

whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 07 Aug 2011 19:58

perhaps i dont mean first, maybe second. I know that I have an issue, but I feel I am taking protective measures and still not getting anywhere. I have a strong filter, I dont look at things online, I try to gaurd myself the best I can around town, yet I get these days that I am literally fighting with the yetzer all day in such an intense way that the fight is eventually when will I cave not if and I then do. Whats my next step in recovery? and how do I pull out of a relapse after 9 months clean to week long sprints of cleanliness?

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by Dov - 07 Aug 2011 22:01

Not what did you do to **stay** clean, but *what did you do to **start** getting the help you needed to learn to stay clean?* What got you to make that move in the first place?

Perhaps you will need to go back to that, rather than coasting on what has been working for you well since then. Think about it SSBT and let us know, if you like.

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 08 Aug 2011 01:04

I decdided that it wasnt acceptable and that I had to stop. Before, as with now I will have momentary crisis of faith that allows my yetzer to get best of me, but only in this arena. I decide this now too, but unfortunately the desire has grown quite strong and I dont always have the will power. But I know i need to do it again. I really just wish I could change my bio chem sometimes, though I know deep down taht wouldnt help. I guess that a part of me enjoys it too much to let go, even though I know its wrong. I really want to stop, I just dont know how to stop myself when I'm face to face with the demon. The shower and bathroom have becoem dangerous places for me but i cant just avoid them.

Honestly too, I used some of the more extreme literature out there to scare myself away. I have found that I am not fond of that and feel it hurts more in other ways, and now have to find a new way. Perhaps some introspection over tisha bav will help. I dont know. If anyone has any chizuk I could use some right now...

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 08 Aug 2011 01:23

i just went through some of the guidebook and I'm going to do this. I want to start a 90 day streak. I know it's taking on a lot but I also know I can do it. I might start phone meetings and as soon as I get a day or two down I'm going to join the 90 day chart. My big request to you all is how to also work on removing the lust. I can control my behavior, Ive done it before. I never quite got rid of the lust that caused this in the first place so long ago. I mean 5 years of codependent relationships doesnt leave someone's neshama spotless. How can I change my view of what a relationship is and learn to view women as what I know they really are (neshamot) as opposed to tools for my own self gratification. I need to overcome that before I can get married.

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by ToAdd - 08 Aug 2011 09:09

It sounds like you've already taken a few big steps, well done.

To answer your question from a technical side, the RAMCHAL says that to remove a trait from one's heart, you must go to the extreme for a long time.

For us that means putting as much distance between lust and ourselves as possible. To avoid all forms of lust. There are countless tools and techniques here that help with that.

To answer your question from a personal perspective, may I suggest the following?

Lust is when we focus on the physical aspect of another right?

Love is when we focus on the virtues of another. Think of someone you love and write down the reasons why you love them. Most people write things like "I love them because they're caring, kind, generous" etc.

So, everytime you see someone (anyone, especially someone you would normally lust over),

think about what virtues they may have. "She is gentle, she looks determined, she's a good mother, she's shopping therefore providing for others".

Without having any solid facts about the person, you're free to invent them in your mind as you wish. So what do you wish them to be - an object for your own use or someone great?

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by kidushashem - 08 Aug 2011 10:57

hey there, I think we're going through the same stuff right now. I just started a post here yesterday ("please give me chizuk"). I had a six month clean streak that ended 2 months ago and now I'm in the dumps. Very hard. I don't know how to get out and back on track and I'm also hoping that Tisha B'av will help me but I'm a bit skeptical.

I think that maybe going to Mikva now, Erev tzom might help to start with even more Kedusha and determination. Just wash it all off.

Feel free to talk it all out!

Love,

KH

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 08 Aug 2011 14:20

thats all good advice. I'm not sure how well I will do though. I had a lust based relationship prior to making Teshuva, and it seems that lust is crosswired with love for me. When I feel love for someone i have NO lust for, I also feel a triggered. This includes people that would be entirely inappropriate to have relations with. also, I am not in contact with frum people in my parents town often. Most of the girls here wear way too little, and I am exposed on a daily basis. The options are stay indoors all day and only be triggered a bit, or leave the home and

be triggered a lot. It is so frustrating. but worse is myself. I want to fall so that a. I can have the gratification b. wont be fightign my body so much. theres a lot (as with all addicts) of struggling to have heart/body and mind on same page. I will see someone and think they are nice, I wish well for them in their future, but feel I wonder if I could marry them to fulfill my desires. I really hate it. as I said hopefully tishabav will help push in right direction. this is a low spiritual point for clal yisroel, why should I be different...

