

Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by DavidT - 05 Jan 2020 18:34

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When a person who is struggling wants to start being clean is it better to take small steps at a time or to right away go cold turkey?

This might depend on how deep a person is and if he is really addicted...

From one side, going cold turkey can be too hard to achieve so taking baby steps seems more realistic, from the other side as long as the person still acts out even if its less than before, he might still be fully pulled back in...

Not sure what the right balance is...

I'm asking this to be able to help people that reach out for help and they ask, whats my first step?

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by 360gye - 05 Jan 2020 18:57

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That is a good and valid question DavidT, and like you opened with, i think it depends on each person and where they are holding.

As i sure you'd agree, I would suggest first setting up filters and any other precautionary safegaurds which they are willing to do. I would advise for people to go cold turkey, as that is the ultimate goal, but if they are not comfortable with that i would want to find out why. Try talking to them and try to understand what their underlying problem is. Try to at least convince them of abstaining from something and help them in making progress with small steps.

Another similiar question which just came to mind now, is it better to go cold turkey for a shorter period, or small steps for longer period?

Those are my 2 cents

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by DavidT - 05 Jan 2020 19:04

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[360gye wrote on 05 Jan 2020 18:57:](#)

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The question is really deeper. If I tell someone to take small steps, is it like I'm telling him it's OK to act out (being that it's less than before)?

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by iwillnevergiveup - 05 Jan 2020 19:25

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I think, while you'll be ultimately taking small steps, falling and getting back up, if a person doesn't have a mind set and determination that this is over. I'm done with this. While I fell and keep moving it's not yet where I'm going. - I think the mind set "well first goal was 3 days, so today I'm allowed" will enable bad behavior and prevent growth.

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by 360gye - 06 Jan 2020 02:33

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I agree, if you set yourself up that "1st goal is 3 days and then whatever"you're setting yourself up for failure. Instead i would say make small goal but right when achieve it try making another small goal.

I just heard by a siyum hashas someone say, with regards to daf yomi "be a full-time part time participant", meaning even if you know can't do every day, commit to doing a little bit every day. Dont know if this can be applied to this inyan, but i thought it was a nice thought and thought i should share...

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by transforming - 06 Jan 2020 04:03

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Obviously, I can only speak based on personal experiences, but whenever I would commit to "small steps" it would inevitably turn out to be a joke within a matter of hours or days.

It reached a point, where I began using the "small steps" hoax as an "alleviation" for my feelings after falling... I would fall, and would inevitably feel terrible, and instead of capitalizing on my feelings of pain and vulnerability to demand real change of myself, [i.e. implementing real filters, reaching out, seeking guidance etc.] I would commit myself to taking "small steps", thereby putting my feelings to rest, without taking critical and necessary steps to achieve real change. Yet the very next night, I would fall again, because my Yetzer Hora would tell me "hey; you are anyhow only off of porn for 24 hours... how bad would it be to just restart your clean slate after tonight"... Sure enough, my intense desire for porn would crush my laughable "commitment" to take "small steps"...

Throughout my journey, I have come to learn, that as long as I leave myself an opening for falling again; I will fall again very soon after. Period. Obviously, even if when I would (genuinely) commit to going off porn cold turkey, I would fall again, but it would take much longer, and much severer circumstances to trigger a fall...

With the help of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I have gone four times off of porn for three months or longer [and with the help of Hakadosh Baruch Hu I will make it again to 90 days in just 9 more days!!!], and every single time that I went for three or more months clean, it was preceded by a real commitment to go cold turkey, coupled with implantations of real filters and a demand for real change, without any loopholes or escapes... [And when I eventually fell each time, it was only due to extreme anxiety phases, that would lead me to taking bizarre measures (that I would never take under normal circumstances) to obtain porn]...

If anyone had differing experiences, feel free to share...

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by DavidT - 06 Jan 2020 17:41

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Sometimes, a person can do something to take away his ability to sin in the ways most problematic for him. An obvious example is with struggles involving the Internet, which can be partly solved by installing filters. If the person is committed enough that he is willing to give up whatever he will be forfeiting, this should be his first step.

Because this change can eliminate much of the problem of exposure beforehand without much effort — and perhaps without going directly against the brunt of his desires — he must try this option whenever possible. He must remember that although avoiding challenges does not seem impressive, **it is**.

Nevertheless, this is only a first step toward regaining

complete control. A person who limits his access to temptation

is not cured. He must follow up by strengthening himself too.

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 07 Jan 2020 00:22

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Every person and every situation is different. As was mentioned, the decision that "I am not going to be doing this stuff anymore" is paramount. To that end, filters should be installed, accountability partners put in place, and rewiring the brain must begin. There has to be clarity "why I am stopping".

My opinion is that pornography has to be stopped cold turkey. The way to break out is simply being free from it for a period of time. Every time it is viewed, it is like opening a doorway that was cemented shut. Watching "once in a while" makes it extremely difficult to stop due to it's addictive nature.

Masturbation is a little different. There are therapists that have helped guys break free by going from once a day to once every other day to twice a week etc. until they are clean. At the same time many guys successfully stopped masturbation cold turkey.

