

A suggestion/possible strategy

Posted by skaybaltimore - 28 May 2012 17:39

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Note/disclaimer: I would only suggest this rather paradoxical/non-linear approach for those who have tried repeatedly to take a more direct, head-on approach, and have not found that approach to be helpful.

It could be important -- and helpful -- to accept that pornography is actually a "natural" reaction/replacement for something much more substantial and important that's missing in our lives, rather than merely labeling it a sin/perversion. So rather than attacking it and attempting to place it (and ourselves) in some sort of moral straight jacket, let's approach it as a signal to us that something much more meaningful is missing in our lives. Then it might be possible to break the hold it has on us, if we look deeply into ourselves to see what exactly it is that we truly desire (i.e. our ideal Aishes Chayil/Soul Mate, etc.) so we can begin to understand what it is that's missing in our lives.

We can then take that as a new starting point and build upon our newly created thought/image/ideal through focused meditation/concentration/visualization. The more we do that, and the clearer that image becomes, the stronger our attraction and movement is in that direction, and the weaker our compulsion to run to switch on the porn. In essence, we will be crafting our own object of desire, rather than allowing the porn wheel to run itself (and us along with it) on autopilot, but it will be based upon a much deeper knowledge of ourselves and true inner desires. In that way, the hold that porn has over us might be finally broken, or at least diminished significantly.

Remember...thoughts are not just "thoughts" -- they're actually more like "things", and these "thought-things" have a much greater impact on our environment and our lives than we've been lead to believe. So the more our thoughts are in line with what we really truly desire, the more our lives will be positive/constructive, vs negative/destructive.

The thing about all addictions is that they always take on a life of their own, and begin to run in a thoughtless/auto pilot sort of fashion. Our minds have become lazy with despair, and we rarely stop to think if we can ever regain a mastery over our own thought processes. A lot of that has to do with living in a Christianized/Satanic world in which evil is loved and good is hated, which is the complete antithesis of what Hashem has commanded us to do -- love good and hate evil. The people behind the dark side of this world are VERY diligent in what they do and the way in which they do it; much more so than most of us. So by taking this one step towards reversing that process, and becoming the director, rather than the directed, of this one most significant part of our lives, we can begin to turn the tide and reverse what we believed up to this point we had no control over.

Remember...this world is ripe with all sorts of potential addictions, because Hashem has built in numerous pleasure principles that are inherent in this world. The discipline of Judaism is extreme -- we do not have the "luxury" of the ascetics who deny worldly pleasures, and we do not have the "luxury" of the hedonists who ignore the consequences of our pleasures. We must

balance pleasure with accountability. It's the most austere discipline of all. And the masters of the dark arts KNOW that. So they intentionally fan the flames of ALL the possible pleasures, with the knowledge that most people will succumb to their ploys and become trapped in their bottomless pits of addiction. (And this is not just theoretical. The way the Afghans were able to defeat the Russians was by sending in prostitutes with opium and other drugs to the Russian soldiers. In a relatively short period of time, the Russian soldiers were so weakened by this tactic that they were able to be overcome by a weaker enemy, because that weaker enemy had weakened THEM to the point that they could be defeated.)

Yet, as R' Nachman states: "The whole world is a narrow bridge (i.e. if we take a step to the left, we fall into asceticism, if we take a step to the right, we fall into hedonism), but the ikar/essence, is to not be afraid."

That's really quite an amazing dictate, when you think about it. One would logically think that after presenting such a graphic picture of walking a tightrope across this world, the mandate would flow to be VERY afraid. But R' Nachman states the exact opposite -- to NOT be afraid. Because fear and despair go hand in hand, and once a soul falls into despair, it loses the energy and desire to even THINK it can extricate itself. But once a soul has become ensnared in despair, what can it do?

One of the areas that has probably been the most neglected in the Jewish psyche over the past 2,000 years is *dimyon* – imagination. I believe the reason for this is twofold: 1. The line between true prophecy and false prophecy is a hair's breadth, and to help insure that false prophets do not proliferate, extreme safeguards have been placed up any attempt to explore that most vital area of our awareness. 2. In order to reduce the persecutions by Christians against Jews, who are, after all, a nation of prophets, even further attempts have been made to purge that part of our Jewish identity in order to survive in this hostile, anti-Jewish environment. Over millennia we have become more accustomed to surviving than living, and just like a survivor of extreme child abuse, our collective psyche has become compartmentalized and stunted. In order to reclaim the vitality that is necessary to combat the calculated and scheduled attacks by the masters of the dark arts, we need MORE access to our most vital resource – our *dimyon* – not less.

