

Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by boruch - 18 Mar 2009 21:25

[battleworn wrote on 18 Mar 2009 16:36:](#)

Think you can do this without the 12 steps groups? Do you think that you can serenely learn the Eibishter's Torah while the yetzer hora disturbs you with the most profane temptations? I wish you the best of luck, but it is at very least, much easier said than done. And it is certainly a lot easier to do it a lot more effectively by joining a 12 step group.

I've kept silent on this issue for a long time for two reasons. First of all, I try very hard to avoid confrontation. I've learned from a lot of experience that debate gets you nowhere at best. So, as much as I have said on this forum, there's just as much that I've refrained from saying.

Second of all, before commenting, I took a lot of time to make sure I really understood the issue properly.

It's plainly obvious, that the 12 step groups are an absolutely amazing thing.

Battleworn, since that first quote was from me, I'll say a few things.

Firstly, I apologize to you Yaakov for having gotten into a vikuach with you on your thread. I certainly meant well, but at the time I did not at all anticipate how it would come across. There is a time, place and way to share a message and the key to making sure that the message is on target is to focus totally on the person with whom you want to share it. I did not realize that then and I realize that more now.

Secondly, since I created a discussion of the steps and the entire system as first practiced by Alcoholics Anonymous, the steps, the sponsors and the groups, I am going to ask you Yaakov for a little patience to allow me to undo some of what I posted earlier.

The first thing I want to share is how that system is changing the way I am posting on this forum.

But before I do that I need to share with you how I have come to see an approach that was after all is said and done, totally conceived by goyim.

The Maharshal in teshuvos (98) said that the author of the sefer hakrisus, the Rash Mikinon, had studied all of the hidden mysteries of Kabbala and yet, when he davened, he davened like a one-day-old baby.

What could a one-day-old baby possibly teach Rash Mikinon that he did not know from Kabbala?

I will tell you how I now understand it. There is knowledge in all its complexity. And then there is behavior. Someone who has all the knowledge of hilchos shechita who has never seen a shechita will have no concept of how to shecht. That is shimush. Learning the behavior.

So knowledge of tefila is in Kabbala, but learning how to behave? Rash Mikinon chose a one-day-baby as his model.

Why?

There are two things about a one-day-old baby.

1) He is totally dependent on his parents and has no hope of taking care of himself.

2) He only has one option of self-expression. He cannot choose how to approach his problems. How to present them. What words and expressions to use. No complications. He just opens his mouth and cries. Straight from the heart, honest and direct.

That's how Rash Mikinon davened. With the same total dependence on Hashem and with the same simplicity as a one-day-old baby.

Now, if we wanted to visualize for ourselves, the behavior of a one-day-old baby we could walk in to any maternity ward anywhere in the World. The baby doesn't have to be Jewish. It could be a Mexican baby, a Vietnamese baby, it makes no difference whatsoever.

That's exactly how I understand the original AA groups and the 12 steps. The alcoholics of AA were, just like the one-day-old baby. They were totally desperate, they knew that Hashem was their last and only hope and they knew how they needed to come humbly to Hashem for His help. They needed an approach so simple that even a drunk could get it.

Now, we Frum Yidden are not short on knowledge of how to Return to Hashem. We may not be Rash Mikinon but we do have Shaarei Teshuva of Rabbeinu Yonah, we do have hilchos teshuva from the Rambam. B"H knowledge we have in plentiful supply. And knowledge of hilchos teshuva we will not find among goyim, Torah bagoyim al taamin. But where are we addicts to learn how an addict who is returning should behave? Certainly not from a one-day-old baby.

I have found that, as a Frum Yid, I can learn the *behavior* with which an addict should return to Hashem from the early founders of AA. I can learn a set of behaviors so simple that even *this* drunk (me) could get it and implement it.

Does it matter whether the AA founders were Jewish? Absolutely not. Whether they were American, Mexican or Vietnamese? Absolutely not.

Certainly the AA founders wrote the steps in English and certainly they were to an extent influenced in some of their external presentation of the steps by their religion and culture. But in essence the 12 steps represent a Path of Return to Hashem so simple that even a drunk could get it. That's why it can work for me too.

And if you want to see the steps working, you need to look no further than the latest change in my style of posting.

