

The Real Connection

Posted by Yosef - 13 Mar 2010 19:15

Its been more than a month since I've posted. I am continuing with SA meetings (trying to make 3 per week) and having daily contact with a sponsor who has been sober for 26 years. I have started to feel the relief and even happiness (if I know what that is) that comes with surrender to the will of a sponsor rather than my own. I am starting to realize the ways that I need to really protect myself from my disease. One of our meetings is well attended. There is ALOT of long term sobriety in the room. It is so comforting to just sit and breath the same air as these guys who only could have made it this long through their relationships with Hashem. I am trying to learn from them how to get Hashem to help me too. The experience of callinog a sponsor daily and hearing his joy in hearing from me is also amazing. My sponsor has nothing material to gain from the hours of time he gives me on the phone and over skype. Thats what makes it a REAL CONNECTION. I am sure that Hashem speaks to me through him. Hopefully I have had enough of trying to do this my way. The SA fellowship is truly giving me a happiness that I have never known.

Yosef

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Sturggle - 13 Mar 2010 19:34

Yosef,

That's great to hear. Hope all continues to go well.

kol tuv!

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by the.guard - 13 Mar 2010 21:32

Hi Yosef! Great to hear from you. You are a VERY INSPIRING person!

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Giant Leap - 14 Mar 2010 03:32

Hi Yosef,

Thank you for sharing your experiences. I sense that you are a very positive person, and that influences your posting, which is good for everyone here to read. I have just a few points that I wanted to make. First and foremost, I am proud of you for attending these meetings. Through your posting, it shows the great impact that these meetings have on you. Perhaps, your sponsor has something to gain; a mutual relationship where your actions, thoughts, experiences, and successes brings that person more strength in battling. Also it brings a unique perspective on living life which without you he/she couldn't gain. In other words, your presence is important for him/her and visa versa. Another thing I wanted to point out is the term "disease". I will just say, I'm a newbie with this struggle, but I find it easier to call our "issue" a "challenge" rather than a disease. Technically, I learned that the word disease implies a deficit (we are deficient!), and with some diseases, people have not found a way to fix it - yet! Thus, our challenge or issue implies WE can get control and reach sobriety, like your sponsor and others in the meetings, and be'ezrat Hashem all of us.

Pull out the Yosef Ha'tazadik in you.

Giant Leap

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Yosef - 16 Mar 2010 09:28

Dear Giant Leap,

Thanks for the compliments. Your right about my positivity, but it might surprize you to know where my positivity and hope come from. I don't know anything about your challenges, your age or whether your challenges have expanded as mine have over the decades - but when I started getting into stuff that was really destroying my life and I could not stop despite my best efforts I started to realize that **if nothing changes nothing is going to change!**. I prayed to be connected to someone who could help me and I eventually was led to an SA sponsor with 26 years of sobriety from stuff that was even more far out that I had ever ventured into. I asked him what had enabled him to stay sober for 26 years while I kept falling (and his challenges were far greater than mine). He told me that he believed that he had a disease and that I didn't believe that I did. He said that that his experience with thousands of guys like me has shown him that guys who believe they have a disease have much better long-term sobriety that guys that don't. By the way, he is also a physician. Anyway, he has taught me that I am not a bad person (a sinner) trying to be a good person, but rather a sick person trying to become healthy one. So, B"H its working for me. If I didn't accept that I have a disease (which could kill me, my wife and children, my career, my name etc.) than I wouldn't make it a big enough priority to stay sober. My sponsor puts his sobriety before everything even his family and career. I asked him how he could do this. He said, imagine that you have diabeted and you don't take your insulin, the consequence would be going into a diabetic coma and dying. Looking back now, I think my problem in accepting the disease model was just that I had just not lost enough yet. Good luck to you!