By taking the steps to actively cultivate this most essential tool, we can create the means through which to counterbalance addictions that convince us that we are powerless and that our G-d is powerless, and at the same time clearing the channels through which Hashem can personally guide us.

In order to help us achieve this most daunting task, 2 key elements need to be in place. 1. We must at all times link all of our efforts to the clear acknowledgment of Hashem as the One, True Creator. 2. Using a standard Mussar technique, the more detail we can include in our visualization(s), the more effective they will be.

The essential question at this point is: "Okay...how do we accomplish this visualization process? There are lots of books written about it, but in truth, it's rather simple (it's simple to do, but it takes time to develop). To begin with, ground all attempts in a request to Hashem to help us. And know that we have within ourselves MUCH more ability than we give ourselves credit for (another byproduct of a long, protracted *gallus*). Then start simple. Take a simple object, like a candle, for example, sit quietly, focus on your breathing, slow it down, look at the

candle, close your eyes, and see how long you can see the flame in your mind's eye. When you lose that image, open your eyes again, look at the candle, close your eyes again, and see how long you can see the flame in your mind's eye. I guarantee that if you take 5 minutes a day to do this, in a reasonably short period of time, you'll see that this latent ability/talent will become stronger. What you're accomplishing is strengthening the "muscles" of your dimyon/imagination. (An advanced technique of this time honored "meditate on a candle" technique is to be able to see the candle, or whatever object you are holding in your mind's eye, WITH YOUR EYES OPEN. You have the ability to literally superimpose an image you are holding in your mind's eye while looking at the world with your eyes wide open. THAT'S quite an amazing achievement indeed!!)

At some other time of the day, sit quietly and ask yourself: "What type of woman/relationship do I really desire. What are her qualities? What does she look like? What color is her hair; her eyes? How does she look when she smiles? What sort of partner do I really seek in this world/lifetime? What sorts of things would we talk about? How would we raise our children? What are the most important values that she should possess? Does she have to be drop dead gorgeous, or are qualities like compassion, humor, compatibility more important? (These are just examples; use your own thoughts to generate the types of things you want to ask/require of your "ideal" aishes chayil.)

When you combine the practice of visualization training with plumbing the depths of what qualities you desire – both physical and spiritual – in your ideal partner, then you very well might see a significant drop off in the pull that porn has in your life.

I would also suggest that it's important to explore what qualities we possess in ourselves, in order to better understand and balance that which we plan to bring to the table with our object-of-desire aishes chayil; after all, relationships are a two way street, and one can't expect to draw to oneself an ideal partner if one isn't willing to expect the same sort of ideal/compatible and complementary characteristics in oneself. And again...at every step of the way, maintain the connection with Hashem and ask Hashem to aid/guide you along the way. This is by no means a push-button microwave "I want it NOW" process. It requires patience and persistence. This is not a sprint; it's a marathon – the marathon of the rest of our lives.

Finally, any new endeavor must begin with the seed of desire -- in this instance, the desire to make a change in our lives. If we've hit rock bottom with all of our other attempts, we might just be ready to attempt this new direction/change.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by Dov - 31 May 2012 19:12

Dear skaybaltimore,

First off, more power to you, chaver!

Please help me, here. The only goal I am aware I have on this forum is to share my experience - as you are trying to do. If I perceive potential complications in some people using ideas someone shares - that *work* for them - I will describe my concerns. I mean not to villify at all, rather to report from the field. My assumption is that between you and me and others who pipe in, the safest way to *apply* our ideas will eventually be made clear, with Hashem's help. Rather than trying to "show the path", I hope that what I post continues to be a way Hashem uses me to help some sex addicts like us open up and share, clarify what works *and how to use it*. As the AA's taught me, "we are not *experts* on anything - least of all addiction" - but we have experience, strength and hope to share.

