

Thoughts on Therapy & Starting a New Call

Posted by Jonathan - 03 Nov 2017 08:32

Hi Everyone,

My name is Jonathan and what I want to do in this post is share some insights that I think may be important for a lot of you and then offer a weekly conference call that will discuss these ideas further. Just a warning in advance - this is long post, but I do hope a worthwhile read for many...

To start this off, I want to say that I have been part of GYE for many years now, primarily helping men who struggle with SSA (same-sex attractions). Part of that help involves me giving a 12-cycle call for 45 minutes once a week. These calls have evolved from when they began and that is actually largely because I too have evolved. And it's this evolution that has helped me realize recently that there's more I could be doing for all of you on GYE, not just those struggling with SSA.

To elaborate further, when I began my calls, I was only familiar with Life Coaching techniques to approach these complicated issues such as SSA and addiction. However, over the past several years, I started a Masters in Social work and began learning therapeutic approaches to helping people. Coaching and therapy share the common goal of wanting to help individuals improve their lives, but they do it differently. Coaching offers practical, here and now tools, and a Life Coach typically has a set of insights and assumptions about how his client will heal the moment he walks into a session. In a sense, the 12-steps is a Coaching approach - there are set of steps each person should take in order to overcome an addiction, and the primary mindset is that if each person does each step, they hopefully will see success finally reaching their goals to become sober.

Therapy differs from this because it believes each person has a unique life, a unique struggle, and therefore a unique way they would then have to heal in order for them to finally achieve peace. Good therapists do their best to make their office an unconditionally accepting space for the client to deeply explore and learn about himself. As the client and therapist learn more about the client in such a setting, with the help of a secure and trusting connection, solutions for healing begin to become clear, and the client on his own actually starts to organically make positive life changes. The therapist too may then also be better equipped to offer insights and advice that are more personalized, because he now deeply knows his client. A therapist at this point may even then suggest 12-step meetings or other potentially effective tools. It is actually at this juncture that I think therapists will turn on more of coaching role at times. The difference though is that the coaching comes later and is more individualized because it takes into account the client self-discovery that came beforehand.

This means that therapy is more of a process. And often, in this process, positive changes often occur later after the therapist gets to know the client and the client better knows himself. And this can take a lot of time too, as well a investment, energy, courage, and overcoming a lot of risks. It may seem simple thinking about it, but having the ability to uncover all the different parts of ourselves, and then have the ability to deeply understand it all is **not** easy. This is especially

because we have parts of ourselves that *hate* being seen and known. We have parts of ourselves that want to stay hidden, perhaps because they are familiar with shame and rejection, and are too afraid they'll experience that again if they were revealed. We have parts of ourselves that actually like to hide **other** parts of ourselves. For an example: We may have a child-like part that went through incredible pain, hurt, abuse or other forms of wounding growing up and never had healthy support letting go of the suffering this pain caused. And another part of us may be really familiar with that suffering, and reacts to it by doing a lot today to help us hide, repress, or deny that suffering so we do not have to feel it anymore. This is what I mean having a part of ourselves that hides another part. And a part like this may also be hiding our pain by pushing us to seek alternatives to pain, and ways to escape it so we can "live life" and not have to experience suffering any more. In other words, we have parts of ourselves that are actually actively trying to **protect** us from past pain AND we have parts of ourselves that are still **experiencing** and extremely familiar with that **pain**. This whole system of parts is simply *not* easy to understand and know. But the reality is, we have many different parts of ourselves that live in each and every one of us and they impact our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in so many different ways.

Let me now say something that may sound really radical: **when we struggle with sex addiction, we may be really experiencing a part of ourselves that is trying to PROTECT us from deep, unresolved suffering caused by pain**. And yes, this means that this part of ourselves may actually have positive intentions by trying to help protect us! And really with that in mind, it is *not* the part itself, but its **methods and actions** for protecting us, that are destructive, bad and unhelpful.

And yet, so many of us **hate** the entire addict part inside of us. We shame it. We abuse it. We wish it wasn't there and constantly go into battle mode at trying to subdue this "rasha" "yetzher horadik" "disgusting" part of ourselves. We may consider it simply a challenge from Hashem and that's it, without seeing it from any other angle. And what we may be doing here is actually defining our addict part by its actions alone. Since this part clearly does bad, well then it must also be bad or a challenge from Hashem, and nothing else. And so we fight it. We battle it. We strengthen our good parts - like our religiously observant part, by then learning more Torah or davening really hard, hoping with all of the good we will simply override this "evil" part of us that is making us sin. Or we may go to groups or meetings, and imagine that the higher our sobriety number, the stronger ammunition we'll have in us to demolish this "unsober" truly evil part of ourselves. Or we'll just do things to try and avoid the addict part all together. We will begin to act like it really is not there, and rationalize the times it appears as just blips in the radar.

