

Need help with my teenage son

Posted by boismom - 14 May 2009 13:42

Hello and forgive me for intruding as I am only a teen's mother and this isn't really my "space" but I don't know where else to turn and I need help and advice to help my son with this terrible addiction.

He is almost 16 and has been having trouble with this on and off for several years but lately it is getting worse. Sometimes he admits it's a "problem" that he wants to try to get over and sometimes he laughs it off and says he's just like any other kid, that 85% of boys his age watch this stuff. At one point I got him to look at this site and this forum and that seemed to sober him up for a few weeks but then I started finding the videos again. He says he can't go cold turkey and the videos are like a nicotine patch. I said there's no acceptable level of this. He also blamed me for his relapse saying I hadn't loosened up any of my restrictions on him when he was sober so why should he bother. I feel I am living with an addict and can't "loosen up" for a second.

We are locked in a daily game of cat and mouse. When he is at school or asleep I ransack his room and look at flash drives, memory sticks, and anything else he can save data on. My husband's office serves as the storage facility for all his confiscated things. Today I found video files on his non-video ipod stashed away in the "Calendar" file. They had been downloaded a few weeks ago. When I said I thought he had given up that stuff he said "Oh, those were just in case...". (huh?!?) To me, his need to have a flashdrive full of videos at any time indicates this is a pretty serious addiction. Other kids might look at this stuff when opportunity arises but he goes out of his way to hoard them. We have pretty good filters on our home computers (I think) but it seems every other kid in school has a laptop and there's wifi everywhere. His PSP internet browser is locked and he doesn't have the password, so he bought himself a new PSP which we had to confiscate. I end up taking away a lot of his electronics but I'm afraid if he has no way to amuse and distract himself he'll get worse. The compromise is to let him have it but to be constantly vigilant. This is exhausting physically and emotionally. We have considered and continue to consider finding him another place to live but don't know what institution or family would put up with this behavior.

This is not his only problem by far. He has been receiving mental health and educational interventions since he was a little kid. I'm not looking for advice and help for all of his issues, just to explain where things stand. He can be very chutzpahdik and his connection to yiddishkeit is very tentative right now. So trying to appeal to his sense of yiras shamayim or kibbud av v'em is difficult. I've tried. I've even tried to explain for a purely secular viewpoint how pernicious this addiction is but he laughs it off, "Oh, everybody does it." From his perspective all the restrictions of Torah and his family's rules are keeping him from living a "normal" life which includes watching whatever he feels like. I'd like to think his neshama still hears me deep down

but I don't know...I guess on the bright side he's not living a "double life" or acting like a hypocrite.

We are thinking about finding him another school. Right now he is in a Modern Orthodox day school type place where there is a lot of internet access. I'm afraid that switching him to a more black hat type of place with less emphasis on internet will lead him to rebel even more because he really won't fit in there and will miss his friends. And he'll find this stuff, somehow, maybe. Also, I'm not sure whether to give him back his PSP which I took away last week after finding the memory stick with bad videos on it. The PSP's ability to display video makes it very attractive as a private viewing booth. On the other hand he uses it to just have fun playing games and letting off steam after a long day at school. He has ADD and without something to distract himself he gets bored which leads to more problematic behavior, eg on the school bus. Does anyone know of a way to jigger a PSP so he can't use a memory stick?

I'm also not sure how much of this information to share with his friends' families. I know of least two occasions when he watched videos with friends, once in my very own house when he invited a friend for a sleepover. I feel like he has a sickness and it's contagious and I'm afraid for the other kids. On the other hand I don't want him to lose all his friends and become a social outcast. I know at least one of his friends has tried to encourage him away from this shtuss.

Would like some advice on these issues and just general chizuk. If you can remember to your own adolescence and what your parents did or didn't do that worked or didn't work would be appreciated. I don't know how much he can really help it and I shouldn't get angry but I still do. Also if you know of any groups or therapists in the NYC area, specifically Queens, Manhattan or the Five Towns, please let me know. I know about SA but I think that's really geared more for spouses.

Thanks again.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by perfectnose - 22 May 2009 05:10

I really feel for you, I worked in a camp for teenagers at risk and had one of my hardest summers ever. sometimes you want to lock them up and throw away the key until they turn 21. I wish you only nachas and especially yiddishe nachas.

PN

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Ilan - 22 May 2009 12:20

Hi Mrs Mother.

