

Multi Addictions

Posted by London - 08 Jun 2009 21:25

Hello

BH I am now getting sober days in thanks to the help of my SA program and this forum, however one of the major problems I have experianced is multi addictions which was a large part of my relapse. I have 3 addictions: lust, food and over spending. When I was sober in SA for 3 years, I worked at some point on the other 2 but never put them both down like I did with my lust. It is known that when a person recovers from one addiction the acting out can go side ways like trying to plug a leak the water will burst at the next weakest point.

As I wrote I am now getting back on the recovery track for my lust BH and am slowly putting more and more days of sobriety, however, I am also overeating and spending money I do not have.

Although this forum is only for lust issues, I know that unless I stop acting out on all levels, I am a ticking time bomb and will explode sooner or later (I exploded after 3 years). What I would like to know from members on this forum is if you have like me multi addictions and have been sucessful in putting them ALL down, how did you do this? My life today is so much better then a few weeks ago, but I know that it can be far far better. Perhaps the answer is to attend SA, DA (Debtors Annonymous) and OA (overeaters), but it seems too much,

I eagerly await some insperation.

London

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by the.guard - 08 Jun 2009 22:28

Hi London,

We had a guy called "Boruch" once on our forum. He came here spouting fire AGAINST the 12-Steps (claiming they were Christian, counter-intuitive, etc..), but after his therapist suggested he try them, he did - and he became a new man. He started posting long and beautiful posts about the value of the 12-Steps, and after a while we even named him our "official 12 Step expert" on GUE. We quoted him in many Chizuk e-mails, see e-mails #439 - 450 on [this page](#)... He is very intelligent and he internalized the concepts beautifully... We even asked him to lead a whole SA division on GYE (see the handbook, tool #14)... But then he disappeared for a while. Recently, we checked up with him to see how he's doing, and here was his beautiful reply. And I think it will answer some of your questions... If you want, you can contact him yourself at: boruchshemo@gmail.com (I actually **suggest** you do). Here's what he wrote me last week:

Hello Guard,

With the help of Hashem I am sober in SA for 132 days, one day at a time and all is well. My wife is doing B"H very well in S-Anon and best of all I have stopped trying to "control" her recovery.

Currently, I have three sponsees. I am still working with Y. from Ohio remotely by phone (I hope to meet him in person in several weeks) and within the last three weeks, I am now working with two from yidden in person who, thanks to a discussion I had at the JSS retreat, these Yidden are now travelling 2 1/2 hours each way from NY State to my out-of-state group for Step meetings that get the participants to work through all of the 12 Steps in a fixed amount of time (in my group it is 4 weeks, in some it is 8, while in at least one it is as many as 20 weeks).

Yaakov is up to Step 9 and the other two are BE"H doing their 4th and 5th with me tonight and tomorrow. I expect that by the time I have taken all three through all 12 Steps on their first pass - by next Tuesday (June 9th), I will be ready to do online stepwork.

*I have been very busy with daily contact with my sponsees and I just took a week's trip to the UK just before Shavuot for a chassuna. I have also been busy with the financial wreckage of my past, as you no doubt know the last and most important part of Step 12 is practicing these principles in **all of our affairs**.*

I had seen how Hashem helped me in SA. As it says in the White Book, without Him, I could not

have done it, and without me (doing the program), He would not have done it. So in the same way I sought Hashem's help with my compulsive eating. BeChasdei Hashem at a few months in program and at day 30 of full OA sobriety (for me that's what is known as "90-day OA" which means no sugar, sweeteners of any kind, no caffeine, no juices, no flour other than 2 rolls for Shabbos, all food weighed in advance on a digital scale, three daily meals with exact measured amounts from each food group according to a food plan and no eating in between meals), I am healthier than I have been in years.

A year and a half ago I was at an all time high of 225 lbs (102 kg) at a height of only 5' 4" (163 cm) and now I am still 5' 4" (163 cm) but for the first time in years, I am 163 lbs (73.5 kg). Like SA, there is no willpower and white-knuckling, only surrender and acceptance. For the first time in my life I am eating a regular 3 meals a day - losova, not an ounce more and not an ounce less. Now that Hashem has helped me with food I am now encouraged to get His help with my chronically mismanaged finances as well. With His help, I intend to join Debtor's Anonymous, DA, to likewise get Hashem's help straightening out my finances.

Now in case you think that all this will Chas Vesholom lead to "mission creep" and I will be busy with too much stuff other than SA and GYE/GUE, I can reassure you that this all goes to the bottom line of SA Step 12 work. As you know, we succeed through attraction and not promotion. The attractiveness of the recovery I got from Hashem lies in how much others want "what I got" from Hashem. If doing the 12 steps helped me become sexually sober, physically healthy, debt-free, and a better husband, father, neighbor and employee, that will be even more persuasive than anything and everything I could possibly post on GYE/GUE.

So, bottom line, I am very busy with off-line Step work right now and B'Ezras Hashem should be back by next Tuesday (June 9th). You are most welcome to keep me honest on that one.