When I wrote that piece above I had not gone beyond working steps 1 through 3, and most importantly, I had not read the primary text of Alcoholics Anonymous, commonly referred to as the AA Big Book (it's available online, in PDF and as a Palm DOC). In SA, the working assumption from the beginning has been that whatever is true for alcohol and liquor is true for lust. They commonly read directly from the Big Book, replacing the words alcohol and liquor with the word lust, and replacing the word alcoholic with sexaholic.

Today, having read the AA Big Book and working currently on all 12 steps, these excerpts from page 65 and on best capture how I have learned about self-will and it's impact on my life as a whole and even my posts on this forum:

"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful...

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well...

He decides to exert himself more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him...

Is he not, even in his best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?"

Until now, in my posts on the forum *I have always been most mindful and have focused on how I wanted to post*, even though, and as much as, to a certain extent I have also tried to bear in mind, after the fact, people's reaction to my posts.

Being brutally honest with myself, as the AA founders say they were, much as I had taken notice of how people responded, I was still not getting beyond the description above in the Big Book. As the Big Book describes, my relationships, as my posts on the forum, were often self-serving and defined on my own terms, even when I thought I was being helpful.

Now I realize the difference and B'Ezras Hashem I will do whatever I need to in order to post with much more patience and with much more thought and attention to how others need to hear the message.

[battleworn wrote on 18 Mar 2009 16:36:](#)

But listen to this: To me it's seems clear that going to R' Tvi Meir *instead* of the 12 groups, is **at least a 100 times as amazing**. So why don't I push R' Tvi Meir, like some people push the groups?

The answer is, because I try not to project myself on to other people. In my humble opinion this truly wonderful forum could use a little more open-mindedness (I'm not talking at all about Rabeinu Guard) Just because ploni didn't have emunah before he went to the groups, it doesn't mean that everyone is like that. Just because Almoni suffered abuse, it doesn't mean that we all did. Etc... Personally, I don't believe that the groups are appropriate for ykv at all (The fundamental differences between him and boruch are quite obvious to me) But I know I could be wrong.

Battleworn, now that I have read the primary text on the 12 steps I can finally express what I had been unsuccessfully trying to say. Obviously different people are inspired in different ways and obviously you cannot stuff everyone in the same mold. But that is not the issue at all. What I was trying to share with Yaakov is something I later found in the AA Big Book describing the experience in the late 1930s of the newcomers who joined AA and worked the steps, p85,

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone--even lust. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in lust. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward lust has been given us without any thought or effort on our

part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation."

So that's the claim printed in 1939. Is it true? Well, as I explained earlier on this thread, *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book*, I was most certainly *fighting* my addiction, I had been for 36 years. And losing. Then *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book* came SA and the day I called my sponsor. He told me to stop *fighting*, to surrender to my Higher Power and in a moment of temptation just work steps 1-3.

Of course, as many people on this forum have written the last thing on their minds in a moment of temptation is 12 steps, let alone the presence of mind to use them. And I was originally no different.

But I have since found that when I made my recovery the single most important thing in my life and I joined SA, when I took part in a weekly Back to Basics Step meeting that works through all 12 steps in 4 weeks in addition to a regular meeting, when I met and learned from people with 15 years of sobriety and more, when I was working the steps together with everyone else, much as soldiers march in step and find it easier to march together, doing the steps became the most natural thing in the World. And *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book* I experienced what I posted earlier in this thread. That I no longer needed to fight.

Are there other methods that are so effective in turning a losing fight into no battle at all? I can only tell you of one method like that, doing the 12 steps by working them with a sponsor and active 12 step group meeting attendance. If anyone else has another method with the same results, I would certainly be interested to hear about it. Not because I am looking for another method. The 12 steps are helping me change in many areas and I would not trade them in. But recovery from addiction is extremely important to me and I am interested in all things Recovery.

Now you raise a legitimate question, Battleworn. Are the groups for everyone? Is the SA 12 step program which is directly and totally modeled on the complete AA 12 step program for everyone? The best way to know the answer to that is to read the first 164 pages of the [Big Book](#). You can download it as a [PDF](#) or put it on your Palm OS device from this [link](#).

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by the.guard - 25 Mar 2009 12:25

That's a beautiful way of looking at it!