Yosef

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Giant Leap - 16 Mar 2010 19:26

Dear Yosef,

Your are surely welcome. I feel that this issue is a challenge, and that people need to hear and be recipients of love, support, and especially hear about their strengths. Since you have asked to know a little about me, I will briefly mention that currently, I am starting my education and career in the helping profession. Ironically, I have fallen into the falsehood of lust and addiction, but I think it will strengthen me and my connection to Hashem (If I can't help myself, then how can I help others - always runs in my mind). I can not really share how this issue started with me, in fact, I can not really recall how it started and why it did. The fact is that I have it, it's a challenge, and with Hashem's constant help and in Him directing me to this online community, I will succeed. Because I am being trained in such a field, I have come across both the disease and the positive/wellness strength based model. For those that do not know about the two models, the disease model used by the physician(s)/SA sponsor, places emphasis on a problem

or deficit and tries to find a solution. The strength based model works on encouragement and various strengths that the person has and uses those strengths in helping the individual overcome an issue or challenge. Years of research has shown that many people like people to focus on their strengths rather than their problems, after all if someone seeks help (lets say for depression) and gets an earful of negatives (like the diabetes example) about their "problem", then mostly likely most people will feel down about themselves (in this case become depressed or even more so). Additionally, in the helping profession, there is a shift in moving from the disease model to the positive/strengths based model (aka Positive Psychology). Anyways, it's all about perspective, and there is no right or wrong way to look at it.

So, if we look at your strengths, Yosef, one can see that you possess an enormous amount of fortitude to deal with a challenge that lasts for decades! Not only that, you have come to understand that you need help (admitting is a difficult issue that people 'and I' struggled or struggle with). Here is you stating that in your own words - *" started getting into stuff that was really destroying my life and I could not stop despite my best efforts I started to realize that if nothing changes nothing is going to change!.I prayed to be connected to someone who could help me and I eventually was led to an SA sponsor with 26 years of sobriety from stuff that was even more far out that I had ever ventured into. "* Here it's best to note that neither the strength based or disease model will ever work if one does not admit that he or she needs help and seeks it. You can also see that the SA sponsor did tap into a positive perspective, by stating that you are not a sinner but a good person. Lastly, another strength is that you have set up priorities in your life to be reach your potential and the goal to be sober (hence you are attending SA meetings) in order to live an enriched life in regards to your wife and children, your career, and your name. In short, the goal is the same,whatever works for you is great and the only priority.

Much success and blessings to you,

Giant Leap

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Yosef - 17 Mar 2010 22:58

Dear Giant,

Yeah. Tons of therapy, love, support and being told about my strengths by "helpers" did nothing for my addiction. When you act out enough times your brain changes. Its like soaking a

cucumber in vinegar once its really absorbed that stuff, its a pickle, and no amount of chizuk is ever going to get it to be a cucumber again. What is working for me and millions of others is Spiritual approach that empowers me to accept that it is ok that I'm a pickle and not exactly like everybody else. In fact, even if I could go back to the life of a cucumber, at this point, I might decline the offer - my pickle status is accelerating my growth in ways that being a normal cucumber never did!

Yosef

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Giant Leap - 18 Mar 2010 04:25

Dear Yosef,

Interesting posting, especially about the pickle analogy:) Its not only about giving people chizuk, which is good and does work. Chizuk is a tool and in of it self can be therapeutic. You'd be surprised that a few words can change a person's life. What I am saying is that the strength based model is a new and popular approach to view the same thing as the problem/deficit model without depressing people. In fact, it works with 87% of clients, while 13% need the above approach, plus medication. The brain does not change, behaviors do. A behavior is learned, can be unlearned and relearned. The maladaptive behavior, which in this case is being addiction to lust (viewing illicit images and videos, the act, etc) needs to be replaced with a positive and constructive behavior(s)/lifestyle. This can be done through psychotherapy, and one approach that works with addictions in particular is behavior therapy. There are a few of these behavioral therapies that are quite intriguing. Regarding what you said about the spiritual approach. The spiritual aspect empowered you (and many of us here on this site) because that is one of our strengths. For example, other strengths can include family, friends, shul and community, the Torah, among many things. This approach does not work with everyone. I beleive I read about someone here on the forum that prefers the 12-Steps. Also, a step further, athiests would not fair well with such an approach;D. Acceptance in whatever way one comes to it is what I've been saying, without it neither model can work. I am happy that whatever approach you've found successful works for you.