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by Dov - 08 Aug 2011 21:23

This is a pitch. And I rarely make outright pitches. And I am not making it to *anyone* esle reading this, only to you - every person is different.

You call this thread "what is the first step?"....well. Please bear with me:

You describe the pain and hopelessness of success in this struggle so well. If you are indeed totally convinced that you are an addict, then I suggest you at least consider going to SA meetings. I do not believe it would be the only way for an addict to get better - but it works for me beautifully and I am just suggesting it as a serious option for you. If you are an addict, then I firmly believe that ***I cannot*** win this struggle using the tools that you bring with you right now. In other words, *you* can't beat it. I ***am*** a loser as well, in this respect. *Hashem* taught me that, through failure after failure and progression after progression of my problem over decades.

Question:

But then how do we ever 'win'? Surely He does not want me to lust and masturbate the rest of my life away! Are we doomed to live a stupid life forever?

An answer:

As an addict, I have discovered that *He* wants me to ***know*** that ***I*** cannot beat this - that I

really need **Him**, for a change. I do not need my willpower, my teshuvah, my seichel, nor my yir'as Shomayim...I **need Him**!

And, of course, for Him to be able to help me Hashem does not need any of those things either!

I do not have to 'deserve' His chessed. That's why it is called "*chessed*", you know.

And I am sober today and one day at a time for 14 years so far - and I am not alone. Doing the work I needed to do SA taught me (and continues to teach me) how to **allow** that to happen for a guy like me today. Tomorrow I will be concerned with allowing Hashem to help me - tomorrow.

You are a fantastic fellow, have come a long way in Teshuvah and life in general, and (if you are an addict) may be coming to see the impossibility of your battle. That it is not what you thought it was - not what others *told* you it was. They could not have known that yours is not the garden variety and not what the sifrei mussar are addressing *at all* - if you are indeed an addict. For that is determined by trial and error that teaches you that **you** do not have what it takes, and that no human power can help you win. It's not about "the Yetzer Hora," any more. That's addiction, and there is recovery - for me and many others I know and do not know.

Sure, 'Hashem does not give a nisayon that we cannot handle'...but this is obviously not 'a nisayon'. It is a *disease* - **if** you truly are an addict. It will destroy your life and everything in it - if you are truly an addict.

So, are you comfortable with this? Let me know if you like, or just ignore my entire post - I respect you either way! Hatzlocha SSBT!

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by Dov - 09 Aug 2011 04:06

I started this post yesterday, but forgot to send it till tonight. (May Hashem bring down a fiery home made out of our tefillos for thousands of years for the Sh'chinah haK'dosha and unite us

all bimheiro biyameinu mein!)

"...got rid of the lust"

"I'm going to do this..."

"...work on removing the lust"

"...need to overcome that"

"...but I also know I can do it"

...and:

"I can control my behavior, I've done it before."

....and yet - here you are again. ?

You can say that you mean that "of *course* I mean I will do this *with Hashem's help*"...hey, everybody here says that....how many really do it? How many are clean of all the thousands of yidden who are feebly 'trying', year after year, after year?

Where is G-d? Why doesn't He help them better?

I think many **say** that they are trying to stay clean "with Hashem's help, of course" - but it is just nice words, nothing more. For an addict, wasted words.

Until addicts learn how to surrender and say (and really mean), "OK! OK...I can't! I give up! Hashem, I need You and only You to save me from this and to *continue* saving me from this. I have no strength and I recognize that for me, 'using *my strength*' is *part of how I became an addict in the first place*. I do it alone, and alone is cut off from you...and hidden from people - especially those who I love. *For me*, that is all my avodah zarah and cannot save me. *For me*, I

need to go **with** You....like Noach had to. I do not succeed when I walk *before* You, like
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Does this sound like apikorsus to you? If so, I will shut my fingers (mouth) and stop writing this stuff to you. Then I will wish you the best of luck beating this thing. Really. I believe it may be possible. Who knows?

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 11 Aug 2011 01:51

I just got the post. Been clean BH but mulling over the thoughts. I think there are components that are addicted and those that arent. I'm not 100%, but I will touch base..Thanks for the encouragement..