I am GLAD you were Mikatzer, because the greatest truths are the simplest ones.

the chevra here don't even know what I'm really upset about

I don't either, even though we've been writing e-mails back and forth for days. I still honestly can't figure it out. What ARE you upset about?

BTW, if you can, take a pen with you and where ever you see such a sign, write down www.guardureyes.com

Irony, isn't it? Using the internet to battle the dangers of the internet! Well, where else will you catch the falling yidden, in the Beis Hamussar?

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by battleworn - 25 Mar 2009 14:06

O'K so now I tried to be very clear and to the point and I beg you pleaseread it carefully with your full attention! Thank You very much!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by battleworn - 25 Mar 2009 15:02

Also, If you say you don't know what I'm upset about, then you obviously didn't see my email from 6:00 pm yesterday.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by battleworn - 25 Mar 2009 15:10

I just remembered that earlier yesterday, you wrote that you understand me 100%

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by Ano Nymous - 25 Mar 2009 15:14

I've enjoyed reading this thread, but I feel the need to make one comment. All of us are on the same team. There is nothing wrong with a good argument, but we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal: to help ourselves and others beat this addiction. When we resort to name-calling and ad hominem attacks (which I've seen in this thread), it means we have lost sight of this goal. Don't let your emotions blind your intellect! If you do this, nothing will offend YOU (although you may disagree) and you will not feel the need to offend others. Keep sight of the ultimate goal!!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by the.guard - 25 Mar 2009 18:11

Ano's got the spirit!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by aaron4 - 25 Mar 2009 18:42

Also, If you say you don't know what I'm upset about, then you obviously didn't see my email from 6:00 pm yesterday.

Was this offline? If it's something that can help the rest of us, can you post the exchange?

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 25 Mar 2009 18:52

[guardureyes wrote on 25 Mar 2009 07:28:](#)

BTW Boruch, did you ever read [this page](#)? I thought you'd find it interesting.

Yes, Guard, it is very interesting, thank you for pointing it out.

I will be saying more in response to another comment.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 25 Mar 2009 19:03

[Ano Nymous wrote on 25 Mar 2009 15:14:](#)

I've enjoyed reading this thread, but I feel the need to make one comment. All of us are on the same team. There is nothing wrong with a good argument, but we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal: to help ourselves and others beat this addiction. When we resort to name-calling and ad hominem attacks (which I've seen in this thread), it means we have lost sight of this goal. Don't let your emotions blind your intellect! If you do this, nothing will offend YOU (although you may disagree) and you will not feel the need to offend others. Keep sight of the ultimate goal!!

I'll take the blame, because as you will see below the blame is mine.

Firstly, as I have to some extent already acknowledged on this thread, I have made the mistake of trying to persuade people to join the groups.

But I need to go much further in acknowledging where I went wrong. From the outset there were two different things that I knew in theory:

1) The AA/SA 12 step system, who it works best for and when.

2) How to approach people for whom the system can work.

In my early enthusiasm with how the 12 steps had worked for me, I was very much the addict in recovery. I did not pay attention at all to who it would work for, when it would work and how to approach such people. I had read about it all and knew about it in theory but I was so enthusiastic that I got totally carried away to the extent that I did not even connect what I knew in theory to what I was doing in practice.

In my enthusiasm, call it "zeal of the converted", if you will, at different points, I tried to persuade Shomer, Yaakov, battleworn and anyone else who would listen, of the benefits and necessities of the 12 steps, and at the same time, between the lines, I tried to stop others recommending their non-12 step approaches to others.

The results were very clear.

I had a positive impact on Shomer who knows me very well and trusts me. However, Yaakov, battleworn and possibly many others, who do not know me, other than as the wild man of the forums, have been very turned off by someone who just yesterday was knocking the 12 steps and today is over-zealously self-righteously proclaiming that the sole solution to all the Worlds' problems is the 12 steps.

Clearly I was very wrong. Not just because what I did, did not work. But most importantly because I was not living up to my own beliefs. I believed that the system worked with an amazing track record, I knew that the system includes specific guidelines on who, how and when and in my enthusiasm I ignored them all.

So, here are the real guidelines.

