

My First 12-Step Meetings

Posted by lamAdam - 05 May 2011 14:02

Hi GYE!

I originally joined the forum and began using the site a couple years ago. Unfortunately, I did not make progress at the time. Eventually, I completely forgot my login information, and gave up on many resolutions I had made about my recovery.

I hit bottom this past Sunday. For over a year, I have fantasized about beginning the path to recovery and then proposing to an ex-girlfriend of mine. On Sunday, I found out that she is engaged. I was -- and remain -- totally crushed. Right now, my biggest struggle is that my fantasy has not left me, it has merely adapted. I constantly catch myself fantasizing about when she will call me to tell me that her engagement broke up. Not healthy for me!

So on Monday, I dragged my tuchus to a 12-step group, and I've gone every day since then (three meetings). There are definitely aspects that make me feel out of place or uncomfortable. I'm not used to saying "prayers" or "meditations" in English at all, so reciting the Serenity Prayer feels foreign to me. The meeting I'm going to meets around lunchtime in Chicago's business area, so there isn't really a steady group; the people I've been seeing usually have an evening group in the suburbs that they attend, but this one is the easiest for me to get to by far. Finally, every meeting ends with holding hands and reciting the Lords Prayer (without saying JC). Although they don't say JC, and I don't recite it, it still makes me feel uncomfortable -- especially the day that I found myself sitting next to a woman! In SA of all places!

But I've attained a level and quality of sobriety that I've never had before, and that's the bottom line right now. I'm struggling with heartbreak and despair, and this is actually holding me back from acting out, but I do have the phone number of a sponsor from one of those meetings. He's a Catholic priest! Again, it makes me feel funny, but I know that if I can bring myself to call him in a time of weakness, he will know how to guide me out of it.

I've also contacted a Rav, revealed my addiction, and asked him to help me find contacts within the frum community, and I hope to have something lined up soon.

I was wondering if anyone else has had similar experiences with 12-step groups?

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by Kedusha - 05 May 2011 14:08

Welcome, IAA!

Yashar Koach for taking the plunge! I don't have personal experience will live 12-step groups, but I was on a full cycle of Duvid Chaim's phone conference.

Needless to say, if you're next to a woman, you shouldn't hold her hand, both for Halachic reasons and for common sense reasons. You can explain politely that some people are just very trigger-sensitive.

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 05 May 2011 15:30

Hi

and Wow! you are rocking and rolling, kudos to you for taking such bold steps to help yourself.

much continued hatzlocha!

ZS

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by Dov - 05 May 2011 16:50

I have been going to SA meetings for over 14 years and can relate to your issues, though I agree with the spirit of what you write, that they are actually relatively insignificant compared to

how sobriety and recovery have transformed my life including our marriage, my avodah, and everything else.

BTW, if you are in Chicago, make sure you get to know Mike...the guy with 20+ years of sobriety and some real recovery, too.

The girl thing is something I have posted about around 6 mo ago. If you want to talk about that with me, just pm me, as it's not for here, I think.

The "lords" prayer thing I have what to talk about, too. But in my SA meeting we do not say it. Rather we say the simple (and secular - look up the word 'secular') Serenity Prayer. The meeting voted for that about 10 years ago after more than a few religious Jewish members like me became regulars and a sensitive - *and very religious* - Catholic meeting secretary (who incidentally was sober over 5 years at the time and is now about 20 years sober, b"H) brought up the issue for a vote himself! It is not in the White Book as a part of the meeting guide in there (last I looked), and is clearly religious. I have heard and read things AAs have written about the essential words of the "lords" prayer being able to take an all kosher Jewish re-interpretation...but I am not impressed, so I do not say it either. Instead I talk to Hashem while they are saying it if I am ever in another SA meeting that does say it at the meeting's end. Though the Serenity Prayer was made up by a priest, it is not religious, but secular and certainly not Christian.

All in all, though, I am glad you are dealing with these concerns and facing the fact that your sobriety is the main thing. Many get distracted by details and lose everything - especially their yiddiskeit - as a result. Yet b"H you and I are "still here chayim kulchem *hayom* (today)", as Moshe Rabbeinu put it...

