

Still Gotta Work on Myself

Posted by skeptical - 12 Jun 2013 23:45

After 183 days and 3 hours (6 months, 1 day and 3 hours) of working really hard on myself and staying clean, I had a fall this afternoon.

I am posting this here because I had made up that in the event of such a situation, I would be open and honest with my wife (unthinkable a short 6 months ago!) and everyone here. I will post more of my thoughts here after I tell my wife.

As I have encouraged others and will continue to do so, I am picking myself up, not getting down about it and continuing on with my life.

More Soon.

=====
====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself

Posted by skeptical - 14 Jul 2013 09:51

I have been asked to post the method I use to stay clean. To be honest, when I first started, I didn't really have any method. I just decided to stop and I did. Along the way, I've picked up some gems of wisdom and found myself giving them over to others who have also seen some success using them.

I will attempt to start posting some of those tips here. As we are on a continuing journey, I'm sure I will always be adding things to it.

#1: A commitment to stop -

This is the first thing that must be made. Sometimes this comes from inspiration that we see, or something that we feel. I know for me, I started coming to Guard Your Eyes and snooped around without any commitment for a few months. Many times I had the browser open with one tab on GYE and the others on pure shmutz. I was here, but without the commitment, so no

change was happening. Then one day, particularly after being steeped in garbage, I decided that I had had enough. I decided to stop.

Many people on here say that they want to stop. The thing is that though they have that feeling, a large part of them doesn't **really** want to let go of the stuff. It simply feels too good.

We need to make a firm decision. Have we had enough or not? Are we ready to give up the pleasures in order to lead a much happier life?

If the answer to that is yes, we're on our way.

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by Dov - 15 Jul 2013 02:09

Dearest Skeptical person I know,

How exactly was your willingness to 'finally be done with it' demonstrated?

I bet you had the desire to quit and felt you 'really had enough this time' many times over the past couple of years, no?

I would bet that this time was different because you were willing to take real steps - to do something real to turn your back on it. Sh'vuos, charomim, knasos, and other trash are nice and work a bit sometimes for addicts, for a while. But whether you yourself are an addict or not, I bet you found that there is only one thing that made 'this time' real, for a change: opening up in a more real way to other real people.

For some that may be simply posting on the forum - even using a fake name.

For some that is still too fake, and it is when they start to email, call, chat, or really get real with the other posters (even while using their fake name).

For some none of that is enough. It's still to make-pretend. They need *real-er*, and they call or meet with other sick people getting well, look into their eyes, and discover that this thing is real. For them there is simply no substitute, in the end.

PS. You talk about getting onto the right track, and that's great. But as many have found, even the 'great act' of opening up, eventually fizzles out. I try to use it as a lifestyle, rather than an event.

Please go on, though....where's #2?

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself

Posted by skeptical - 15 Jul 2013 09:18

OK, so I blathered on the well-worn soapbox a bit again. Sorry.

Dov

How exactly was your willingness to 'finally be done with it' demonstrated?

I would bet that this time was different because you were willing to take real steps - to do something real to turn your back on it. Sh'vuos, charomim, knasos, and other trash are nice and work a bit sometimes for addicts, for a while. But whether you yourself are an addict or not, I bet you found that there is only one thing that made 'this time' real, for a change: opening up in a more real way to other real people.

Honestly? I don't think I did *anything* to demonstrate that I was done with it when I first started

being clean, but I'll start with the past, bring us up to the present and see if we can see a different pattern here.

This whole issue started when I was a young teenager. With the internet in its infancy, I had my own computer in my own room and I had hours to explore. I knew that what I was doing was wrong, but I was extremely curious, nervous about the topic, and fascinated. I tried a bunch of times to install filters, but then I would always open them up. I tried to write tiny letters on my calendar to indicate that I would try to stay clean those days, it didn't work. I deleted accounts to certain services but would then just open new ones. I was just way too interested in the stuff.

I got a little older and went away to a yeshiva. While at yeshiva, I was able to stay clean without a problem. I didn't keep track how long I was clean - that wasn't really a thought at the time, so I have no idea how long each stretch was. Each time, I thought I had it beat. Then I would go home and just out of curiosity, I would go to certain programs/sites just to see if the people I used to interact with were still there. Pure stupidity. In reality, I was testing myself to see if I still had the desire for the stuff - and I failed miserably. And you know how it usually goes. Once I fell, I was a failure and would stay down for a while.

