

Realistic Outlook On Recovery

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 24 Dec 2009 12:02

The following post was originally posted on kollel guy's thread. I decide to make a separate thread. This describes my experience alone. B"H, I am 10 months sober, and I have learned a lot in these months and I wanted to share. This is after over 15 years of trying to break the cycle.

Realistic Outlook On Recovery

The principle is, as you stated from Dov, to learn to take baby steps. But in order to do that we need to create a realistic outlook on recovery.

In my personal recovery, I came to the realistic conclusion that my addiction was preventing me from living life to its fullest and not the opposite. It was not my "not knowing how to live life" that was causing the addiction. With this realization, I was able to make for myself sobriety a goal onto its own with the vision of attaining the bigger goal of rebuilding my life and learning how to live life by connecting with the value system that I believe in. In the early AA's day, addicts were not allowed to participate in 12 steps until they were committed to sobriety. In 12 steps, they teach you how to rebuild. But that is very hard to do if you are still holding on tight to your old ways and your old dreams.

The **second** realization that I began to understand was that becoming sober does not automatically translate into "feeling and living life". I realized that just because I am going to become sober does not mean that the whole world is going to open up to me and all of a sudden things like daveing, learning, caring for another, will happen on their own. Rather, I will have to work on them as independent goals. But as long as I had the addiction in place, it was harder to do. And indeed, after maintaining five weeks of sobriety, I began building myself step by step. It takes time and patience. But time and patience alone will not rebuild you. It takes effort.

The **third** realization that I had, was that "feeling life" may become harder after sobriety. I had to admit it and accept sobriety nevertheless. What this means is, (and I believe you are experiencing this) that as an addict we had our instant gratification button ready whenever we needed it. I know for me, it gave me my drive. Yes, it gave me depression and guilt but at

times it gave me a high. Also, due to the low “depression and guilt” that it brought me to, I was able to always feel a tremendous high afterwards when I felt encouragement to change. I no longer had those moments. I know this sounds strange, but many have experienced this.

I am sure I can come up with more realistic outlooks on recovery. But for now this should suffice.

Advantages of having Realistic Outlook On Recovery

Looking at recovery this way, helps a lot. **Firstly**, it is easier to attain. This is based on the principle known as “divide and conquer”. If a person has a big goal to attain, and sees his next success as attaining that big, he may get discouraged. Also, he doesn’t quite see how he will get there and gives up. But when we break down the goals, it becomes easy. When I made my goal, “remaining sober” and stop thinking about the why’s and what’s and who’s, I looked at the addiction and said that is easy.

The **second** advantage is that it creates a feeling of accomplishment. We all need to feel accomplished in order to drive us further. When we see we can accomplish a little bit, we are encouraged to accomplish more. In some AA circles, they hand out sobriety chips to make the addict feel accomplished (see [this link for cyber chips](#)). We need to see ourselves as succeeding and not failing. When we define our recovery as purely “living life” this sets us up for disaster. I am telling you this from experience. When we see that life is not rebuilding on its own, we feel like failures. We then draw the terrible conclusion that there is not point of continuing.

The **third** major advantage was that I was no longer living in a fantasy world. Think of the following mashal. A man is promised a million dollars for climbing a big mountain. After climbing, he is not granted the money. Two things will happen. Number one, he will get depressed or at least saddened. The only reason why he did this was for the money. Without the money, it was not worth it. The other result is that he will go down from the mountain. There is no purpose of being there without the money. In the nimshal, my mind always told that when I become sober, life will great. All the hardships and challenges of life will melt away. So, when the money (good life) didn’t come, I would get depressed, discouraged and leave the sober life. When I began seeing sobriety as a goal onto its own without any promises but as a necessary building block for my life, my drive for the goal and satisfaction with the goal was much easier. I had to walk out of the fantasy world. Sobriety does not lead to a good life. But it

will allow me to work on living the life as I know it.