One thing He has given me to see is that my lust to see my own recovery as a 'journey of understanding and education', was actually one of the things that *kept* me drunk. For years and years (while acting out my lust) I studied the Yetzer Hora, read great (and some not so great) Breslov material, and psych journals in religious Jewish magazines, etc...I even tried the 12 steps (privately, of course!) as presented by Dr. Pat Carnes in his books. I tried getting married - and that made my addiction grow by leaps and bounds, as most addicts discover. With all my best efforts, I ended up sicker and more self-obsessed (and made my wife miserable, too). And for me and many addicts I have met, *any* self-obsession is part of the problem, not the solution.

It seems to me that becoming convinced that I 'finally got it' was the very *last* thing I needed. The terrific pain of my continued failure eventually led to more emotional self-immolation, including more medicating by sexual acting out and more self-obsession - working ever more desperately to *figure this thing out*. So in the long run, the smarter I got, the drunker I got. But for you, it seems to be working well.

In the end, after being in recovery and sober for a year or two, I came to agree with what the AA's wrote (and italicized) on page 39 of AA,

But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be *absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge*. This is a point that we wish to emphasize and to re-emphasize. To smash home upon our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience.

I could never have seen or admitted that to myself while I was "working on quitting." Only after a year or two of sobriety and following the directions of the sober addicts I was with did I come to see my limitations. So my experience in recovery was more like na'aseh venishmah - I needed

to be sober first and get recovery and insight later. The experience that is working for you is more like *nishmah vena'aseh* - and of course that's great to share. The important thing is that ***it is working for you*** - which is why I probed quite plainly in order for me to learn from you, not teach you.

Is sharing all that with you being aggressive? If it is, I will listen - and then please, please suggest for me a way to say it in a non-aggressive manner so that I can work my 12th step better. Or tell me to keep my thoughts and experience more to myself and I will try that in some manner and see how it goes.

- Dov

PS. If you'd like to speak to me directly so I really understand better, you can have my phone number whenever you want.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy

Posted by ontheedgeman - 31 May 2012 19:44

wow this thread took an entirely different turn than I expected! I love it!

First, a prayer, that my words not be hurtful or arrogant to anyone, and if so, it's inadvertent and they should roll off your skin like dust on a new car.

I've always considered myself the master of humility, second to Moshe Rabeinu perhaps... nothing bothered me, I never really get angry except for totally legitimate reasons where people say the wrong thing to me and I have to defend Gcd's honour (not mine, nope). Especially my wife's comments. Otherwise my humility knows no bounds and I'm the paragon of humility and everyone should learn to be humble from me.

Then someone suggested to me that, if I do have explosive outbursts when people "cross the line", maybe my humility isn't what I think it is. So lately, I've been thinking (danger sign!) maybe a humble person wouldn't actually flip out when his wife crosses the line. Maybe, if I was truly humble, I'd actually just accept that her comments hurt me, and be mindful of the pain she has caused, watch it, follow it, etc... and apologize if what brought on her criticism was caused by something I did (or failed to do).

The real test for how my programme is working or not working is how my ego responds when

Gcd sends His messengers to test me. Whether it's a post that challenges me on my own recovery, or something a family member says to me - the real test of whether I'm letting go of my resentments, turning everything over to Gcd, practising what I preach, how I respond and how I watch feelings.

Dov saw something in your posts that most people would never see. I'm jealous. How can someone as great as me and as humble as me, be surpassed in wisdom by Dov? oh well. The point is - maybe Dov was aggressive, maybe not... It's neither here nor there.

If you have been clean for 24 hours, that's great. Most people on this site are great at quitting for 24 hours. They've done it many many times. Just not in a row.

Part of recovery is not acting out; the other part, as Dov outlines, is much more.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by Dov - 31 May 2012 20:19

One more time...I bet he is doing quite well, actually. And I am not that humble. Ask my wife.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by skaybaltimore - 31 May 2012 20:52

@Dov

Regarding your 10:12 P.M. post:

Judging from the quote from AA that you state was very helpful to you, I think we are clearly coming at this from completely different angles.

