

Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.

Posted by KiviYVY - 18 Mar 2015 19:31

I've been trying something recently that's been helpful. When a temptation comes, instead of trying to fight it, I've been acknowledging it. "Yes, I want to look at her." "I want to stare at that picture. That's what I really want to do." When I acknowledge, I've found that there's no fight, and the temptation subsides much more easily. I got this idea from Dov of the Daily Dose who expressed a similar thought on his amazing noon calls that he's been running over the past 2 weeks. Telling myself that I don't want to look at the girl, or that I shouldn't be looking at the girl is just not honest. I really do want to, and I really FEEL like I should! What's amazing is I'm not as interested in looking (and going further) once I've been honest.

This is in contrast to conventional thinking, which I saw in today's Shemiras Ainayim email. See Below.

I'm curious if other's have tried this approach, and what other approaches have been most helpful.

Kivi

Fraught with Negativity

It would seem that shmiras einayim must be fraught with negativity since we need to keep on nudging ourselves: "Don't look! Keep your eyes down and never mind what you're missing out on!" But constraining unruly urges can be a bitter struggle, because trying to suppress powerful desires is like squashing down a coiled spring that is gathering the strength to jump right back with more force than before.

Having a Positive Attitude

The answer to this, says Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l, is to focus on the benefits of guarding one's eyes. The struggle, then, is no longer between enjoying a certain pleasure and giving it up, but rather between choosing one pleasure in favour of another one.

Sending ourselves positive messages and cultivating a positive attitude might be far more helpful. We could reiterate our basic premise that deep down we really want to stay inside the Torah's safety net and be clean and pure. We're not seeking to be awash in momentary thrills; we choose to rise above that kind of thing. They leave long-term damage and have caused untold havoc in enough areas already. We'll go for the gold - true spiritual wealth and eternal bliss.

This style of thinking is far more effective. We are no longer suppressing our basic desires. Taking pride in preserving one's purity by saying no to forbidden pleasures gives a marvellous boost to the morale.

A spirited and upbeat attitude turns shmiras einayim into an informed preference as to how we wish to live, rather than a difficult sacrifice which drains our energy.

By choosing a more positive attitude, it is no longer necessary to keep the palm pressed down so hard on that coiled spring of lust. The roaring fires of our unruly passions begin to behave themselves and to lose their edge.

This is me, happy to march under the banner of shmiras einayim.

In that vein, the sefer "Veha'eir Eineinu" was written to spell out some of the wonderful benefits and rewards granted (in This World and the Next) for shmiras einayim - guarding one's eyes in our challenging times. It gives the reader clear guidance and tips, and will help him regain his footing when he feels he is losing ground.

In itself, just learning about matters of purity will help us rein in and control our impulses. The Midrash (Nasso, 14:4) promises that whenever we truly toil over a particular Torah teaching, Hashem will remove from us the desire to commit that sin.

We get a kick-start by reminding ourselves that, moment-by-moment, our shmiras einayim is bringing immense satisfaction to Hashem. And the good news is that the real uphill struggle is only for the first bit. The Mesilas Yesharim assures us that kedusha starts off as effort, but then it comes to us as a reward. At first, it's work - following that, it is handed to us as a gift. Only the first struggles are so seriously tough.

The Chinuch writes that if you shut your eyes not to see evil once, it will make it easier to do so many more times. If we restrain ourselves now, we will rejoice in our lot forever after. The yeitzer hora towers like a mountain. But as soon as we kick some of the old habits, the road ahead is surprisingly smoother, and all it takes is a slight but continuous input to keep us in the driver's seat.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 18 Mar 2015 19:49

Works for me very often too.

I WANT to... but I don't HAVE to.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by KiviYVY - 18 Mar 2015 19:53

Even more honest for me is "I FEEL like I have to." That's true for me. Maybe it's calling the Yetzer Hara's bluff. Whatever it is, its helpful.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by cordnoy - 18 Mar 2015 20:03

Here's for trickin' the y"h....dat's a winnin' attitude.

Next time tell him it's a mitzvah to look....dat will certainly confuse him, for he don't know about devil's advocate....oh wait...he is da damn devil! Scratch dat!