BTW my wife recently forwarded a JPost article posted on Vos Iz Neies about some guy Yaakov

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by the.guard - 08 Jun 2009 22:35

I also want to mention that we have a member called "Jack", who after getting a half a year sober through our forum and website, began joining an OA group for over eating, and he too is

doing fantastic. I hope he also joins this discussion.

The bottom line is, I wouldn't try to tackle everything at once. But once you feel more or less stable with the lust, say a half a year or so, you should look into taking care of the rest of your issues, one at a time. Give each one a half a year before attempting to work on the next. At least that's my view. I await Jack's and Boruch's comments.

But as you see, this is all too common. Addictive nature tends to breed a variety of addictions... But once you master the 12-Step principles, they spill over into ALL YOUR AFFAIRS. It is much easier to tackle the other addictions as well...

P.S. See also Miribn's thread on the "Women's forum". She is **also** dealing with OA and Lust addiction in parallel.

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Re: Multi Addictions
Posted by chl - 08 Jun 2009 22:42

bs"d

Thank you guys, that was very helpful and inspiring. Thanks, London, for starting this thread.

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Re: Multi Addictions
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 09 Jun 2009 05:23

It is imperative to differentiate between addiction and addictive personalities. Not everyone who has an addiction has an addictive personality. The modern day researchers point out how this is especially true for p**n addiction. Many people who have p**n addiction DO NOT have addictive personalities. This can be easily seen for people on this forum, who truly lead flourishing lives with a terrible habit to accompany them. For many people, like myself, the addiction is labeled an addiction based on the fact that I had no self control over what I did not

want to do and realized that I should not be doing. I regretted what I did when I did it but could not take control when time of temptation arrived. The lack of self control was based on an impulse that we like to refer to as an a need for dopamine. However, my general life never became unmanageable. I continued to live life like a normal person, with some major character defect. The addiction was limited to p**n and it was somewhat under control.

I am not going to go into the reasons why this true, but it is an issue of fact. One does not find this when it comes to other addictions like drugs and alcohol, whereby the victim of addiction is usually completely unmanageable. That is why everyone is shocked when they find out that ploni is a p**n addict. Even within sex addictions, there are two types. Understanding where you stand with regards to your addiction is so crucial to recovery.

It is also important to differentiate between p**n addiction and overspending. Things like overspending are not a matter of dopamine, the way sexual addictions are. I cannot go into the neurological details now, but it is important to understand what each addiction is in terms of science. If not, you have NO IDEA what you are dealing with. Lumping all addictions into one big group is terribly dangourous. Thinking that we understand our addictions when we don't is dangerous. 12 steps is a recovery program. It is not a diagnosis program.

For people, like yourself, who have these multi-addictions, and ones that do not deal with dopamine directly, I would go to a real professional about this. Some times in life we can look at the symptoms and deal with it that way. But when the symptoms are so great, we need to hit the core. We need to get back to the root. Determining the root is not something you want to do on your own. It is not something you want your SA leader doing for you. 12 steps are not doctors. We have to go doctors to define the problem for us. It is not something we should be doing for you. You may need medication for disorders. Look into it.

You decide! Your life is IN your hands to make decisions.

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by the.guard - 09 Jun 2009 10:15

Yakov, as I showed above - with Boruch, Jack, Miribn and others that I have been in contact with, having multiple addictions is an all too common thing. And I do believe that ALL addictions are related. Yes, even "over-spending" is related to the same pattern of a need for a "high" or

dopamine. It sounds strange to us, because we don't relate to it (we're thinking, what's THAT all about??), but for an addictive over-spender - when he feels that need to buy, there's a "rush" similar to all other addictions.

London, correct me if I'm wrong.

Let me quote from the end of the book "The first day of the rest of my life":

*It is preferable that the sex addiction therapist themselves have had personal experience in dealing with some type of addiction, whatever it may be, since **the psychological processes in the various types of addictions are extremely similar.***

From my own personal experience I have discovered, that even if in other fields of treatment, the therapist need not have experienced himself the illness he is treating, the situation is different with addictions. The best addiction therapists are particularly those that have dealt themselves with obsessions and addictions, because only they truly understand inside out, the psychological processes of the addict and his method of thinking.

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by aaron4 - 09 Jun 2009 12:36

While I can understand similarities between addictions (after all, nearly all addictions including lust are being successfully treated by methods developed for alcoholics and I can see many parallels from my own experience), I have to side with Ykv that lust addiction is not necessarily indicative of an addictive personality and that the tendency to switch addictions may not always apply to a lust addict in recovery. I say this from experience, now here's an untested theory as to why. Unlike alcohol or eating which occur in public and are part of an addicts outward life (regardless of the psychology), lust is a private affair, an internal disease. This is why life does not necessarily become unmanageable - outward life continues, it's the inside that's affected. Once recovery begins and the inside begins to heal, there is no urge to act out on the outside. That was never the problem and will not fill the void. If someone does have an addictive personality however, lust can certainly be one of the addictions used to "feed the need" but I believe you'll find it is NOT the first addiction but more likely the second or third. If it's the first one, it can stand on it's own.