Aside from that particular quote, I also tend to see the whole "how many days have you been clean?" routine differently as well. It works for some people, and if it works for you that's great. That's the area in which I felt you were pressing aggressively; it had nothing to do with the content of what you were sharing. I don't believe in "jinxes", so it's not that I believed that by saying that the approach I've recently adopted was working for me for x number of days everything would collapse. It was more along the line of thinking that I'd already stated clearly, although not in AA or SA terminology, that it was working for me, and that time would tell how

LONG it would continue to work. I was satisfied that I'd presented my situation in a clear and honest way.

The fact that you have certain reservations about how recovery is supposed to work , and questioned the validity of the approach I've chosen, is coming from you. Specifically, if you believe that self-knowledge has nothing to do with recovery, then that's your belief, but it's definitely NOT mine, especially considering that a major part of "ourselves" is the very breath of Hashem that he breathed into us!! And that's one of the big differences that I see between a typical 12-step approach and a more Torah-oriented approach. The "Big Book" folks really didn't have the 2,000 years of wisdom in their world view that someone attached to the Torah has. Hence, my decision to join this site. I've been a part of 12 step programs over the years, and while they have validity for a lot of people, that approach is clearly not the only approach when it comes to dealing with addiction(s), and it's not the course I choose for myself. But I certainly wish you success in your approach, as I'm sure you do in mine.

The way I see it...a human being is an amazing hybrid of both body and soul. In short, the bodily senses are the means through which the soul "sees" the material world. And images -- especially erotic, pornographic images -- are among the most powerful, influential images imaginable. The WAY in which the soul is affected by such images is inestimable. And without a true understanding of how this process works, so that it can function properly, as Hashem intended, things constantly run amok. For me, proper understanding is essential, so that the resulting actions are balanced, and not by-products of addictive choices. This is strongly related to tuning into our conscience, something all addicts are adept at tuning out. By slowing things down through meditation (really, nothing more than quiet listening), one is able to more clearly hear one's own conscience, which then comes to help a person on the brink of making a choice between an addictive and a non-addictive action.

@ontheedgeman

I honestly have no idea what you're trying to say, especially the reference to what Dov did (or did not) see in my posts. What I clearly acknowledge is that self-deception is a major part of continued addiction(s), and that it's possible to get lost in self-discovery when it gets tangled up with self-deception, as it often does. But that's a risk I'm willing to take at this stage, since more traditional approaches have not worked for me in the past. And I'm certainly not suggesting that someone follow my path; I'm simply stating the path I've chosen for myself.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by Dov - 31 May 2012 22:04

[skaybaltimore wrote on 31 May 2012 20:52:](#)

The fact that you have certain reservations about how recovery is supposed to work , and

questioned the validity of the approach I've chosen, is coming from you. Specifically, if you believe that self-knowledge has nothing to do with recovery, then that's your belief, but it's definitely NOT mine

Appreciated well all that you wrote except one part: I never questioned your recovery nor the validity of your approach. All I did was ask you if it was "working" in the way I understand "working". But you clarified that we see things differently and that's cool. Hey, you wrote that you recognize the limitations of laying it all on self-analysis, so it's not like I was coming off the moon....or Pittsburgh, for that matter.

Finally, just for the fun of showing more common ground between us than you may realize, the quote from AA was definitely *not* helpful to me to **get** sober! I would never have understood or appreciated it until I was already sober for a year or two. I *got* sober simply because I could no longer afford to act out my lust any more, not because of any inspiration, respiration, or . Of course, I was still a sitting duck because my character defects made life unbearable for me, but didn't know that at the time...

The line from AA was only helpful in **keeping** me sober after that fear-based sobriety started to run out. Just like other things, such as *lust*. The lust I feel at times, helps keep me sober more than anything else I know. It's a gift from Hashem that keeps me honest, reminds me of my limitations, and allows me to resume working my steps when I start to spiritually coast. Lust never *helped* me before - it was always the enemy. Now, it's the 'burr under the saddle', as are my pain, fears, pride, and resentments. Kind of ironic, no? Mishlei: *birtzos Hashem darkei ish, gam oivov yashlim itto*. Beautiful.

Hey, have a nice day in Baltimore, or wherever your sky is! (what's a skay?)

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by skaybaltimore - 01 Jun 2012 00:07

whatever

@Dov

Thanks for the further clarification of your position. It's always a shame to see things break down due to semantics.