Then I started going out, looking for a shidduch. Would I share this most embarrassing side of me with anyone? No way! Once I'd get married, there'd be no reason to do this stuff anyway, I'd have the real thing and then I'd be cured! From the time I met my wife until about 3 months after my chasuna, I was clean. I remember just before my wedding, I was a bit down that I had never really beat my YH before it was game over for him by default. How foolish! Life after marriage is stressful too (who knew?) and one day while at home on the computer, I once again decided to check out places I used to frequent just to make sure the YH was really dead. It wasn't.

A year or two after I got married, while I was at work, my wife came across a browser I had accidentally left open. That was the beginning of years of pain and anguish for the both of us. She was extremely hurt by my actions, and my world was coming crashing down around me. My deepest, darkest secret was out. I may have resolved to stop, but at that point it was only half-hearted. The truth is, I didn't see why she was so bothered, and I didn't feel she really had the right to be. This stuff numbs us, it numbs our feelings, and it did a good job on me. To me, it was just simply a way to wind down at the end of the day and though I knew it was wrong, I felt it was something that was between me and Hashem. My wife on the other hand wouldn't buy that. She started speaking to people in the community and soon Operation-Get-Me-Into-Therapy-Or-The-12-Steps began. I was hurt, frustrated, embarrassed and annoyed. My deepest darkest secret, the one I wouldn't dare breathe to a soul was coming out. I made up in my mind that if certain people would find out, I would leave my wife and kids and get out of town.

After a particularly bad fight, I called my older sister and asked her how to go about getting a divorce. Of course she wanted to know what had gotten into me. I told her everything. My sister was able to calm me down a bit. Probably about a month or so after that, my wife took the kids and left me one night with an ultimatum. Therapy or she's out. I was enraged. I saw this threat as manipulation and I wanted no part of it. If it meant giving her and the kids up, so be it. I once again called my sister who tried to knock some sense into me. Later that night, a compromise was made. My wife came back home and I agreed to chat online with a frum therapist. I had a few sessions, but got the feeling that he was more interested in my money than in me, plus, his hashkafa didn't match mine. So I ended up terminating that. Next, I went to a marriage counselor with my wife. We had a few ok sessions, but again for whatever reason we stopped going.

Around that time, a relative of mine was beginning to go through a divorce that was rumored to have had components of this issue involved. At that point, I was clean for a bit and had resolved to stay clean. Trying to help mend that marriage, I made phone calls to two other relatives and told them of my experience. Again, at that point I wasn't counting days, so I have no idea how long I managed to actually stay clean, but eventually I fell and stayed fallen.

Whenever I was back to my garbage, my wife was breathing down my neck. She was hurt and she showed it. She made snappy, hurtful comments and wanted desperately for me to get help. I resisted.

Then I started a business. About a week before I opened, I decided I was going to start being clean as a zechus for the business to do well. I managed to stay clean for 3 months. I know that it was 3 months this time, because when I came back once again to poke the YH again to make sure he was dead, the program I got on told me that it had been 3 months since my last login.

Fast forward a couple more years. My business had failed a year or so beforehand. I had a lot of free time on my hands. My wife signed me up to the GYE Shmiras Einayim emails. I would sometimes glimpse at them but for the most part, I ignored them. She decided on her own that she had enough being my policeman and for the most part ignored my activities. Because she backed off, my resistance weakened. I joined GYE and discovered a community of frum people who really got each other because they were or had been in the same place. I still wasn't really participating but I was reading.

When I decided to start being clean, I didn't tell a soul, not anyone on here and not anyone in my "real" life. I didn't even **really** make the commitment that I was leaving it all behind for good.

In fact, when I first decided that I was going to start being clean, instead of deleting my accounts in certain programs I had been using, I left them active and on my computer. I didn't filter any of my devices. If I had wanted to use them, I could have done so very easily. But I had decided that I was going to be clean for a short amount of time, around 2 - 2 1/2 weeks. In fact, during that time, people would get on here and chat with me. I think you, Dov, were one of them. When I was asked where I was holding, I was very vague and non-committal. During that time, my wife, not knowing that I had stopped, noticed a difference in how I was interacting with her and the kids, and she made a comment to that effect. That encouraged me to continue. About a month after I had decided to start being clean, I was chatting with someone on here and I started giving chizzuk, sharing some of my experiences when I felt it would help. It wasn't until 6 months later that I started opening up about myself on this thread.

So: I had no **real** commitment, I wasn't **really** opening up to anyone on here. In fact, my real opening up to real people was done years ago and it had little effect then.