Giant Leap

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Yosef - 18 Mar 2010 11:04

Dear Giant Leap,

I admire your tenacity. There's a saying in A.A.: If you spot it, YOU GOT IT! So please don't be offended by what I'm about to say because I GOT IT TOO! probably more than you do. I am usually quite enamored by my own opinions and I'm a classic case of "self-will run riot" That's why I wasted a lot of years getting nowhere with my recovery. My illness stayed on a relatively low light for many years and so I rationalized that I could just continue on. It wasn't until a few years ago that it changed from just masturbating and sitting in front of a computer (after a while, as you know, it sucks you into more and more stuff - like phone sex. But believe me it doesn't stop there). So I didn't start really cleaning house until I met the first person who I could not manipulate - my sponsor. He saw through me like a human MRI machine. He knew what I was all about right away not because he is a psychiatrist but because he is an addict. He started to clobbered me over the head whenever I started to worship the god-of-my own thinking. And it felt so good to get my illness beat out of me. People like you and I are just too "challenged" to trust our own thinking. Just look where our best thinking has got us. My sponsor broke his anonymity years ago in order to co-found and build SA.. As a psychiatrist I'm sure that he knows more about psychological theory and the statistics of human behavior than I do and maybe more than you do too. But despite his superior knowledge and intellect he still attends SA meetings, and does what his sponsors tell him to do. He accepts that he has a disease and that it is not only incurable but it gets progressively worse with time. We try to do whatever our sponsors tell us to do because they have more wisdom than we do. I will usually try to do whatever he tells me to do even if I think he is wrong because **I must continually surrender to someone or something greater than myself in order to not fall again.** And, it's only through that lovely feeling of SURRENDER that I can feel fully alive, free and full of joy!

You recently wrote openly of you fall. Why not go for the real thing this time. Surrender and join us for a meeting or at least give in and call me for a few minutes. We have a lot in common.

Yosef

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Giant Leap - 18 Mar 2010 23:23

Dear Yosef,

Thanks for the compliment about my tenacity, which really it isn't. I'm just trying to use what I am
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are right about how our challenge(s) can possibly extend beyond the computer. I've read some personal stories here on the forum and one on Lazer Brody's blog about some people who had there issues extend beyond viewing illicit images and acting on them in compulsory ways. My issue has never extended further than my own computer. I am not willing to seek out prostitutes or partners. Anyways, I do agree that we have difficulties in trusting our own thinking, because the yetzer is too strong and manipulates us. Also, esoterically speaking, the flaw of knowledge/covenant i.e being pogem, clogs the person's connection to Hashem and lessen his ability to understand what he did wrong. It's because the person has created a kilpa (shell) around himself, and others say that one's spiritual foreskin that needs to be excised to return to Hashem.

learning to help others and share some insights. Nothing you said has or will offend me

Regarding your comment about me and your SA sponsor's knowledge on psychological theories. I am not saying that I know more about psychological theory and statistics of human behavior than your SA sponsor (psychiatrist); I can assure you that I do not. As I mentioned previously, I am pursuing a degree (my master's) in the helping profession. I am currently taking classes about psychotherapies and applying them to my life as an addict. I'm even thinking where addictions should be my specialization, but I'm not that sure.

RE: Your comment about you SA Sponsor seeking help from othe

rs. "But despite his superior knowledge and intellect he still attends SA meetings, and does what his sponsors tell him to do." Of course, he's human too. Counselors, therapist, and the like seek help too when issues in their lives develop. Helping people is their profession, but sometime they too need help.

RE: "I must continually surrender to someone or something greater than myself in order to not fall again." Yes. I agree. It is good that you are modeling the behaviors and learning from the wisdom of your SA sponsor.

RE: "Why not go for the real thing this time. Surrender and join us for a meeting or at least give in and call me for a few minutes. We have alot in common."

I'm sure we got alot in common. I don't think I have the courage to join a meeting or call. It took me a "giant leap" to admit that I have a problem, let alone another giant leap to begin to write on the forums, after viewing them for some time. Thank you for your offer.

Giant Leap

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Re: The Real Connection

Posted by Yosef - 19 Mar 2010 14:19

Giant,

Thanks for your honesty about being afraid. I can relate to it because it took me a long time to start attending the meetings. I will B'N pray for you for the next two weeks. In the meantime, I hope you continue to enjoy your life - the good old Jewish way!

Shefa, Brocho and Hotslocha.

Your brother in Recovery,

Yosef

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