

The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do. I eventually won't care

Posted by maybethistime - 20 Sep 2012 20:13

To me the what really defines addiction is its power over my drives and will power. There are times when I truly want to stop. Then there are times when my desire to stop is relegated to the that group of desires that are so utopian and theoretical in their makeup that they lose all practical significance. Like world peace or "getting in shape" for the average joe. We all would like to get in shape and stay healthy but it just never seems to be urgent enough to warrant a significant action. It just gets shoved aside to a bucket list type of realm with other things that we would "like to do" and that are "good ideas". Over the long years of my struggle I know that there were many times where I reached a true heartfelt resolution to stop. The "rock bottom" the "make it or break it", "that's it no more-period"... The thing is, after two weeks, a day or two months (my personal best streak) there comes a point when the resolve is just not there. The desire and determination are simply not there, and situations that up until then might not necessarily have been a struggle casually sneak up on me and cause me to slip, and down I go. Sometimes I spiral out of control with an almost determined urgency, and other times I can stabilize for a period, but overall a leak has sprung and I begin to sink both practically (by acting out) and emotionally. And I can never seem to really catch myself. Everything just seems to be so temporary. I will eventually forget those ideas that brought me motivation, hope and inspiration. Life is such that the struggle loses consistency.

So in short the question I would like to pose is this: How do I deal with a problem that tomorrow isn't a problem (at least to me). How can I prepare for the eventuality that I will wake up one day and not really care, both about acting out and about reminding myself why I really don't want to act out and what it has done to my life. The reality is, that if you're not motivated enough to get motivated then you probably won't get motivated. So even if there are things I can read and people I can talk to it doesn't really matter because I won't want to. It's something that I can't fight against, I simply just do not always seem to have the reason to stop or stay stopped.

I would really appreciate some feedback and I need help in getting past this, because until I do I am never really going to ever believe that I can get past this.

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do. I eventually won't care

Posted by nederman - 21 Sep 2012 00:35

I am sorry to tell you that you sound just like an addict who is in denial. This is the typical case where the guy eventually decides that he is powerless and needs the support group in order to keep his commitment. I sure hope I am wrong.

Do you like your days and nights? Do your choices bring you excitement and satisfaction

besides getting you into olam ha-ba? If you valued your life more maybe when you act out you would feel that you are ruining something. Right now using porn is the thing that you enjoy the most, but it doesn't have to be that way.

If you think you may be depressed read Feeling Good by David Burns. Watch out that it's the unauthorized recovery manual around here, this is really 12-step territory ...

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by alexeliezer - 21 Sep 2012 02:34

I agree with you MTS. If you're not motivated, you won't stop. Addicts have a problem getting motivated, because getting clean is a monster struggle. There has to be some big payoff.

You obviously have some motivation, because you do keep trying to quit. It sounds like you're just quitting, though. Nothing more. No real *recovery* -- the personal healing and growth that are so important to a recovering addict. Sure you've had clean streaks. But you were just a dry drunk. Nothing was changing inside you. You simply weren't acting out. (And I venture to guess you were sneaking quick hits here and there.)

Choose a path of real recovery. Real personal growth.

Take back your mind. That's the big payoff. Your mind. Yours again.

Will that work for you? Is there anything more precious than your mind?

Ask someone with Alzheimer's. Or ask me. My mind was overridden with lustful thoughts morning to night. I'm happy to say that's no longer the case. I'm living real.

You only get one life. And one mind. You can still turn things around. But it's not a "streak" you're after. It's recovery.

Gmar chasima tova and welcome!

Alex

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by silentbattle - 21 Sep 2012 04:15

Forget about addiction or not (at least for a moment - I'm not an expert, i just think that sometimes people get scared off by that). I'd like to make some points that are true regardless of level of control, or addiction.

Yes, there are times when we feel inspired, and that inspiration wanes, and other desires come back in full force, wearing away our commitment and determination. We've all been there - really. Almost any one on this site can tell you about their personal struggles, how they battled for years - decades, even - and kept falling.

Realize, first of all, that falling doesn't mean you've lost. Not on any level - even though inside you may feel like since you've fallen, might as well keep going...

To answer your question, though, I'm going to say something along the lines of what Alexeliezer said. Trying to stop is like trying not think of a pink elephant. It just isn't going to work, certainly not for long. It makes it all about the struggle, and you can only hold on for so long.

The key is to find happiness in other parts of your life, to see and really the joy and happiness in staying clean, and living the life you really want to - becoming the person you're proud of, I think.

Does that make sense to you?

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by maybethistime - 21 Sep 2012 08:44

for the record I did give SA a serious try, but i never really felt comfortable both with the people and the ideas. Also in the group I was in the only people with significant sober periods who weren't constantly starting over and showing up to meetings depressed were people over the age of 40. I didn't see it work for people my age group (I am 23). Which is another issue that might be connected with this one, and that is how many young people really recover (and how do you define recovery, if not a long period of sobriety). Also I am aware of the bottom up

approach of building up yourself first and then hoping recovery will stick, because the problems the addiction is coming to numb will no longer need an addiction. I am also seeing a therapist and I am making really good progress.

