

Thank you and goodbye letter to PMO

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In YY Jacobson's talk with Eli Nash, he spoke about the importance of saying thank you to the addiction and letting it go. Meaning, the addiction is the solution, not the problem. It's the solution to a deeper pain, a deeper void, a deeper sense of isolation, loneliness, etc. It's been serving a purpose, and to treat it as something so evil only makes us feel worse about ourselves, which fuels the addiction further (as it's really covering up a lack of connection.) Therefore, in order to recover, we must acknowledge what our addiction was doing for us, thank it, and say goodbye, as we're adults now and can deal with our pain in a healthy manner.

Addiction served me for a long time. It protected me. It helped me stop feeling pain. It helped me and I need to acknowledge those parts of me instead of only acting as if it's shame, so I can let it go, and prepare to live a normal, healthy, balanced life.

Rabbi YY Jacobson, in the name of Rabbi Twersky, who helped tons with addiction, spoke about those with addictions having the deepest soul. We have the biggest lack and void in our soul that we need to fill with a stronger, deeper, darker addiction. More than others, we need a strong connection with life, our friends, family, Hashem, our spouse, etc.

Rabbi Jacobson said this addiction is not not about sex. It's about loneliness. The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. It's connection.

I'm ready to connect with my true inner self, with others, and with Hashem, in a truly authentic, rich and meaningful way, even if that sometimes brings pain along with it. Therefore, I need to say goodbye to this addiction.

But, instead of pretending like it's evil and I'm a horrible person, I'm going to start by acknowledging what it was doing for me all of these years... for if it wasn't serving some purpose, I wouldn't be doing it again and again. To ignore this is to ignore reality. I cannot let go of this addiction until I recognize what it's done for me.

This letter is by no means endorsing pornography or masturbation. My aim is not to highlight any "benefits" of these habits or to promote them in any way.

Rather, I want to acknowledge that, despite their destructive effects, they did serve a purpose in my life. They were filling a void, helping me cope with pain and isolation. I wired my brain at a very young age to turn here for comfort, and it protected me all of these years.

I want to recognize what this habit did for me all these years, so I can let it go, and fulfill myself in a healthy, meaningful way with real relationships, even if that means feeling pain.

Dear porn and masturbation, I want to thank you for all that you've done to help me.

Before we met, I was a happy little boy with a "normal" home. I fondly remember the love and

connection I felt during shabbat dinners with my family. I also enjoyed all the time I spent with my mom when she home schooled me. She took me on field trips, read books with me, and otherwise spent lots of quality time with me.

But then we moved, and my parents' marriage went downhill. Shabbat dinners stopped abruptly, followed by the love and attention I once received as a little boy.

That's when the fighting started.

I was a nine year old boy, all alone in my room with nobody there. I was scared and afraid. I could hear my parents screaming at each other downstairs tucked away under the covers. I tried to cover my ears, but I could still hear. I tried slipping a note under their bedroom door during a fight asking them to make up, but they kept fighting. I crawled into my four year old sister's bed when my parents were fighting downstairs late at night so I wouldn't be all alone. My sleeping sister was the only one there to comfort me.

One night, I waited all night for my mom to tuck me in, but she didn't come. I started crying and screaming "mom! where are you?!" over and over but she didn't come.

Then my dad walked in. He sat down on the floor, leaning against the wall, defeated.

"Your mom isn't coming home tonight Jacob."

That's when he broke the news to me.

After my parents divorced, life went on. My mom had to get a job to support herself and couldn't homeschool me. She was becoming less and less available, both emotionally and physically. I went from sleeping in to waking up at the crack of dawn, driving to a babysitter's house before public school at 5 AM, going to school, and then going back to the babysitter until she picked me up at 7 PM, took us home, gave us dinner and went to sleep.

The transition was difficult, but I adjusted quickly. This all happened when I was in the 4th grade, around 9 or 10 years old.

In the 5th grade, I heard someone say girls kiss each other too, but I didn't believe them. I searched "girls kissing" on Google.

Then I found you.

I didn't know what I was seeing at first. I felt excited and ashamed at the same time. Even at such a young age, something about what I was looking at felt so wrong.

But I kept going back for more.

Curiosity turned into a regular habit. As time passed, I thought it was normal. Just about every boy I spoke to at school was watching you too. We talked about it as if it was normal.

When I came home from school, I used you. Before I went to sleep, I used you. When I was

bored, I used you. When I was feeling lonely, I used you.

Within a few years, I used you every day, at least once a day, for almost a decade.

I never thought I was an unhappy child or teenager. I always thought "I was fine."

The truth is, I was not fine. I was in pain, and you helped me feel "fine." You numbed my pain. You numbed my pain so it didn't hurt so badly. You gave me something to connect to when I was lacking connection.

I never addressed the pain inside from my parents' divorce, or the distance put between me and my mother. Instead of facing my problems, I just covered them up with you.

Now that I'm older, you're still helping me up until this very moment. When I'm tired, stressed, lonely, overwhelmed, or feeling shame, you help me calm down and feel good.

When I'm preparing for a hard week ahead, settling back into the stressful realities of life, business, etc. you help me calm down.

It's hard for me to let you go, after all we've been through together. Through the ups and the downs, you've always been there to help me through it all.