Whatever we do in these cases, we are *not* **accepting** AND **understanding** this very real addict part of us. We are not bringing it into light and seeing it for what it really is. We are not learning from it, and seeing why it is truly in our lives. We may be making a lot of assumptions about it and judging it in all sorts of ways. But again, we are not getting to know it, and letting it talk and speak to us. We are not letting it tell us whether it is trying to protect us from pain. And we are certainly not seeing all the work it may be doing to try and protect us from pain. This then does not give us the opportunity to then see any of the real, unfortunate, deeper hurting child parts of ourselves that are still suffering from pain. We do not get a window into all of that pain because the protector parts of ourselves do not trust us to handle it - after all, we already are doing great job at shaming, condemning, and judging the addict part of ourselves - why would that protector part actually then let us see our younger pained parts that are suffering when we

could then do the exact thing to them and make the pain worse!?

In these situations, some of us may end up becoming really good at going to battle with ourselves and subduing our “evil,” addict parts enough that they no longer show up in our lives. And yes this actually takes a lot of work, and work that often needs to be maintained for a lifetime. But many of us may be happy accepting that challenge and living in battle mode until we die. And I truly respect these people. I think they are incredibly strong and if that is what is working for them and creating peace and success for them, then I applaud it.

However, I also think many of us struggle or ultimately will struggle with living in this constant battle. I think there are so many of us that deep down need to face their pain and resolve its suffering. I think many of us do at times find success battling our addict, but we then find that we are not winning the war, and may be worried whether we ever will. As a therapist, I want to say to all of you that you can learn to see this part of you instead and give it some light. You can sit with it, instead of shame it, and learn why it's in your life. You can have a dialogue with it to actually understand why it's giving you desires to act out, and in this dialogue, you may even begin to find ways to work with this part of you so it helps you achieve your goals, instead of work against them. And then I believe you can become strong enough to face the real pain and suffering the addict part of you may have been trying to protect from you this whole time. YOU can be the one to see, accept, understand, and then care for that pain. And then, as a Life Coach, I want to say to you that you can then know and discover the right tools that will work for you to help you heal the suffering. With your knowledge about yourself and your own unique pain, you may discover that you need the 12-steps, or if you are already there, how you can make 12-steps even better for you! Or you may discover that you need a whole other tool all together - or a combination of both. Whatever tools you take on, you can do so knowing a lot more about yourself first.

And you can do all of this from a sense of Self that is much more accepting and willing to face all of these protecting and pained parts. You can do this from a Self that has unconditional love and care for YOU - A Higher Self, or true soul-like essence, that I believe is actually already in you and connected to Hashem. A Self that is willing to shine light on everything within you and face it all - both the protectors and the pain. A Self that does not want to battle anything in you, but simply wants to understand it all with the intent to give healing and peace.

My calls for SSA used to speak about matters in a coach-like way and gave off the impression that if strugglers do steps A, B, and C, their conflict with SSA will resolve itself. But this isn't always what happened with individuals that I met who were following my approach. And then as I evolved more into a therapist, I took a step back from a lot of what I was saying, and realized I need to develop calls that present a framework that makes more space for all of the many different kinds of individuals that face this struggle and that also recognizes the many different ways individuals will ultimately find peace. Today, I still present a specific framework, but it has been expanded so that SSA is never defined by one specific way of thinking and I now frequently encourage participants to pursue a therapeutic space where they could better understand all the parts of themselves more effectively, especially their SSA, than just through a 12-cycle call.

I do think a lot of GYE could benefit from evolving in the same way. I think many of us need to face our struggles more deeply than just by relying on an already pre-determined set of tools,

such as forums, groups, meetings, calls, etc. Please don't misunderstand me and think that I am saying these tools are not helpful - indeed they are! And I know they have been life-changing for so many here. However, I do think for a lot of us, these tools sometimes neglect other parts of ourselves that still need attention and care. And when this happens, we can continue to store pain deep within ourselves, and we can then continue to feel a reliance on protectors, such as our addict, that immaturely try and save us from this pain. This also ultimately prevents us from deeply knowing and accepting ourselves, and instead we stay in an eternal battle deep within for the rest of our lives. In short, I think we really do owe it to ourselves to at least consider a path where we achieve inner-harmony with the parts of ourselves that do bad things, and not believe that our only path to success is on an internal battlefield.

And so with all of this said, I want to offer to continue this discussion in the form of a weekly conference call. I would very much welcome speaking more about these ideas with all of you, and why and how this type of therapeutic exploration into ourselves can be incredibly powerful and necessary for many of us to reach our goals. I would also focus on the goal of moving past sexual addiction and living a healthy sober life, but I think the content of the calls would certainly apply to any interpersonal struggle. And yes, these calls will be just a tool, which I would make clear from the beginning. They will not replace therapy and I do not think they will solve all your struggles. But as a tool, I think they will be helpful one, and hopefully effective at opening your eyes and directing you to therapeutic resources, should you discover that you need them to move forward.

In order to make this happen, I want to first see whether there is any interest in a call like this. Please express your interest to me by either replying to this thread, or sending me an email at jhoffmantherapy@gmail.com.

I know this was a long read, and I hope to that those who got to the end found it helpful. I look forward to seeing where this goes and welcome any questions, feedback, thoughts etc. here in this thread as well, or to the email above I provided.

May we all have nothing but Hatzlocha Raba moving forward in our journey!

-Jonathan

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Re: Thoughts on Therapy & Starting a New Call
Posted by cordnoy - 03 Nov 2017 13:01

Read it twice.

Very nice.

B'hatzlachah

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