1) Who -- The ideal candidate is someone who is seriously interested in sobriety, prepared to give it whatever it takes, has not been able to achieve it until now and believes that on their own they are unlikely to be able to achieve sobriety, such a person is likely to do very well.

2) How to approach -- A recovering/recovered member of the groups approaches any addict who is struggling at a time they are likely to be more receptive, usually when the addict is on the more desperate side, shares some of their personal trials with the addiction with the potential candidate, discusses how they came to realize that they could not do it on their own and discusses how they found a solution that is working for them and is working for many others.

If the potential addict is interested then the goal is to supply information that can better help the addict decide how badly he is addicted and ultimately the purpose is to inform the addict that there is literature that discusses the solution and there is a fellowship that works the solution. No persuasion is used, the addict is just told that any time they have questions they should feel free to get in touch.

None of this is secret stuff, it is my own summary of what is clearly documented in the

Alcoholics Anonymous book in Chapter 7 called "Working with Others".

Now of course, I ought to have known better anyway, but especially after I had read that Chapter and technically knew how to approach others, I should have known better. If I had done anything even remotely similar to what is in that Chapter the results on this forum would have been very different.

Looking back, the disconnect was because I felt too at home on these forums and did not realize that everything I had read about approaching others applies when posting on a forum, even though you have been posting on it for 60+ days.

But I make no excuses.

So, I apologize to everyone who has been affected. Yaakov, battleworn and anyone else who got caught in the crossfire. **I am sincerely sorry for making you have to deal with my getting carried away.** I am human, I have gotten very enthusiastic and I got very carried away. The goal is to recognize where I went wrong, which I do and to make it right, which I will try and do.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 25 Mar 2009 20:18

Great guidelines Boruch!

And one thing I really like about you is that although you are sometimes **brutally** honest with others (ouch!), you are also **brutally** honest with yourself :D

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 25 Mar 2009 21:15

[guardureyes wrote on 25 Mar 2009 20:18:](#)

And one thing I really like about you is that although you are sometimes **brutally** honest with others (ouch!), you are also **brutally** honest with yourself :D

Yes, humor is also important. In that spirit *here is my comment on something battleworn quoted:*

[battleworn wrote on 23 Mar 2009 12:53:](#)

To this I would add the following quote from R' Twerski himself:

There is indeed the risk of "crazy house romances."

On the GUE forums you never have to worry about "crazy house romances" (we have separate

On that subject, before anyone gets insulted, there is the famous story of the German Jew who entered R' Yisroel Salanter's beis hamussar and heard everyone yelling and screaming mussar at the top of their voices,

"vos iz dos a meshugge hoiz?" -- "Is this a crazy house?" he asked R' Yisroel in perfect Deutsche Yiddish.

Yes, R' Yisroel answered, it is a meshugge hoiz, it is a crazy house. Here we come in crazy and leave normal.

Most of us, myself certainly included have come into GUE quite crazy:

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My birchas hedyot to everyone here is that we should all become permanently recovered
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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by boruch - 25 Mar 2009 23:34

[guardureyes wrote on 25 Mar 2009 07:28:](#)

BTW Boruch, did you ever read [this page](#)? I thought you'd find it interesting.

Guard, I have read that page at length, and unlike Rabbi Twersky, I know the groups at first-hand and I understand the natures of the concerns expressed, and I can tell you that the page should be removed entirely from the site ASAP, as quickly as you removed that picture of the woman, if not more so, because this email is even more dangerous.

Here is why.

For those who don't have the patience, the bottom line is that this email does address potential concerns and real issues. However it is also an unwitting, but self-serving distortion that has lead many who are uncomfortable with the groups to honestly believe that the groups are a bedieved.

As much as there is some truth in the email there is plenty of false paranoia, exaggeration and distortion.

An honest, simple, common sense approach is a much better way than all the false fears and paranoia:

[quote="guardureyes]Dear Rabbi Twerski,

If I can please ask some important advice in regard to our website www.guardureyes.com. I was contacted yesterday by someone who has nearly 3 years of sobriety after attending the SA groups in New York. He's a chassidishe guy, and he had fallen into a terrible sexual addiction with no limits at all, until he finally surrendered, and today he's almost 3 years sober B"H and helps others in the groups as well. He pointed out to me that I am too quick on my website and in my advice to people, to send them to the groups [/quote]

I did this too and as I wrote above that is not how AA and SA recommend working with others. People need to find themselves, they need to discover for themselves to what degree they are addicted and ideally they should come into a 12-step group because they feel they have to and because they need to, not to try it out.