WDHW!!!

b'hatzlachah

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by KiviYVY - 18 Mar 2015 20:17

Well, if I feel like its a Mitzvah to look, then I should acknowledge that FEELING too!

I don't see it as tricking the YH, although there's a place for that as the Baalei Mussar say. I see it as taking the wind out of his sails (or really the wind out of my mind's sails).

BTW - What's WDHW?

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by cordnoy - 18 Mar 2015 20:21

I won't argue the point - today.

Whatever Da Hell Works!!!!

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by gibbor120 - 18 Mar 2015 20:36

Very often, conventional thinking hasn't helped us. I'll quote dov (perhaps not exactly) - "Stick with the winners". Writing ideas is easy, staying sober is not. Take advice from those that stay sober, not from those that have great sounding ideas.

The chizzuk emails are a mixed bag, it's just what one person thought, and another decided to put in a chizzuk email.

It's an open forum. Some ideas are good, some are bad, and everything in between. You need to take what works for YOU!

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by skeptical - 19 Mar 2015 18:01

KiviYVY

This is in contrast to conventional thinking, which I saw in today's Shemiras Ainayim email.

I don't see the contrast. It seems to be saying the exact same thing.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by KiviYVY - 19 Mar 2015 18:07

In what way do you see it as the same?

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.

Posted by skeptical - 19 Mar 2015 18:19

KiviYVY

When a temptation comes, instead of trying to fight it, I've been acknowledging it. "Yes, I want to look at her." "I want to stare at that picture. That's what I really want to do." When I acknowledge, I've found that there's no fight, and the temptation subsides much more easily. I got this idea from Dov of the Daily Dose who expressed a similar thought on his amazing noon calls that he's been running over the past 2 weeks. Telling myself that I don't want to look at the girl, or that I shouldn't be looking at the girl is just not honest. I really do want to, and I really FEEL like I should! What's amazing is I'm not as interested in looking (and going further) once I've been honest.

Shmiras Einayim Email

...The struggle, then, is no longer between enjoying a certain pleasure and giving it up, but rather between choosing one pleasure in favour of another one. Taking pride in preserving one's purity by saying no to forbidden pleasures gives a marvellous boost to the morale.

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Same thing, slightly different choice of words. In both scenarios, you are admitting it is a desire, a want. In both scenarios, you are happy choosing the desire to stay clean over the other, because that is what you truly desire more.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.

Posted by KiviYVY - 19 Mar 2015 19:08

In the sense that both are not head-on fights with the YH, you're right. But what I mean to say is very different. I also don't think the SE email is focusing on admitting to the desire.

What I have experienced is that I struggle when I try to restrain the desire, or to even shift the desire to something positive, as suggested by the SE email.

Being honest about the desire is different. There's no struggle, no shifting. It's recognizing it and acknowledging it. It's not making believe its not there, or making believe that I really want something positive. When I want to lust I want only to lust and I don't want anything positive. Positive thoughts are nowhere to be seen - flushed from the system. The only thought I have is, I want to that image, I want to indulge in it and go all the way! OK - just short of "all the way."

That's what I want, and saying that's not what I want and that I really want H' may be what I want to think, but it's not what I'm thinking, and it's not what I want to think when I'm lusting. If I had the sanity to think about the positive holy thoughts of Hashem and Schar and all that, I would really love that. But that's not the honest truth AT THAT MOMENT.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.

Posted by skeptical - 20 Mar 2015 03:38

Once I say that is what I want, with no reason not to go for it, I'm going for it.

That's what I know from my own personal experience.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by KiviYVY - 20 Mar 2015 13:13

I understand that, and do feel that when I'm not practicing the steps of recovery. The issue I'm addressing is does being positive or telling myself that its not what I want make things better or worse? Does not acknowledging the desire and telling myself that its not there or that I want to look at it more positively help? My feeling is that lying to myself is not going to help, as much as being honest with myself.. and then letting go.

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Re: Be Positive or Honest? How to Resist.
Posted by skeptical - 20 Mar 2015 17:17

And I'm saying that the SE email is not saying any differently.

It is saying to acknowledge that you have two wants. 1) to do all kinds of inappropriate things and 2) to stay clean. Don't focus on suppressing your desire for #1, because eventually the pressure will explode. Instead, choose to fulfill desire #2, which brings about a much better and more lasting pleasure.

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