Practical Advice

OK, now onto something practical. The recovering addict is always lost as to “now what?” The following is based on my personal recovery. It may not be applicable to you. But I am a big believer in creating a tailor made recovery program that is based on other’s experiences. You learn the yesodos from others and apply them to your life and situation as appropriate. A while back, I put together a pamphlet called “**recovery in a nutshell**”, where I highlighted my basic recovery for other people to use as a guide. I never posted it yet. But the following is based on it.

- 1) Take time each day to focus on recovery.
- 2) During this time, remind yourself you are an addict and that you are in recovery. Perhaps say “We admitted we are powerless to lust and that our lives became unmanageable” ten times. During the early days of recovery it is important to drive this home and that any exposure to anything erotic is dangerous. The addicted mind is so good at making oneself forget. So remind yourself constantly.
- 3) If you are working on 12 steps, read over just the summary of a new step each day. This will help you engrain the 12 steps and internalize it. Keep going over it. I used to keep a summary of the summary in my notebook and constantly review it.
- 4) Take time to feed yourself spiritually in a way that will affect your addiction. Rabbi Twereki suggests 10 minutes a day of messilas yesharim. He had encouraged us to start a chabura of mesillas yesharim to compliment what we do in 12 steps. I personally found doing tehillim each day and a dosage of shaarei teshuva (first shaar, NOT second or third) very uplifting. Many of the 12 steps corresponds with Rabeinu Yona’s steps of teshuvah, as Elya pointed out once.
- 5) Spend time each day reviewing reading material that will help you learn about your addiction and will guide you to recovery. Do not jump around from book to book unless you find it very unhelpful. Take a few days scanning different material to find what talks to you the most and then stick with it. If you finished that material, then move on. Great examples of reading material: Gye attitude handbook, The Big Book. 12 & 12, Recovery Nation, or find some great books on netaddiction.
- 6) Take on a few easy mitzvos that will make a big difference in your day. For example, saying modeh ani with proper kavana. You cannot thank Hashem for life, unless you appreciate life. You cannot appreciate it, unless you understand the value of life. If you properly understand

the value of life, the need for acting out is small (it is not so natural at first, but believe me if you try to stay clean and focus on the value and purpose of life at the same time, eventually the temptations for acting out subside in a major way). Another good one is working on saying the first pasuk of krias shema with kavana. (Dov has often pointed out that the basics of the 12 steps is in krias shema. So do it right and it will make a difference.)

Hope that this helps someone out there and was not too overwhelming. Again, I am sharing my personal experience, with both the yesodos and application. Most of what I wrote here, is a compilation of my personal journal on my computer from the past many many months of recovery.

Feel free to comment and question.

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Re: Realistic Outlook On Recovery
Posted by imtrying25 - 24 Dec 2009 12:04

Thank you YS. Although i saw it already on KG's thread now it will be so much easier to find for when i want and have to read it.

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Re: Realistic Outlook On Recovery
Posted by Momo - 24 Dec 2009 12:32

Does this mean you're gonna visit us more often?

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Re: Realistic Outlook On Recovery
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 31 Dec 2009 09:40

Kollel Guy,

I kept meaning to write out a summary of our conversation for your records but never had time. However, I just read over this post that I wrote to you last week and noticed that most of the practical part of our conversation is summarized in the above post, under the section entitled "Practical Advice".

The most important thing is to take time each day(20 minutes to an hour should do it) and DO SOMETHING about your recovery. Have you had an hatzlacha yet in beginning to implement routine changes.

-ykv

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Re: Realistic Outlook On Recovery
Posted by Kollel Guy - 02 Jan 2010 21:46

Major Shkoyach, what you write here is so logical, I wonder why I didn't think of it myself.

When I began seeing sobriety as a goal onto its own without any promises but as a necessary building block for my life, my drive for the goal and satisfaction with the goal was much easier. I had to walk out of the fantasy world. Sobriety does not lead to a good life. But it will allow me to work on living the life as I know it.

Even if you would only have written these words, the post would have been kedai.

Aa far as it working with me....

Well I still have to get around to working on the steps. All of it is still in "good idea" land for me.

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