[quote="guardureyes] and that this can sometimes cause more damage than good if the person is not fully ready for it. (By "being ready for it", he explains that the person's life has become unmanageable and he'd rather die than continue, but he can't stop). The reason it can cause damage he claims, is firstly, because the Jewish community is small, and someone who is not

sincere can expose others in the group and bring real Gehenom on others who are truly seeking the help that they need (and he knows stories to this effect)/[quote]

This is a very sad and unfortunate truth. I have heard from a member of an almost exclusively Frum 12 step groups where there have been real anonymity issues. I did not know this at the time, but my fears over the anonymity issue were the main reason that I decided from the outset to go as far as maintainable over the long term (1 hour drive) from home, to a group that has not seen a Frum Yid in years. It turned out that I was very fortunate, because the group I attend is made up of mostly religious, middle-aged and older men, it has members who have 15 years and more of sobriety, many of their members have been AA members with many years of sobriety from alcohol, my own sponsor has been with AA for 25 years, which is since he was 25. So I get to see the real deal and not a diluted and watered down version.

But let us be honest here. The purpose of the groups is to serve those who seek sobriety. If someone is serious, if he understands that the program is not group therapy, that it is not a support group, that it is

1) A religious program -- it is about sincerely, deeply and very honestly asking Hakodosh Boruch Hu for help.

2) A program that requires a personal housecleaning -- doing the program means looking ruthlessly and honestly at every aspect of their character and being ready to have all the flaws removed.

3) A fellowship of people to whom he must have loyalty, at the very least as far as absolutely protecting their anonymity.

If an addict is serious about all of that and is interested in committing himself to the program (rather than just testing the waters), then no-one is entitled to keep that addict out until he is caught, arrested or suicidal. So the description that "he would sooner die" is way over the top.

Yes, there is a potential for problems and certainly one should not directly and actively promote the groups, but if an addict is seriously ready for the elements of the program as above, then he should not be pushed away to a phone group because of concerns of the anonymity of current

members. **Anyone who is more concerned of their own anonymity than the recovery of an addict who seriously seeks sobriety does not understand the 12th step.** The solution is to be selective, to screen, and to impress the seriousness of the program and the seriousness of anonymity on would-be newcomers.

But, let us be totally honest, the real threat to anonymity does not come from Guard's recommendations, the real threat is from an entirely unrelated problem that significantly threatens anonymity within many Frum groups. Many of the members of Frum groups would, initially at least, rather have died than gone to the groups. The only reason that they went to the groups was that they were dragged, kicking and screaming by those who caught them, their wives, Rabbonim and/or askonim. When people don't want to be there, they can be a significant risk factor, until they come on board, get with the program or leave.

So concerned_yid, anonymity is a concern, but you have identified the wrong cause.

[guardureyes\] Secondly, he claims that if they are not fully ready, they will only learn worse things, end up leaving the groups and falling even harder \(and he knows stories like this too\).\[/quote\]](#)

[You find what you are looking for. People who are serious about recovery are looking for recovery not excuses to become worse. The key is to sort out the addict who is serious and ready to commit himself entirely to the program and not someone looking for an excuse to say, well I tried that too and it didn't work.](#)

[\[quote= wrote:](#)

Therefore, he suggests I leave the links to SA only on the "links page" on our site, and only if someone is really desperate will they make an effort to find out what to do and how to join the meetings, and they will search for the links or contact us about it. He doesn't think I should suggest it for everyone, and it shouldn't be offered on a silver platter. He thinks I may want to hint to people in the beginning, that if they try everything and still can't break free, then we can help them find further help...

What we can do here on the site that is very much in line with AA's "Working with Others" is:

1) Help people discover whether they are able to stop on their own

2) Inform people that there is a problem and that there is a solution. That solution is a program that as above:

a) Is a religious program -- it is about sincerely, deeply and very honestly asking Hakodosh Boruch Hu for help, within the framework of your own Yiddishkeit.

b) Is a program that requires a personal housecleaning -- doing the program means looking ruthlessly and honestly at every aspect of character and being ready to have all the flaws removed.