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by the.guard - 09 Jun 2009 13:05

I am glad we can have an honest and open discussion without anyone feeling bad. I am happy that Ykv and Ahron feel free to disagree with me :D. That's how we all learn from each other...

I don't know if this is directly related to the discussion, but it seems to be somehow - so I want to quote it... Rabbi Twerski once answered Ahron:

Lust addiction, in contrast to alcohol and drug addiction, is more like food addiction. One can do without alcohol or drugs, but one cannot do without food. Similarly, there is a need for a healthy sexual drive in marriage.

The Talmud relates that the sages "captured" the yetzer hara and imprisoned it. The next day one could not find an egg on the market, so they had to release the yetzer hara. Inasmuch as the yetzer hara is the source for healthy sexual drive, it cannot be eliminated.

The ultimate solution is for a person to work hard on increasing one's yiras shamayim and praying for siyata dishmaya. There are no short cuts.

Shabbat Shalom

Twerski

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by London - 09 Jun 2009 14:06

Thanks for all the replies.

I can only talk for myself, for me my lust addiction is an addiction in every sense of the word, on the 20 questions from SA I answered yes to 19 of them, my addiction stopped short of getting arrested. Now that I am abstaining from lust, I notice that when I get into difficult or anxious situations, I have a craving for food, I have always been an overeater, but it is now more apparent. My therapist has told me that unless I put down my all addictions true serenity will always elude me. The same chemical process taking place in my brain when I look at porn or masturbate take place when I eat chocolate or spend money I do not have.

I relate to what R' Guard writes from R' Twersky, food, money and sex are all natural G-d given drives, what I have done as an addict is take this natural drives and abuse them until they control me. I do not believe there is a natural drive for drugs or alcohol which is why these 3 are so hard to put down. That said, there are people who may have stronger urges / taivos for lust and have not crossed the line of addiction.

I really relate to what Boruch writes, and I guess there is a part of me that is in denial about my food and money issues, because when I act out with porn and masturbation, the consequences are there to see, it ruins my marriage and is in major conflict with my religion, but when I overeat or spend money, the consequences take far longer to set in. Also with lust, there is a constant battle of lust triggers that I encounter in my daily life, that I do not with food or money.

That's why I posted this question, as I believe that until I put down all my addictive processes, I will always struggle with lust, and wanted to hear other peoples experience too in overcoming this problem.

Thanks for listening,

London

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by aaron4 - 09 Jun 2009 14:08

I think R' Twerski was comparing lust to food only in the sense that both are necessary (as can be seen from the Gemara) and therefore a careful, nuanced approach must be used to deal with it with no shortcuts. I don't think it's a gizeirah shavah that can be used to apply ALL
Just my opinion.

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by aaron4 - 09 Jun 2009 14:14

I hit Post before reading London's latest post. Obviously we all have different experiences and I aspects of food addiction to lust addiction can certainly understand the other view. I will keep it in mind and watch out for creeping addictions. London, Boruch and anyone else who has experienced multiple addictions, these distinctions are minor, and with lust they're non-existent. We're all in the same boat and are here for each other!

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Re: Multi Addictions

Posted by battleworn - 09 Jun 2009 18:06

Hi Everyone.

While I definitely agree with Aaron that we all have a lot in common and of course we're always here for each other, I also agree with R. Guard and Yaakov that it's important to realize the differences.

When I was a bochur I smoked for quite a number of years. The reason why I started smoking (weather you believe me or not) is because I thought it would be a good way to calm my nerves. When it was time to look for a shiduch my mother told me that I had better stop smoking because good girls don't like it. At that time I was smoking two packs a day. I cut down steadily for 8 weeks until I was down to one cigarete every three days and then I just stopped.

Being that the only kind of smoking addiction I had was the chemical/neurological addiction it was quite simple to stop with a bit of willpower. Had I had an addictive personality it would have been very different.

Yaakov, don't you agree that if the problem was really the Dopamine, then all we would have to do is wean ourselves of it slowly. Obviously the problem is that we become dependent on it psychologically. So what's the difference if we are dependant on dopamine or on overspending. Either way the problem is psychological and not really neurological.

now here's an untested theory as to why. Unlike alcohol or eating which occur in public and are part of an addicts outward life (regardless of the psychology), lust is a private affair, an internal disease. This is why life does not necessarily become unmanageable - outward life continues, it's the inside that's affected. Once recovery begins and the inside begins to heal, there is no urge to act out on the outside. That was never the problem and will not fill the void.

I also have a theory. Lust is a total and immediate escape from the real world. Perhaps a powerful drug could compare. But alcohol doesn't work nearly as fast. On the other hand food addiction and over spending don't give a complete escape at all. They're just a bit of a distraction. There's no way they can take the place of lust addiction. But if someone has an addictive personality, then I guess they would be vulnerable to any sort of addiction.

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Re: Multi Addictions
Posted by battleworn - 10 Jun 2009 17:47

Jack posted a very interesting post over here. rehab-my-site.com/guardureyes/forum/index.php?topic=395.15

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