I am certainly no psychologist and I did not read every single post but I did read your first letter. I am not a parent so you can take my advice for what it is worth or just simply discard it. I am not sure I have a right to give advice as I struggle with these issues. To me, you seem to behave towards your son as a commander behaves towards a soldier in basic training. I believe that the best thing you can do for your son is to love him regardless of his addiction or difficult tendencies. My brother is not an addict but he struggled at school socially, his father (my father) often would tell him to leave the house. It came to the point where my brother was not even welcome in his own house. What has happenend to that relationship - Well its over. My mother loves all her children equally and no matter what we did wrong, she still loved us. I think for your sake that one thing you cannot compromise on is your love for your son. I believe that you are doing so by invading his privacy. Perhaps you are not the best person to solve his addiction and you cannot do it with a "whip". A psychologist or an upstanding friend or Rabbi is probably more appropriate. Showing tough love by kicking him out the house is not an appropriate response. He is not on drugs or alcohol that he would behave violently towards you. I remember one of my siblings was looking at porn. I did not see it personally but my fathers computer technician noticed it when browsing through the history... My mom was concerned that his privacy was violated. Maybe that was not the correct response, but she loved him and was concerned for his honour. When your son looks at you he must see that you love him. If he sees his mother as a commanding officer he would rebel even more and look, checking through his things is not working so why carry on? I feel that there is a tendency on this forum to say that "you are right" or "I empathise with you" etc but in this case I believe that looking through your son's flash drive is not the correct thing to do!!! And perhaps you are the wrong person to help him off his addiction.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Elya K - 24 May 2009 04:31

Dear Mom,

In a sense his spiritual sense is wasting away. You're in charge, not your son. You're paying his

tuition, feeding him, clothing him and giving him shelter. If he were Chas V'Sholom sick with another

illness you would pick him up and force him to go for help. This is no different. Have you spoken to

Reb Shaya Cohen in Lawrence? If not, I would highly recommend it immediately. Call Rabbi Bender in

Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway and he can give you the information.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Nat - 01 Jun 2009 13:15

Dear mom;

I am crying and davening with you and for you and your son.

My only suggestion other than the ones already said is maybe if you could work indirectly through a friend or someone he trusts, it might work more, since it seems he also has the rebellious nature of a teen worked in there too.

Never give up keep davening for him, and help others with taharas Hamishpocha too. It can truly help.

Nosson

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Nat - 01 Jun 2009 13:30

As well maybe come to the idea with him that at least no porn at home meaning he has a place at home not the porn. I had a friend who was involved in girls his mother always kept a bed for him at home but only for him not for girlfriends-sometimes it won't work but it's a suggestion saying even though you think it's normal respect me and my feelings at my home.

The last thing I would like to say was that you too should never ever ever give up hope or stop loving your son he has a pure neshama even if he leaves home chasve sholom and someday B"H he will get over it. There are so many people here who have gotten over it. I personally was addicted for 12 years of my life Hashem should forgive me for this.

As well as what wrote before yidden believe that we are all connected when we strengthen ourselves in yidishkeit we help everyone else.

And as a side point you should get support yourself begashmius so that you won't freak out have a nervous breakdown and that you'll be able to deal with this as rationally as you can. What I mean to say is physically get rest, sleep if you can, do exercise, eat normally, and emotionally go for counseling go to meetings speak to friends (not loshon horah and not to people that don't understand and may destroy his reputation and self esteem...) and **KEEEP POSTING HERE IT HELPS WE CAN AT LEAST GIVE YOU SUPPORT!**

Again I am saying tehillim here from the heart for you and him.

Nosson

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by BruceWayne - 01 Jun 2009 14:48

I agree with Ilan. DO NOT let your relationship dissolve to nothingness. It wasn't that long ago that I was a teenager (I'm 22) and I remember very well that I had this mentality that was basically to do the opposite of whatever my parents told me, regardless of what it was, just to spite them. I have a friend who was kicked out of the house for his behavior, but it's a 2 way street. If his parents had approached the issue differently then maybe things would have been better than they are now. Sometimes if you push, you get pushed back harder.

My parents never found out what I was doing. Of course, I was careful enough to keep everything digital. Having hard copies of anything is just asking to be found out. They may have found out anyway (and I've had a gut feeling telling me so) but if they did they never brought it

up. I guess they assumed it was a "phase" and that I was responsible enough to control it (I am a responsible person and a good student, so I guess that went to my favor). In a sense they were right because I am now on this forum, but it took forever.

Maybe you could try getting your husband to talk to him. After all, it is a "guy thing" and there would be a better sense of understanding between them. In fact, he may rebel even more because women truthfully cannot understand the lure of porn for us, so he may think that if you think it's wrong you really have no idea what you're talking about so he just won't listen.

But tread lightly at first. Like I said, if you push hard you can be pushed back harder.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Lechayim - 01 Jun 2009 15:39

Chasid ?Sexual? Enjoys arousal? Lust? Needs physical pleasure? Or is it really an addiction to pornography? Are these really so different? Isn't this all one big problem?

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Ilan - 02 Jun 2009 09:53

Boy's mom has left us! Bruce Wayne, you make our forum exciting

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by BruceWayne - 02 Jun 2009 21:50

What does that mean?

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by the.guard - 02 Jun 2009 22:04

Ilan is saying that "Boysmom" hasn't posted in a while...

And he is saying that you, Bruce, make the forum exciting!

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by bardichev - 02 Jun 2009 22:17

bruce you make it very exciting

you honesty and easy style makes you a person that I can identify with

hatzlacha

bardichev

boysmom we want you back!!