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?  
Posted by doingtshuva - 07 Jan 2020 23:11

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[DavidT wrote on 05 Jan 2020 19:04:](#)

[360gye wrote on 05 Jan 2020 18:57:](#)

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Another similiar question which just came to mind now, is it better to go cold turkey for a shorter period, or small steps for longer period?

Those are my 2 cents

The question is really deeper. If I tell someone to take small steps, is it like I'm telling him it's OK to act out (being that it's less than before)?

ones goal should be to become completely clean, but that is usually done through small steps.

It's just impossible to stop and change a habit from one day to another. If you tell someone to stop watching porn for 1 hour a day, you are not telling him to watch the rest 23 hours. You hope that from 1 hour it will become 2 hours and so one.

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by MenachemGYE - 08 Jan 2020 00:34

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[DavidT wrote on 05 Jan 2020 18:34:](#)

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Not sure what the right balance is...

I'm asking this to be able to help people that reach out for help and they ask, whats my first step?

I think small steps is always preferable, as long as they are right steps... Here's some examples of what I would consider good ~~baby~~ steps:

- Consider the pros and cons of stopping
- Reading success stories of other members on GYE and realizing that it's possible to stop
- Making a firm decision to stop
- Choosing a goal (porn, masturbation or both).
- Learning about strategies that can be helpful in dealing with urges
- When dealing with porn, finding out which filters are most recommended, and who can install them
- Finding a partner who can give support
- Make a realistic plan, and doing homework to figure out what should be included in it
- If there's a major underlying emotional issue, looking into a therapist or learn coping

skills

- Learning what it takes to achieve long term sobriety, and what to expect during the first few weeks and months
- Learning about the best ways to deal with slips and falls
- If unsure, consulting with someone if the 12-step program is a good fit

All these things don't require that much energy, because they don't involve actually stopping. And on the other hand, they help you be better prepared for the real thing.

To be continued...

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?

Posted by MenachemGYE - 08 Jan 2020 01:20

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(Continued)

Now let's say we talk to someone who doesn't believe they can really stop for good, and let's further assume that they are right -- that it's improbable that they can really stop cold turkey right now for good and have a clean streak ???? ??? ???... which of the following scenarios makes more sense?

## Scenario 1

Set a goal to...

- Stay clean for at least 1 hour each day over the next week
- Masturbate only 4 times a week instead of 7
- Watch only 3x a day instead of 10x a day

## Scenario 2

- Set an initial goal to be clean for 90 days (or even 7 or 30 days if that is longer than your longest ever streak)
- Deal with slips and falls in a healthy way:

- ?Realize that it's common for your plan not work perfectly the first time, it takes a

- few rounds until you get good at it
- Remember that practice makes perfect, it's like learning to ride a bike
- Remember that you'll probably have automatic nasty thoughts after a fall, and be ready to dismiss them as nonsense (e.g. I'm a lost case, I'm messed up anyway so I may as well binge and try again tomorrow/next week)

I think the second scenario is more likely to work, because your mindset is that I'm done with this behavior, it's not good for me, and I'll treat falls as *mistakes* that I should learn from -- either to get more practice with my existing plan, or to make improvements to my plan. And if I don't have slips during that initial time frame, I'll actually be stretching my limits, and start believing that I can really do it for good.

On the other hand, in the first scenario, it's hard to define a fall as a mistake, no matter when it happens. Why be clean for 1 hour now? I'll watch porn now, and then stop later when the urge was already satisfied... Why be clean today? I allowed myself 4 days this week, so I can watch today and stop tomorrow... And in the worst case, it will be 5 days instead of 4... is it really so terrible? What's the big difference?

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Re: Start with being completely clean or small steps?  
Posted by MenachemGYE - 22 Jan 2020 12:27

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Some additional thoughts -- ?????? ?????? ?????? ??????.

In this week's Parsha Moshe Rabbeinu tells Pharaoh,

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Why 3 days? The Alshich in Parshas Shemos explains:

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In other words, it would be impossible to expect Pharaoh to agree to free the Yidden for *the long*

*On the other hand, we find in Hilchos Nezirus that the minimum amount of days for a Nazir is 30.*

*The Rambam writes elsewhere that about someone who becomes a Nazir to deal with impulsive/addictive drinking of alcohol:*

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*term, however a 3 day goal would be reasonable even for him!*

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And although the example in this halacha is a long term commitment, the *minimum* goal is 30 days:

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There's a lot we can learn from the way the Torah deals with a Nazir, for example, avoiding triggers:

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And here we see that the amount of time needed for an initial goal is 30 days of abstinence, even if the end goal is moderation.

It's fascinating that ?some experts today also suggest setting a 30 day goal when dealing with addiction:

- Most famous is the Moderation Management program which as its name suggest is not a program for sobriety, but they still suggest starting with an initial period of 30 days of no drinking at all, to get started (See Moderation Management Ch. 5)
- Dr. Gerald Connors, in *Substance Abuse Treatment and the Stages of Change*, suggest an initial 30 day period of abstinence.

But as usual, the Torah is way ahead.

So why did Pharaoh get only a 3 day goal? Maybe because he was a heavy addict (??? ??

During the Shovavim, let's resolve the beat our inner Pharaoh and break free!

**Warning: Spoiler!**

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