The problem for me seems to be that when I fall I fall hard. I don't just slip once, I slip for a 20 hour long bender. So any continuity of feeling good about being clean or any progress in doing and focusing on the things in life that make me feel good are completely disrupted. This motivational inconsistency effects not only my ability to stop but also my ability to continue going in other parts of my life. Believe me, when i am sober i feel great and am able to do the things I enjoy, and even the things i enjoy less but that bring me satisfaction (like learning). It just that that all seems to come to an end with a fall.

The thing is, being that I have been going through this for years (accept for the therapy, that has only been going on like four months or so) I can't seem to shake this feeling that I am in a never ending struggle. Both with the addiction and subsequently with being in the drivers seat of my life. i wish could build my self up, Problem is i seem to be buiding on quicksand.

Please help and thank you for youre responses.

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by nederman - 21 Sep 2012 11:35

You can make SA work but you have to work the steps, get a sponsor, the whole thing. If you start out that you don't believe in it then it's not going to work.

Why do you want to stop?

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by alexeliezer - 21 Sep 2012 17:16

Let me add another question:

How clean are you when you're clean?

Are you really guarding your eyes in all settings?

Are you deflecting all fantasies and images before they affect you?

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by silentbattle - 23 Sep 2012 05:33

The point is to focus on how good you're feeling while you are clean - and really focus on it. That's part of staying clean, that's why you go to therapy, and/or (take your pick of) meetings, phone calls with friends, sponsors, partners, logging onto GYE and posting. Remind yourself. It's too easy to forget about it when things are easy...until they're not.

Posting and talking to people also helps you keep tabs on how you're doing. Usually, when a fall is coming, you see it coming- if not from a mile away, then at least far enough away to make a quick right turn and hightail it outta there. But when we're alone, we can miss it because we're not paying attention, or more often, just ignore it, or say things like, "but I neeeed this (insert whining tone - we've all heard ourselves say it)!" Or, "it feels so good, I just CAN'T resist!"

As far as whether younger people can get clean? look around on this site. I was in my 20s when I started here, and I was clean for well over a year and a half. Maybe even 2 years? Not sure.

More importantly, though, it's all excuses. You're trying to say the old argument, that for guys like you (whether because of age, high sex drive, particular situation) it's just not possible to really stop.

But it is - if you decide that it's worth it.

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by nederman - 23 Sep 2012 13:14

True. You can actually tell it to yourself, argue with your subconscious thoughts which generate that terrible feeling. Tell yourself "I cannot get aroused further unless I choose to think lewd

thoughts. It doesn't grow by itself. If I start doing something engaging pretty soon I will turn around and the feeling will be gone."

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 23 Sep 2012 16:47

one thing I have done, which has been moderately helpful, is write a detailed, strongly emotional letter to myself about how much pain I am in when I fall, that way there is documented proof that there is a problem for when I dont feel there is one. It's easy to mood swing from motivated to forgetting why you have made the boundaries (one of the reasons for the boundaries), and having this reminder is helpful. it might not make you feel like you did when you wrote it, but hopefully it will be enough of a deterrent from doing it again.

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by silentbattle - 24 Sep 2012 04:39

That can work - the problem is that sometimes I feel like I'm in so much pain right now, I'll take the pain and suffering later if I can alleviate some of the pain now, or even the lack of pleasure.

But if I focus on the pleasure of staying clean and feeling good about it, then I can respond to my desires directly, fire with fire - you can't offer me any pleasure greater than the deep feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment I have right now from staying clean!

And anyone who's fought back and succeeded, even if just for a day, SHOULD know that good feeling.

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 24 Sep 2012 22:15

i hear that. you need to decide what you want, and incorporate that into the letter. Committ that those goals will be the goals, despite how you feel. A moshol-I want to get into shape. I really do, and I committed to go to gym at least a few times a week. and I go. and I get on an eliptical, and start going. and then it gets really hard, and I feel like I am done. I look at the time and about 1/6 of the time has passed. great. I can either give in to the difficulty, hop off and have that much trouble later, or I can keep going, because that is what I came to do. after I am done, I feel exhausted. I am sweating, can barely walk and add weights and I cant even lift my arms. I am ready to go to bed for 2 days. but then after a bit of time I feel really good. It's not exactly parallel, but I think it captures the point. bhatzlacha!

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by nederman - 25 Sep 2012 01:23

You can also argue with yourself. The urge to get off the elliptical is caused by a common cognitive error called "magnification," basically you tell yourself that you can't stand it. It's a subconscious thought and it creates the feeling. You can refute that thought with an conscious thought "I am magnifying. I cannot know now how tired I really am. Let's keep going until I actually have to stop." Then you watch yourself keep going and then next time you get that tired feeling you feel less tired.

The advantage of this cognitive approach I have just described is that you actually remove your yetzer ha-ra. If you use a commitment (basically a watered down neder) you feed the irrational belief that you are powerless and will not choose good over bad unless you are forced. See the Mesillas Yesharim, who says that if people stop and think the yetzer ha-ra doesn't stand a chance.

See Feeling Good by David Burns for a list of other cognitive distortions and actual stories of people who learned to think to their own advantage.

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Re: The problem that isn't always a problem. What can I do.I eventually wont care
Posted by strugglingandstrivngBT - 25 Sep 2012 13:32

interesting. I'm not sure the two are contradictory, but I very much like how you phrased it.

thanks!

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