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 11 Aug 2011 15:21

So, I have come to a few hypothesis. I am diagnosed OCD and take maintance meds for that, and that is a disease. The big issue here is now: Is my lust a component of OCD that must be worked out as such, or is it a seperate disease that needs to be worked out as such. The nafka mina being if its part of OCD SA may not help, as it is a more internal. I am about to move to a different city to switch schools and learn, so I am going to wait to start anything but when I'm there I think I am going to start therapy. However, whatever the case may be I have control of my actions and that is what I need to work on NOW! BH I have been better, little slips that dont end in full fledged but they are bad enough.

I view this as a huge part of my struggle to understand the boundaries of the pyschological and psychiatric human mind and the soul. Again the nafka mina being where mitzvos and avodas Hashem can be effective and where drugs and therapy are needed. I view them as VERY closely related and this is why, yet both slightly different.

Any thoughts?

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by Dov - 11 Aug 2011 18:26

Yeah. You are thinking too much, as you are always doing (if you are anything like me), and you are convinced that you need to 'understand' something in order to succeed at getting better. As in:

[strugglingandstrivngBT wrote on 11 Aug 2011 15:21:](#)

I view this as a huge part of my struggle to understand the boundaries of the psychological and psychiatric human mind and the soul. Again the nafka mina being where mitzvos and avodas Hashem can be effective and where drugs and therapy are needed. I view them as VERY closely related and this is why, yet both slightly different.

I suggest dropping your hypotheses on Hashem's foot instead of on yours. It won't hurt Him, don't worry. And do not look back. Make in-person friends with another person in successful recovery from a problem like yours and speak daily with that person at the beginning of the day (before or after davening or breakfast) and then again near the end of the day sometime. It doesn't need to be every day, but most days would be great.

Love yourself, take good care of yourself, and stop burdening your poor self with the weight of the world. Nobody really understands all the crap you are struggling to gain mastery over. Least of all, you.

Learn what to do, not what to think.

You cannot think yourself into right living. You can only live yourself into right thinking. Hashem will give you the gift of right-thinking. But it will be a gift that you will be able to hold onto only after you take the right actions without needing to understand.

Na'aseh venishma is not a mitzvah anywhere in the Torah, but it underlies *everything*. Especially recovery.

Give up trying to know or understand. You are not really that smart. None of us are.

Trust G-d, period.

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 12 Aug 2011 04:41

I admit illness. I admit that I dont know what to do and that I cant do it. After a day of doing good I fell minutes before bed. I just couldnt take it. I really cant do this. this is a problem and I really dont know how to give it up to Hashem. How do you just let go? What do you do? I dont feel there is an external safegaurd. I feel like the battle is all on me. A lot of what you said hits home but what can I do? Every safegaurd I take the YH/disease is waiting saying "ok, we'll do it the other way then!" I want to go into therapy as I said but what do I do until then? As I have said, I dont know if this is a symptom or the problem, but a big problem in my avodas Hashem too is not doing things because I view them as real or true, but because I feel good. I know it is true and real, but I cant admit it sincerely. HEre too, I know this is a problem but I cant sincerely ask for help. I am numb to it. That may be my hardened/confused heart or the meds, but I am numb. numb and a little bit scared...

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by Dov - 14 Aug 2011 23:21

[strugglingandstrivngBT wrote on 12 Aug 2011 04:41:](#)

I admit illness. I admit that I dont know what to do and that I cant do it. After a day of doing good I fell minutes before bed. I just couldnt take it. I really cant do this. this is a problem and I really dont know how to give it up to Hashem. How do you just let go? What do you do? I dont feel there is an external safegaurd. I feel like the battle is all on me. A lot of what you said hits home but what can I do? Every safegaurd I take the YH/disease is waiting saying "ok, we'll do it the other way then!" I want to go into therapy as I said but what do I do until then? As I have

said, I don't know if this is a symptom or the problem, but a big problem in my avodas Hashem too is not doing things because I view them as real or true, but because I feel good. I know it is true and real, but I can't admit it sincerely. Here too, I know this is a problem but I can't sincerely ask for help. I am numb to it. That may be my hardened/confused heart or the meds, but I am numb. numb and a little bit scared...

OK, so you are touching on a lot of different things here. Some are probably totally unrelated to your schmutz problem. But that's typical with us: we have normal problems that everybody has, but since we do one thing abnormal, we assume that all our problems are tied into that. That is just a big distraction. It muddles the situation even more and makes improvement much harder.