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by ninetydays - 10 Jun 2009 21:41

Dear BoysMom,

I am new to this site and this is my first post. I am 24 and have been semi-addicted for the past 3 years. It all started with the internet in my moms office at home. From there it let to the

occasional peek, the occasional chat, until I really slipped.

While I am married now with a child I still do not consider myself completely cured. On occasion, when business is not going great, or I get upset at my wife, and there is a computer around I will stumble.

I have been to other forums where people talk about random topics. What you can see here is how much people care. From the fact that the grammar is accurate, to the responses lengthy, people take time out of their day to give Chizuk to those who struggle just like them.

While I was not like that at 16, I was in bad shape at 21. In hindsight I do not believe I ever felt real guilt while I was in the ditch. I don't know why --- that is just how I remember those experiences.

In terms of advice for you.... I am no expert but I would like to offer my 2 cents as to what made an impression on me.

I was watching a TV show couple years ago and the host (Maurie) was counseling 14 year old girls on the dangers of having random sex and prostitution. To stress his point he brought out a former prostitute who had two months left to live. She started screaming at these young girls and told them that unless they got their act together, they were five years away from turning out just like her.

Obviously porn does not have the same damaging affect as prostitution. It does not bring on disease or illness. But the detrimental affects it does have are disastrous. I think and I know its repeating what everyone else says is to see the end game.. where it leads. Eventually porn will not satisfy him and he will turn to.....then.....then.... The end game if presented the right way will make him think twice about where he is going.

To conclude this is an amazing site and keep us posted of your sons behavior. While we don't know you we really do care and want to be as supportive as an online group can be.

Chazak Veematz!!!!!!!!!!

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by kutan - 15 Jul 2009 21:26

Hi All,

Boysmom is still around, she just has a lot on her plate right now, and is not motivated to keep checking this site like we are.

I PM'ed her the following, and she responded right away, so if you wish to PM her your insights, she will appreciate them.

Ilan and followers, my humble opinion is with you. Boysmom mission is to keep a loving open relationship with 'boy', and not to be the one to police him. But it is a tightrope, since she can't condone it either.

Rabbi Brezak gives parenting lessons that have helped my family tremendously, and he is great for guiding cases like this.

I'm posting my PM here for the benefit of all:

Hi Mom,

Rabbi Brezak gives weekly parenting lectures recorded on the phone. You call in and listen (about 45 min.). He answers Q's he received during the week, discusses a point in parenting, and has some inspirational talk too.

You can email / fax the q's to him during the week, and hopefully he will pick it.

He also gives more in depth workshops by phone, that are live (you can speak with him during

it) They are on specific topics such as sibling rivalry, dealing with difficult children, the shabbos table, etc.

It takes time to absorb his approach, which is basically to develop a positive relationship with the child by making continuous emotional deposits in the bank account, disciplining proactively (not during the episode), disciplining positively (with incentives and kindness) and so on. He bases it all on advice from Gedolim.

But he also has a knack on advising people. I've seen it again and again.

He also does telephone counseling one on one, but it is a bit costly... billed by the half hour. However, I have subscribed for this and have found the benefits to be priceless. The workshops and recorded parenting line are economical.

All this is done under the name of 'Project Kavey'. They can be reached at 718 569 2521.

I am sure your getting good advice. But when it comes to raising children, to me (and clearly to you) there is nothing more important, and I would tap R' Brezak to help as well.

BEST wishes. Please know that it is very likely that with good hadracha and siyata d'shmaya, your son will outgrow this.

BTW, here is a link about R' Brezak :

www.5tjt.com/news/read.asp?Id=2052

(the 732 number in the article is no longer... use the 718 number in the email above)

and here is a comment someone posted on Yeshiva world after a teen - risk article:

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Raising kids today is more difficult than ever before. I need to get Da'as Torah when I have parenting questions. Project Kavey has started a Parenting Line. I have benefited along with hundreds of families from Rabbi Brezak's advice. This is very new and I would like to inform everyone of what is available to them. Every week he gives ? hour of parenting inspiration, with ANSWERS to frequently asked questions along with a tip for the week. A free demo is available at: 212-990-6160.

I was so impressed with what I heard that I undertook to help start a national "one book lending gemach" of the book "Chinuch in Turbulent Times" by Rabbi Dov Brezak. In Eretz Yisroel there are already over 200 gemachim established and parents are getting life changing results from his advice. This book will change the life of all those who read it, if it is read with an open mind and ready to learn from. Rabbi Wolbe zatzal's haskomah says that he almost assures that anyone raising their children according to the guidelines in this book will be matzliach with their chinuch. On his shoulders we can definitely depend!

Anyone interested in starting a gemach in their home or borrowing the book should please contact me at onebookgemach@gmail.com

Comment by chesedzechus — August 14, 2007 @ 4:25 pm

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by battleworn - 16 Jul 2009 11:22

Kuton, I'm so glad you brought this up. From all the people I've heard and all the stuff I've read about parenting, I found R' Brizak to be **way** above everyone else. He's extremely humble and is very careful to stick to the truth. In my opinion, others don't come anywhere him in this.

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