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by aaron4 - 05 May 2011 21:18

I went to my first SA meeting today, just a few hours ago. I have been sober for almost 3 years but as you can see from my post yesterday in the "I'm about to Fall..." thread (last I checked it was still the most current and I don't know how to insert a hyperlink...can someone tell me?), it's still not easy for me to keep on truckin'. Dov says it should be - the pekkela is not a heavy one to carry - and asked if I was doing this alone. Well that was a pretty clear message: DON'T do

this alone. So I went today.

I'm not expecting anything from one meeting. No fireworks or life altering spiritual experiences. But I was surprised at how lousy I felt (and still feel) immediately afterward! I didn't expect that either. I don't really know for sure why I feel that way. I think it may just be pride. Here I am, almost 3 years sober. I've made significant progress in bringing Hashem into my life and in Avoda generally, progress that I never knew was even possible because I couldn't imagine it before. I don't think that's enough to keep anyone sober, certainly not an addict like me. But I even "worked the steps" (yes, alone). I admit powerlessness every day, ask Him to take over, get out of His way, etc. etc. Furthermore, I didn't even act out! I'm still technically sober! Yet I felt like I had to go to a meeting...because progressive victory over lust still eludes me. I think that's why I feel down. Intellectually I know that my progress is still progress, not to be overlooked. My connection to Hashem is real, even if I don't feel it right now (I don't). But it's hard to get my heart to agree.

Anyone have THAT experience?

Is an SRA meeting a lot different than an SA meeting? Any reason to avoid it?

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by Dov - 05 May 2011 21:58

I feel that you are past the thinking stage now. Just do. Do, and you will get results you seek. But if you mainly think and figure out stuff, I say you will not go anywhere. You have had the past three years to think and figure and do your best job in that area. Now - if you want something a bit different and better - try the surrender that only *doing* brings.

Alei v'hatzlach.

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by pinokio - 08 May 2011 16:10

adam, still here, pal.

how's the brown line treating you? CTA treating you well? do you sit in the last car like i used to, and scan the obscene drawings on the beige wall, or the gravity defying graffitti on the underside of bridges and buildings? ahh, the nostalgia is so powerful, the memories. nothing like reminiscing the old days, in the loop.....

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by Dov - 09 May 2011 00:33

Frank Sinatra: "Chicago, Chicago! It's not New York, but it's still a city!!!"...are those the words?

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by lamAdam - 09 May 2011 13:33

I have my first meeting with my sponsor today. I'm not sure what to expect, but I think he knows that. Unlike last week, I'm back into something of a routine in my life -- work, preparing for the LSATs (AHH!), davening. But now I'm constantly reminding myself that I'm an addict, that I'm powerless over lust, that Someone is plenty powerful over it, and that He will bear the burden the moment I surrender it to Him.

Feels a lot different from gritting my teeth and fighting! This one feels like it's working...

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by pinokio - 09 May 2011 16:27

expect the unexpected

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by Dov - 10 May 2011 21:35

and *unexpected* the expected

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by lamAdam - 15 May 2011 23:21

The ideas of the first few steps have been totally eye-opening to me. I didn't even realize that I was white-knuckling for all those years! Surrender is definitely, definitely an easier path, though it certainly comes with its difficulties.

I'm meeting with my sponsor tomorrow, and I hope we can sit down and talk about what it means to actually "work the steps." I've been reading the White Book and writing in a journal, and I review the Serenity Prayer several times a day when I'm feeling weak, but how do I actually go about officially recognizing powerlessness? Have I already done it without noticing?

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Re: My First 12-Step Meetings
Posted by Dov - 17 May 2011 16:10

Everybody is different. Most guys I know do not realize the truth of their own depth of ill-ness until they write down all their acting out history and look at it all together, then share it in detail with another person who understands because they are also an equally powerless addict.

We get honest with ourselves by getting used to being open with others, not the other way around. Boruch Hashem you are taking the step of actually meeting with your sponsor. Keep it

going, amigo.

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