For example, the worry about 'only doing things cuz they make you feel good' is so unrelated to this issue that even I can tell that. You are pouring guilt and confusion on yourself just because you have gained insight into a simple fact: you are selfish. Well, **we all are!!** Congratulations, you react well to positive reinforcement - so does the entire human race! That is the selfish way Hashem made us! You would eventually have to call fear of death selfish, too, in your approach. Gevalt. You are such a nice and good man - and here you are not even going to let yourself be considered nice and good! I'd bet 99% (and I really mean 99%) of the frum yidden out there do 99% of the frum things they do simply because they feel good from doing them. Either doing xyz makes them feel they are 'a member of the group' (a very powerful motivation), or they know others are impressed (also very powerful), or they feel good about doing something difficult and being in 'the elite' (what's wrong with that?), or they feel close to Hashem when they do it (and their main motive may *still* be cuz that makes them *feel good*), or because they like the way it feels to do that particular thing (learning Torah, and other mitzvos, can be very stimulating)....or they feel they are 'getting rich' with Olam haBa. All selfish - but none are evil nor shameful. They may even be very good, for many people.

The RMB"M says Hashem gave us so many mitzvos and so much Torah, specifically so that in most people's lives there will at least be ONE thing that we stumble on a thing that we actually do completely non-selfishly (he calls that 'Lishmoh'). One thing! "And then," the RMB"M says, "they will be zocheh to Olam haBa." Is he talking about resh'o'im? No. He is referring to 99% of Klal Yisroel - to me, you, and the overwhelming majority of the rabbis and roshei yeshivah out there, etc.

So. You do stuff cuz it feels good. Congratulations. Welcome to the human race. Even *Jews* are human! Surprise! Even Jews are selfish - and even in their avodas Hashem! Only *Hashem* is not. All of us people are, to some degree. Notably, Moshe Rabeinu was on such a high madreiga davka *because* he eradicated selfishness from himself (onov mikol odom gave him the aspaklaryah hame'irah). Obviously that is quite a madreiga. How filled with pride can you be, to munn **yourself** for falling short of Moshe Rabeinu?

Who do you think you are?

But that is the very nature of sexaholism for frum Jews: Precisely **because** we like porn, fantasy, and sex with ourselves (masturbation) so much, do we expect perfect Teshuvah, Torah and mitzvos lishmo'n, and nearly perfect dikduk b'mitzvos. After all, if anyone could be a really, really good Jew, shouldn't it be me? After all, I love porn and masturbating so much that I feel the need for it every day and fight it. Yeah, I am really 'up there' with the great tzaddikim. WE put way, way too much pressure on ourselves because of our **grandiosity**. That's a religious ego. It is *not* what the novi meant when he sang about "vayigbah libo bedarchei Hashem". That is being proud of what you *did* accomplish and *can* live up to - not making up a false image of yourself and then crucifying yourself on it.

That thinking is nuts.

We *are* the simplest of yidden, and do *not* reach the toes of many other yidden. And that is OK. We need a simple avodah - a tricycle. Yet we insist on sitting ourselves in an 18-wheeler! Our yetzer hora tells us "*Real* Devekus and *constant* good-intentions, Torah and mitzvos *lishmo'n* is what *we (of all people)* should be doing!"

It is one of the main reasons we keep falling.

We need **humility** above all things! Hachno'oh va'anovoh. That is the very first step. Leiv nishbar v'nidkeh Elokim lo sivzeh. We need broken hearts. Not sad, depressed hearts, but broken ones. Humility. To be cut down to size.

And that is exactly what the 1st step inventory does.

And you are not alone! Me and all us guys do that sort of prideful self-beating all the time! We expect we should be so much greater than we really *can* be....and we think that's just 'reaching for the top'. Really, it is a failure to accept our true limitations. I say the sooner you learn how to accept your limitations, the better: your **best** avodas Hashem **will** have some selfishness and self-seeking mixed in it, and He **still** loves that and is very proud of you.

There is no way to know what to respond to your plight above. There are probably 10 different ways to give you 'chizzuk'. But why put off the inevitable if you are actually right, that you cannot do this? If you really are screwed up (as I am), then chizzuk may 'convince' you to hold off for today....and then just plotz tomorrow. So who needs a slow death?

And if you are wrong about yourself and you **can** do this (meaning, you are really *not* an addict), then you need chizzuk!

You need to get to know yourself a bit better, I think.