And they need to understand that they must be ready to absolutely guarantee that they will do nothing whatsoever to compromise the anonymity of anyone in the program.

[quote="guardureyes] Therefore, I wanted to ask the Rav's advice on this, since it is a serious issue. He claims it's a very big achrayus to send someone who is not ready to the groups, and that it can cause untold destruction and suffering to that person, or to the others in the group.[/quote]

The secret is, as above, as simple as weeding out those who are not serious.

[quote="guardureyes] I spoke with this guy already for over an hour and a half on the phone, and he seems to be very sincere and have a lot of good experience. If the Rav wants, I can ask him perhaps to even call and discuss this with the Rav. Besides for speaking on the phone, he also sent me an e-mail with these concerns. Here is his letter below:

[concerned_yid\]](#)

It is important (vital would be a better term) to understand, that many, if not most, people on your website are not true addicts yet. They may have addictive behaviors and it will surely progress to the the point that their lives will become totally unmanageable that they will rather die then live such a life.[/quote][[/quote]

This is an excessive definition of addiction that is nothing more than the personal opinion of a very serious and sincere individual who is justifiably concerned with the wrong people going to the program. [b]But, as sincere as this email is, it is however entirely off-base as a source for description of addiction.[/b]

The AA definition of the hopeless addict is someone who realizes that he probably will not be able to stop without non-Divine means. It is very safe to say that well over 50% of those who post on these forums fall very comfortably within this definition. And by the way, hopeless addiction doesn't mean those who cannot quit without an 'S' and 'A' group. Hopeless addiction includes all of those who are convinced that they probably could not have stopped or could not stop without Rav Tzvi Meir, Musar or any other religious or Divine means. [b]So the email author has it totally wrong, we are almost certainly 100% on addict percentage on this forum. [/b]

Of course not every addict should go to a 12 step group. For a start they need to seriously want to be sober and as above they need to be serious about doing what they can to make the groups work for them.

[quote= wrote:

However, at the present they realize that they have a problem and want help.

That is a very good start. Sounds to me exactly like the AA description of an addict.

[quote="concerned_yid]No one becomes an addict overnight! [/quote]

There is a famous joke about two elderly and learned baalei mussar who were sitting in the beis

hamussar, each in his own corner, crying "ich bin a gornischt", "ich bin a gornischt" and in walks a newcomer and says to himself, unbelievable, such choshuve yidden and they think that they are gornischt, what should I say? At this he bursts into tears and starts crying, "ich bin a gornischt".[b] *Immediately the two baalei mussar get up outraged, "Just who do you think you are that you say you are a gornischt!"*[/b]

So, the members of this site may not have done the years of recovery time that the email author has, but I can guarantee the email author that **no-one comes to this site overnight**. I did 36 years before I came here, and I don't believe for a minute that anyone comes here for the fun of it.

So we need to strike a balance. We need to weed out those who are not serious, who are fundamentally dishonest, who are really only looking for excuses and discover those who are serious even if they have not suffered for years and have not yet looked death in the eyes.

We may be very well-advised to wait for a week or so, after a newcomers first post, circumstances permitting, to get a better sense of who and what they are before giving anything more than initial generic information but we have no right at all to create rules of how much seniority or severity is required to say, "ich bin a gornischt".

[concerned_yid](#)The help and chizuk received from your site, the phone meetings, and the forum may be exactly what they need to stop. The fact that that they are not alone and there is a loving and caring community that they belong to, may be just what they are looking for.[/quote]

[And it may not be. The only criterion should be seriousness.](#)

[\[quote= wrote:](#)

Sending someone like this to SA could do more harm then good; I say this from my own experience.

Don't send anyone. Give information to those who we know are serious.

concerned_yid]Being is SA for nearly three years, I have seen so many people come in and leave, and I can say almost all of them did not come by themselves (rather, they were told by others to try the groups). [/quote]

[b]Yes, you have seen many people come and leave. They were [i]told[/i] by those who caught them who gave them an ultimatum such as, the wife who said, if you don't go you are going to have to give me a get, the employer who said, if you don't go, we are going to have to fire you, the Rov and askonim who said, if you don't go you will have to step down from being Rosh Hakohol, and the Rov and askonim who said, if you don't go we will tell your wife/your parents.[/b]

Come on concerned_yid!!! That is not at all the same as a recommendation made by one serious ex-addict to another serious aspiring ex-addict...