However, despite our long history, I cannot go on like this any longer, for our relationship is not a healthy one. You may numb my pain, but you're also numbing my experience of life along with it. You take me out of this world in an unhealthy way. You make me feel shame, guilt, fear, sadness, and isolation.

You're replacing an opportunity to feel true love and connection with something artificial and fake.

You're preventing me from getting married, as I cannot take this filthy habit into a marriage. You will destroy my relationship with my wife, hurt my children, and ultimately cause me to repeat the cycle of pain and trauma passed down to me from by my parents.

Even without marriage, when I'm with you, I'm not really living. I'm numbing myself, and dulling the brightness of life.

You promise to make me feel connected and loved, but every time you betray me and make me feel isolated, alone, like nobody will ever love me, and that everyone would shun me if they knew about you. Rather than making me feel connected to Hashem, others and myself, you make me feel isolated.

You make me feel powerless over my desires, like an animal, a slave to impulse. You make me engage in the most base behaviors, so far beneath my values, but they go out the door when I'm with you.

I've been angry at you for making me hate myself and do things I regret. I've been angry at you for years, but I keep coming back to you. Until now, I was not ready to let you go.

Every time I felt bad - whether caused by a tough conversation with a family member, stress at work, loneliness, etc - you were there for me. I turned to you to comfort me. But the temporary relief you gave was always swiftly followed by even more pain, anguish, loneliness, and isolation, than before.

didn't realize we had a toxic relationship until a few years ago when my friend challenged me to go 30 days without you and I only went 17. Ever since then, I've tried and tried, but have never gone more than a few months, and recently, once every week or two.

Ever since I tried fighting you, I've been so angry at you. As much as one part of me wants to let you go, another part of me is holding on so tight. I've hated that part of me. I've felt like I'm not a man, not a good person, not a good Jew. It makes me feel hopeless, like I'll never be married, never have a true meaningful connection with someone else, and even if I do get married, you'll haunt me in my marriage for eternity. I have a hard time looking rabbis and women in the eye, because I feel gross inside. I've been so angry at you for that, and so angry at the world for putting me in this situation.

But I realized that anger is not the right emotion to feel towards you. Rather, I should be feeling gratitude and compassion.

Gratitude, because you helped the little ten year old boy weather the storm of life for so many years, protecting him from the pain of his parents' divorce, lack of affection from his mother, and being thrust into a public school environment where he needed to survive.

And compassion, because that little boy didn't have a choice when he found you. He was a young child in lots of pain, who only wanted love from his family, but wasn't getting it. He was an innocent boy, full of life. A little boy who felt powerless over his family dynamic, in pain, who stumbled upon you without knowing any better. He was given unfiltered and unrestricted access to one of the strongest drugs ever known to mankind at the age of ten. It was normalized in his society, to the point where he'd talk about it with friends in school, hear about it in music, see it on TV and in movies, etc. He didn't know any better. How was he supposed to know the damage he was doing to himself back then?

And now, as an adult, I've been blaming that little boy, and angry at that little boy, for using you as a coping mechanism, when really, I should be feeling compassion for that little boy. He's still inside, and he still wants the love and affection he once had as a young boy but became deprived of by the age of 10. He was too young to know any better back then, so how can I expect him to know any better now?

Therefore, I have compassion for that boy. I love him more than he could ever know. He's a valuable person with so many bright lights to shine in this world. He has the potential to become a great person. He can have a meaningful and fulfilling marriage, raise healthy and bright children, and do so much to help others around him. But he has to see his own potential first.

But now, it's time to say goodbye. I'm an adult now, with free will. I'm choosing life over death. I choose to live. That means running towards Hashem, not away from Him. But don't be fooled - just because I'm saying goodbye to porn does not mean I'm going to forget about the little boy inside. I love him and will take care of him more now than ever before. He's finally going to get

the real love he so desperately needs from himself, rather than seeking it from external sources. Not from porn, not from masturbation, not even relying on others for external validation.

Rather, he's going to get it from me. I'm going to love him and take care of him every day.

I'm going to love myself. Only through loving myself - truly loving myself - can I come to love others. And I cannot love myself when watching pornography. I'm watching women being objectified on a screen. I'm wasting my tremendous potential. I'm connecting to fake people doing something so animalistic and fake - connecting to pixels on a screen instead of a real person. I'm making myself feel shame and isolation instead of love and connection.

I'm hurting my ability to have a healthy, loving and meaningful marriage and increasing my odds of divorce and loneliness, the very opposite of what I want.

I cannot enter a marriage with you like so many of my peers have.

So, porn and masturbation, this is goodbye. Thank you for all you've done for me, but I must go.

What will I do without you?

I'll live life to the fullest, feeling every moment of it, good and bad, for even the bad is good. Even though it doesn't feel good, it's the bad from which we grow the most and learn the most about ourselves.

I'm going to experience life, the happy and the sad, the pleasure and the pain. I'm going to love myself and love the inner child. Instead of turning to you I'm going to take care of myself with prayer, meditation, exercise, adventure and truly meaningful connections with others instead of my artificial connection to you. I'm choosing to build rather than destroy, to live rather than to die.

Thank you, and goodbye.

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