Was my last post hypocritical? Maybe it was.

So why did I write it?

Over the past 6 1/2 months, I've spoken to a lot of guys on here. I have about 25 gye email contacts who I am in touch with regularly and some others that I chat with on here. I see clearly that there are those who really **want** to stop and others who **wish** they wanted to stop. Meaning they kind of want to stop because they know it's the right thing to do, but they don't really want to give up the pleasures they have come to know. Stopping doesn't really work when you don't really want to let go. Eventually you're going to go back to it.

While I may not have shown outwardly right away that I was making that commitment, I think at that point it was really there, I just had to discover it and bring it out of myself in my own way.

What made this time different from all the other times?

This time I thought back to all the other times I had tried to stop and figured out a pattern: All the other times, the yetzer harah was telling me to prove I was over it. Then of course, I would get sucked right back into it. I wasn't going to fall for that trick again. There's no need for me to

prove it. I could prove it by minding my own business and by not testing myself.

This time I was part of a community, cheering on others and being cheered. We may be behind screen names, but we care about each other. Giving chizzuk to others reinforced things in my mind over and over again.

This time, I was experiencing real happiness being clean and I wouldn't give that up for anything.

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself

Posted by inastruggle - 15 Jul 2013 09:52

For me commitment means, that I actually think about what I'm about to do, decide to give up on this pleasure for the rest of my life.Period.

I realized that the many other times that I decided to stop before I joined gye I just decided to stop.I didn't give too much thought to what I was doing, all I did was say "ok this time I'm going to stop". If I was honest with my self I knew that I probably would fall again and I was just doing this to make the guilt stop.I would stop for a very brief time (if that), but eventually I would give up and decide to work on it later.I never sat down and thought or wrote out to myself that I am ready to give up doing these activities for the rest of my life. I never made a cheshbon and figured out if I was actually ready to:

Never again be able to have sexual satisfaction until i'm married,and even then, not the way iv'e had it until now, which was on my own terms.

Never again to be able to use this to escape.

Never again to use this to alleviate boredom.

Never again to be able to just completely free myself on the internet.

Never again to be able to relieve my curiosity on various topics.

When I made that commitment, things weren't the same again. Yes, I slipped and fell since then, but I got up because I knew that I was giving it up. It's a process and it can have some ups and downs but until we make the commitment we never start the process.

I don't think that i would have succeeded in stopping without gye even if i would've had proper commitment but that would probably due to the lack of tools. Enter skeptical's tip no. 2.....

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 15 Jul 2013 18:07

Wow, Skep, thanks for that great share!

kol hakavod

keep up your great work

??? ????? ?? ???

and thanks Inna for your post.

the two of you make GYE a great place

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by skeptical - 15 Jul 2013 21:42

#2: Let go of the past, forget the future, live the present -

Many of us are plagued by thoughts of our pasts. We have failed so many times in the past, why will this time be any different? Is it just a matter of time before I'll fail again? Why bother?

We need to realize that each moment, each choice, and each action is independent of the ones

before and after it. We need to let go of the past, it doesn't matter what happened back then (even 5 minutes ago!), and it really doesn't matter if I might fall in the future. We need to live the present and concentrate on making the right decisions when we are faced with them moment by moment.

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 15 Jul 2013 21:57

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by gibbor120 - 15 Jul 2013 23:30

Thanks for that post! You illustrate so clearly some great points.

[skeptical wrote:](#)

So far i am lovin' the 12 Steps of Skepticity

I remember just before my wedding, I was a bit down that I had never really beat my YH before it was game over for him by default. How foolish! Life after marriage is stressful too (who knew?) and one day while at home on the computer, I once again decided to check out places I used to frequent just to make sure the YH was really dead. It wasn't.

First is your determination to BEAT the Y"H. It seems once you stepped out of the ring and stopped trying to BEAT the Y"H, but instead AVOID him things turned around.

The second point is that marriage doesn't solve the problem.

Third, that "stress" is a major factor in acting out.