And "skay" is for my initials -- s. k. (hence, "skay").

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by skaybaltimore - 06 Jun 2012 23:08

Well...so far, so good.

I think my reluctance to post positive progress updates has something to do with a sense/concern that the yetzer is now pushing me from behind, rather than confronting me face-to-face. There's always an uneasiness accompanying "success" in this battle -- sort of like envisioning the yetzer smiling from behind, as if it's thinking: "Now this schlemiel thinks he's got me under control. Man...is HE in for a surprise".

But regardless...progress is progress, especially in this area. The thing I've found most helpful -- along with all of the readings, meditations, and visualizations -- has been to simply not turn on the porn laptop. I have 3 laptops, and 1 desktop, but only 1 (an old, very outdated IBM laptop) of the 4 has ever been used for porn. I simply have not turned it on. Maybe all the years of relying on porn for "inspiration" has resulted in me now being able to more easily avoid masturbation without porn.

To be continued...

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by Machshovo Tova - 07 Jun 2012 18:04

[skaybaltimore wrote on 06 Jun 2012 23:08:](#)

the yetzer is now pushing me from behind, rather than confronting me face-to-face.

That's why we daven

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Hatzlacha

MT

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by skaybaltimore - 07 Jun 2012 19:16

[Machshovo wrote on 07 Jun 2012 18:04:](#)

That's why we daven

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Hatzlacha

MT

Exactly.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by Dov - 10 Jun 2012 05:39

Yeah. I usually do better without the porn.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by skaybaltimore - 10 Jun 2012 12:14

[ontheedgeman wrote on 29 May 2012 13:18:](#)

Hear you loud and clear. Visualization is totally under-utilized. There is a great book on it called Visions of a Compassionate World, written right before WWI. So good. Chassidic too. I just got the book over the weekend and was able to read the intro. Great suggestion. Thanks.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by skaybaltimore - 10 Jun 2012 21:26

[dov wrote on 10 Jun 2012 05:39:](#)

Yeah. I usually do better without the porn.

Obviously. And yet, that's the real paradox/irony -- I simply hadn't taken the time to realize that it was that simple -- to simply not turn on the laptop. I had been running on some sort of autopilot reasoning that automatically turned on the laptop for the pleasure I (erroneously) believed it would bring. And while it would be false to say that it brought no pleasure, the type of pleasure it brought was momentary, not lasting.

And THAT'S where the meditation and visualization came in. It gave me the "break" I needed to reexamine the habits that had been running unattended all these years, as if they'd taken on a life of their own. And almost immediately upon seeking a new perspective, the tape stopped playing -- as if a spell had been broken.

So as I've said before...at least for the moment, the power that seemed to me just a few weeks ago to be insurmountable, now seems almost foolish by contrast. But I'm acutely aware that this is by no means the end of the struggle. It IS, however, quite an amazing beginning.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by Dov - 11 Jun 2012 04:47

There is *no* situation in my life - no matter how bad it could *ever* be, R"l - that cannot be made even **worse**, by me acting out on top of it. None. It is never, ever worth it for me to act out.

I believe that 100% with every fiber of my being based on - not the Torah, thank G-d - but upon my own bitter experience as a powerless and hopeless addict.

Since this is primarily a disease of *forgetting*, may I remember that simple fact all day today, Amein.

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Re: A suggestion/possible strategy
Posted by skaybaltimore - 11 Jun 2012 11:22

[dov wrote on 11 Jun 2012 04:47:](#)

There is *no* situation in my life - no matter how bad it could *ever* be, R"l - that cannot be made even **worse**, by me acting out on top of it. None. It is never, ever worth it for me to act out.

I believe that 100% with every fiber of my being based on - not the Torah, thank G-d - but upon my own bitter experience as a powerless and hopeless addict.

Since this is primarily a disease of *forgetting*, may I remember that simple fact all day today, Amein.

Whatever works for you, then that's what you should stick with. I think, however, that we're approaching this from very different perspectives. And that's why I stated at the beginning of this thread that my way of tackling this might possibly be helpful for people for whom your approach was NOT working. So it's not a matter of pitting one against the other; it's merely acknowledging that the 12-step approach is not necessarily the only way to achieve sobriety.

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