[quote= wrote:

Upon leaving, it only got worse, far worse then you can ever imagine.

You better believe it, blackmail doesn't always work well. People who are coerced into going will not always do well. People who are serious will never look for excuses.

[quote="concerned_yid]The first step says "we admitted that we were powerless" and "that our live had become unmanageable" this means one has to admit it not be told "well, you have a problem, try this this may work". It also means that a person must realize and cry out: "my life is unmanageable and it can no longer go on like this anymore".[/quote]

And no-one says that anybody has to wait until they are ready to work the steps to attend. They just need to be seriously committed to getting what they can from the program beginning with the meetings and a sponsor. **So let's not erect artificial blocks in the way of the struggling addict. Well intentioned or not, this is in direct violation of everything that**

the program is about -- helping the struggling addict, *without your own personal self-serving pre-conditions.*

concerned_yid]Honestly speaking, most people on your site, Boruch Hashem are not there yet. They still have a job, were not caught by their spouse or boss, did not accumulate so much debt that bankruptcy is the only option, and are nor not having sleepless nights because they are so miserable with themselves, or became suicidal. Sending some like this to SA will endanger them and the welfare of the others who already are in SA.[/quote]

This is very well meaning, but as Alcoholics Anonymous puts it, this is a perfect example of self-will run riot. [b]concerned_yid, I care about your concerns, I identify with your points but what you have written in the heat of the moment is a distortion of AA and SA. Ask your sponsor.[/b]

[quote= wrote:

Who can take the achraius for the risk of those dealing with such a devastating addiction, being exposed to the public by some insincere individual.

No-one. That's why we need people who are serious and sincere. **And concerned_yid I can identify for you myself with absolute 100% certainty many people on this forum, just by reading their posts, many people who are serious and sincere, many like myself, not suicidal, not facing bankruptcy, not having been caught who would pose 0% threat to your anonymity, unlike the "cases" being "thrown" into your group daily by the various disgruntled spouses, bosses and askonim.**

concerned_yid] What about the welfare of their family, job, community status, shiduchim, etc.[/quote]

[b]And that is why we should be responsible and serious. But we must not be paranoid. That is self-serving and in violation of the whole purpose of the program.[/b] I sincerely suggest that you show this email to your sponsor and do a very searching, serious and deep 4th Step Inventory for all those who were similar to myself, who were not at the end of the road, who could have gained, but who, unlike myself, have been discouraged by the over-reaching tone of your email.

[\[quote= wrote:](#)

Also, if a person is not ready for the groups and comes to them anyway, he will only learn new things and go out and try them.

If they are serious they will not. Guaranteed. **If they do learn new things they were not serious to begin with and would have found worse things anyway. That, as you know, is what addicts do, along with making excuses, such as, "It was the groups that made me do it".** No concerned_yid, this is not true at all.

[quote="concerned_yid]Anyone who really need SA, because the forum, chizuk, and phone meeting is not enough, will find it on your site, or you may tell him/her with my consent to contact me. If they are ready, I will tell them that it's not just them, they are not alone. I was there and B"H recovered, and that SA is my only option if I want live a happy life, joyous and free.[/quote]

concerned_yid, I know you mean well and I know that, like me, you care, so why not be a little more open-hearted to yidden who are suffering? As a chassidishe yid, you more than anyone, should understand that when a yid wants, no matter what his background, no matter what his situation, when a yid wants, no-one should put barriers between him and the Eibishter.

[quote="concerned_yid]Do not mention SA or 12 steps. This is one of the SA traditions "we grow by attraction rather than promotion". Please let me know.[/quote]

SA has a website and they do list the 12 steps together with a little introductory information. Are you more SA than SA themselves?