[skeptical wrote:](#)

A year or two after I got married, while I was at work, my wife came across a browser I had accidentally left open. That was the beginning of years of pain and anguish for the both of us. She was extremely hurt by my actions, and my world was coming crashing down around me. My deepest, darkest secret was out. I may have resolved to stop, but at that point it was only half-hearted. The truth is, I didn't see why she was so bothered, and I didn't feel she really had the right to be. This stuff numbs us, it numbs our feelings, and it did a good job on me. To me, it was just simply a way to wind down at the end of the day and though I knew it was wrong, I felt it was something that was between me and Hashem. My wife on the other hand wouldn't buy that. She started speaking to people in the community and soon Operation-Get-Me-Into-Therapy-Or-The-12-Steps began. I was hurt, frustrated, embarrassed and annoyed. My deepest darkest secret, the one I wouldn't dare breathe to a soul was coming out. I made up in my mind that if certain people would find out, I would leave my wife and kids and get out of town.

I can totally identify with your feelings. I remember before my wife found out, I would sometimes get a glimpse of how bad it would be if she ever found out. She may have heard something in the news or read something in a jewish magazine. I would see her reaction and think to myself, "is it really that bad?". I knew by her reaction that in fact it was, but I was totally desensitized.

Thank you so much for that great post!

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by skeptical - 17 Jul 2013 00:31

#3: Negative programming, positive programming -

This is somewhat tied into letting go of the past and the harmful messages we've been telling

ourselves.

I heard this concept from an expert salesman. He says that a lot of sales people are so afraid of the word no, they are constantly coming up with excuses to push off their sales calls. In the morning when they get to the office they tell themselves, "It's way too early, I don't want to seem too eager! I'll make the calls later." A couple of hours pass and then the excuse changes to, "They're probably going out to lunch. I'll call afterwards!" After lunch, time has to be given to allow the prospective client to get settled in by their desks. Then when they're finally ready to make the call, they glimpse at the clock and, "Oh well, the day is practically finished. Don't want to call them as they're getting ready to leave the office! I'll call tomorrow!" The excuses and procrastination are made using different words, but the real message going through their mind is, "They'll say no and I'm going to be a failure as a salesperson!"

In order to combat this, he says, a salesman has to literally talk to himself, smile and say things like, "I am great! I can sell anything to anyone!" Over and over again, you say these things and you're recording it into your subconscious to be retrieved later when you need it.

If we are telling ourselves things like, "It's only a matter of time before I fail, I always fail after X amount of days, when I see such and such I have no choice but to fail, etc." ***we are not failing!*** We are doing exactly what we said we'd be doing!

We need to change these messages and replace them with positive messages. "With Hashem's help, I will make the right choices as they present themselves to me, moment by moment!"

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by skeptical - 17 Jul 2013 02:20

ZemirosShabbos

So I need to limit it to 12?

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by skeptical - 17 Jul 2013 10:29

#4: Be aware of underlying issues -

The only instance the past is important, is to learn from it. What was going on in the past that made us feel the need to indulge?

For most of us, it's to escape parts of our lives that are too painful to live. Let's face it, doing this stuff makes us feel good, *temporarily*. It's like taking a Tylenol - temporary pain relief. All it really does is mask over the feelings for a few fleeting moments. As soon as we're done, the pain comes flooding back, only this time with much much more strength, because now we have the added anguish of having allowed ourselves to sink so low.

We all have underlying issues. Usually it comes in the form of stress, whether it be marriage problems, money issues, anxiety over an upcoming event, self-pity, or anything like that. It's important to realize what issues we've been trying to run away from and learn how to deal with them in a healthy way.

Staying clean without working on the underlying issues is like mowing over weeds without pulling out the root. It may look nice to start out, but eventually, they will grow back.

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself
Posted by cordnoy - 17 Jul 2013 14:54

well said

the answer to that question cannot simply be, "well im addicted."

there must be some reason.

that being said, there are obviously different stages in a person's life

when younger, it might be to experience it

when older, it is probably due to some depression or level of stress

am I understanding you correctly? [Cuz I think I am getting better due to focusing away from self and focusing on what does wife want; although dov says that "I count," im not hearing that, as of yet.]

thanks

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 17 Jul 2013 18:36

[skeptical wrote:](#)

ZemirosShabbos

So I need to limit it to 12?

not at all, like Neil Armstrong, you can have one giant step

=====
=====

Re: Still Gotta Work on Myself

Posted by skeptical - 17 Jul 2013 21:23

cordnoy

am I understanding you correctly? [Cuz I think I am getting better due to focusing away from self and focusing on what does wife want; although dov says that "I count," im not hearing that, as of yet.]

You're understanding me correctly.

And regarding whether or not you count: You **do** count, but right now you're in repair mode so you need to put yourself aside until your relationship is better. Then you can each give and take from each other in a healthy way.

=====
=====