everything I can do but the result is not up to me.

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The Rov giving the shuir explained that Yosef was saying that certain things are not up to me. The mitzryim have certain rules which may prevent me from carrying out the mission. Based on yesterday's chizzuk email, however, I believe that the Seforno is saying something much deeper. Yosef was saying he internalized the lesson of eiyshas potiphar. Results are dependent on the RBSO. Yosef was saying I will make my effort but whether I succeed that's not up to me, that is up to the RBSO.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by the.guard - 21 Mar 2011 14:44

Beautiful!

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