But I will be chosem bedovor tov and repeat,

[quote="concerned_yid]SA is my only option if I want live a happy life, joyous and free.[/quote]

[b]concerned_yid, I know you mean well and I know that, like me, you care, so why not be a little more open-hearted to yidden who are suffering? As a chassidishe yid, you more than anyone, should understand that when a yid wants, no matter what his background, no matter what his situation, when a yid wants, no-one should put barriers between him and the Eibishter.[/b]

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 26 Mar 2009 09:23

Boruch, your posts are always very informative and wise, but a little too long and a little too harsh and personal. Here is a repeat of what you just said, in a shorter fashion and without the harshness:

I have read [this page](#) and I know the groups at first-hand and understand the natures of the concerns expressed. Based on my experience, I would take a less limiting approach on the guidelines of who should be encouraged to join.

Anyone who seriously wants to be sober and is serious about doing what he can to make the groups work for him, should be encouraged to join. After all, the program is about "helping the struggling addict". One does not have to wait until he is caught, arrested, bankrupt or suicidal.

To decide if the groups are for you, simply ask yourself if you think there is any way you would be able to stop on your own without Divine help. If the answer is "no", then you are an addict as defined by AA.

So you have a problem - but there is a solution. That solution is a program that is the following:

1) A religious program -- which is about sincerely, deeply and very honestly asking Hakodosh Boruch Hu for help (within the framework of your own Yiddishkeit).

2) A program that requires a personal housecleaning -- doing the program means looking ruthlessly and honestly at every aspect of their character and being ready to have all the flaws removed.

3) A fellowship of people to whom one must have loyalty, at the very least as far as absolutely protecting their anonymity. This means that you must be ready to absolutely guarantee that you will do nothing whatsoever to compromise the anonymity of anyone in the program.

The program is indeed NOT for someone whose only reason to go to the groups was that they are being dragged, kicking and screaming by those who caught them, their wives, Rabbonim and/or askonim. It is also not for someone who is going only so that they can say "see I tried the groups and it didn't work!". Because when people don't feel a desperate need to be there, they can indeed be a significant risk factor to themselves and to others, until they either come on board, get with the program or leave.

There is a famous joke about two elderly and learned baalei mussar who were sitting in the beis hamussar, each in his own corner, crying "ich bin a gornischt", "ich bin a gornischt" and in walks a newcomer and says to himself, unbelievable, such choshuve yidden and they think that they are gornischt, what should I say? At this he bursts into tears and starts crying, "ich bin a gornischt". Immediately the two baalei mussar get up outraged, "Just who do you think you are that you say you are a gornischt!"

The 12-Steps are about realizing "Ich bin a gornisht" – Hashem is the one who fights for me. We have no right to create rules of how much "seniority" or "severity" is required to say, "ich bin a gornischt". The only criterion should be seriousness.

See again [this page](#). I have incorporated your opinion there.

Thank you for sharing this. I sent your comments (my version of them, not yours :-) to the author of the letter and to Rabbi Twerski as well. We'll see what they say.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by battleworn - 26 Mar 2009 13:54

When Rabeinu Guard moved this thread to here, I wished he had deleted it instead. But now I'm beginning to really enjoy it. I always wished there would be more discussion about the 12 steps, the definition of an addict, how the groups affect frum people etc. I did ask some questions on a different thread and I thank Elya and R' Guard for answering, but it wasn't at all enough to satisfy me (I know that I also have to read up on it, but first I needed some direction and, of-course, mareh mekomos)

As far as the definition of an addict and who's ready for the groups, Yair Shochet also holds like concerened_yid. Boruch, can you provide solid proof that they're wrong?

I also want to say that, I'm very impressed and inspired by your honesty.

One of the most significant things that came up here is the issue of finding the right group. This was very lacking before and I think you -Boruch- did us a great service by raising this issue. On this page:www.guardureyes.com/GUE/Tips/12StepsQuest.asp

the following question is asked (question 4)

As of today, b'h my only problem is mainly masturbation and porn, I am concerned of hearing people speak of their experiences with other women and I will get too many good ideas at the meetings and begin exploring those ideas. Also, I have heard that people attending the 12 steps sometimes get turned on by hearing other women talk about their sexual obsessions (I heard of a guy who hooked up with a women at the meeting, dunno if it's true), this concerns me too.

The answer given is the one that I quoted earlier (with the "crazy house..."). In light of what Boruch has taught us about conservative groups, groups that consist only of men etc. and the necessity of finding the right group, this answer clearly needs to be rewritten.

Bi'sheim Hashem Naaseh Vi'natzliach!

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