But one thing is for sure: you are preoccupied with some of the wrong things. Madreigos, rather than simple basic behavioral solutions.

You said "I feel like the battle is all on me." That was precious. It says it all so well. But it is not true, really. It is all on you because you make it so. Cuz you insist on beating it and beating it alone. When you 'open up' to another, it is not 'open' enough.

You ask me what I do. I do behaviors like:

*having other guys you talk to **in person** who are recovering successfully, who are safe, and who understand exactly what you are talking about cuz they have been there.

*staying away from people who think they are "healed" - that is a machloh, for it will always lead you astray to think you too, are healed - too early.

*getting explicit with Hashem. Explain to him you crazy and lustful urges - and explain them to the safe people you find to talk with. Either Hashem loves you and is really with you - or He is not. Hashem is not only interested in your Torah - He is just as intimately involved with you in your porn and masturbation - He does not approve, but He is with you, feeding you, loving you. Read Tomer Devorah. Talk to Him all the time. And be explicit, even in the middle of Shemoneh esrei. It's what it is *for* - not flowers and perfume, but the *truth*!

* "How do I just let go" - Let go of your self-hatred. Let go of tomorrow. Daven for today only, not for tomorrow. Stay away from davening for a good tomorrow, week, month or even a good year (even on Rosh Hashonoh!), and certainly not for a good lifetime - it is all poison, for *it does not work* for people like you. It reinforces the fantasy that you have power, and that you are attached to anything but **today**. Give up on tomorrow (fear) and yesterday (guilt), and 'live with the times' - Today! Asher Anochi metzav'cho HAYOM. Only one day at a time is surely all He wants from you and me. But that cannot be 'just words'. Remember that you are sick and need special care. You need to be fed life in little bite-size pieces by Hashem, your Sweet Tatty. It's OK. Learn how to do this.

You cannot surgically let go of your *desire* and 'give that to Hashem to take care of'. You cannot only let go of your *problem*. People say it, but it is silly. The only thing you can try and aim to let go of is **everything**. To give your life and everything in it - only for today - to Hashem. *Not* perfectly - no one can do that! - but at least *a bit*. Put your life in His hands.

Too many of us, as frum people, assume we put the rest of our lives in Hashem's hands, of course. So when we see the yuchy lust, we are told, "give it to Hashem to take care of or to remove" - and technically, that's good advice. But it is not the whole picture.

The truth is, that if we are frum yidden and still using porn, fantasy, and masturbation on a regular and repeated basis, we are messed up as Jews and as people - not just "OK people with a lust problem." We usually are struggling magnificently to run our lives, to orchestrate everything and feel that if only everybody would follow my lead and do as I direct them, things would be fine - but what can I do? Shikshas dress *this* way, my wife doesn't do *that*, The yetzer hora is so strong, I am not getting a good shidduch, my boss doesn't pay me enough (the idiot), the economy is terrible, my job is boring, the mother-in-law (enough said), my kids drive me crazy, etc., etc.... If *I* could direct it all, then it'd be better - maybe even OK. In other words, "Hashem (b'mchilas kvodo) obviously does *not* know what He is doing, and needs to ask me how to fix things!"

'Letting go' can't be just in our lusts - it needs to be in our whole lives as they are today, or it is useless. It means accepting that Hashem makes no mistakes, and that *we* are the ones who are responsible for our own actions - our own **best** thinking got us in this mess. That we need His help and do not *really* know what we are doing.

And that is the 3rd step. If we did not do a 1st step and write down exactly what we have been doing with lust from the first time we tasted it till today, and unless we share it all with another person who is safe and understands and in recovery, then we will not accept our problem correctly. Once we have done that, we should be able to accept step 2: that since we screwed up our inner (and maybe even outer) lives so badly, it is possible that G-d Himself can indeed help us out. Then we can give out lives - just a little bit more than ever before - to G-d. Not that it really changes anything, for He is going to run it all anyhow! But admitting it and accepting it is what it's all about. That's step 3. And it is just a start at it. Making a decision - a start. We get better and better at it, be"H, till we leave this world.

And it is an entirely different life.

Tell what you think. Sorry if I am being too pushy (and too wordy).

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Re: whats the first step

Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 15 Aug 2011 14:23

thanks. I want to make an inventory but I'm not sure where to share it. I dont have ANY frum friends my age here, and none that I know are in recovery. My town is small, and I am only here for another 2 weeks. Any practical advice for that?

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