

THE STEPS

Posted by frumfiend - 28 Jun 2010 21:55

Hello everyone I have been studying any information on the steps that I could find. I am therefore starting a new thread for all questions and comments on the twelve steps.

My purpose is not to knock them rather as I try them on for size I am running into some issues.

The twelve steps were originally designed for the alcoholic disease. This disease as defined in the big book is defined as being comprised of two parts. An allergy which causes that an alcoholic that drinks even one drink will continue to mindlessly drink. The second part is a insanity that although the alcoholic knows how harmful that one drink is, he still must have that first drink. The first is defined as a physical malady that the twelve step program cannot stop. The purpose of the program is to prevent the first drink. The insanity of taking that first drink is a disease of the mind and therefore a spiritual transformation will heal this issue.

The addiction of gambling is obviously not physical in nature. Therefore for the chronic gambler his battle is not to gamble too much. Gamblers anonymous would be comprised of a twelve step program to control his gambling. Abstaining completely would probably make it easier but that shouldn't be the focus of the program. A gambler who gambled once would not be considered to have lost sobriety. Overeating anonymous obviously ain't gonna tell him not to eat at all.

To lust is something very normal we just over do it. So why are we carbon copying AA and saying not to lust. In the SA book it even mentions complete abstinence. We aren't allergic to lust in a physical way. We just have to learn not to let lust control us . So why all this talk of first drink. To me this sounds like telling a overeater to stop eating.If our issue really starts after the first drink then the twelve steps won't help us at all.

Ok so all the pro and con twelvers get out of the woodwork and post all questions and heoros here.

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by Elya K - 28 Jun 2010 22:36

FF,

All S groups use the Big Book of AA as their guide. There are two types of addictions, physical addictions (drugs and alcohol)

and process addictions (sex, gambling, food, work) We parallel the first drink in AA to the first look of porn or the first look

of lust. Who says lust is very normal we just overdo it. Addicts overdo it. Some people could care less about looking at

porn or other women. But we have a mission to fill up an emptiness inside us. Some people do this with alcohol, drugs,

sex, gambling, food or work. Pick your poison. And because of this we can exchange books. The principles

of powerlessness, prayer, resentments, viduy (5th step) working on our midos, working with others, are all globally

applicable. I can show you each step and its corresponding issue in both the Rambam and in Shaarei Teshuva.

We're not saying you cannot have and enjoy sex, as long as it is with your spouse. But just like overeating and drinking

too much whiskey will make you fat and drunk and sick, engaging in lust for an addict will progress into more exotic and

dangerous situations if you keep feeding the lust. Also when we substitute lust being with our wives for true intimacy

that is mutual it is no different. The lust chemicals take over our brains and we're drunk once again.

That's my 2 cents.

Elya

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by me - 29 Jun 2010 10:06

To lust is something very normal we just over do it.

For "me", to stop breathing for 1 second between each breath is "normal" Try it, when all of the air leaves your lungs, you are in state of rest for a moment...the lungs come to a short pause.

If I were to "over do it", i.e. to just let this 1 second "rest" continue for a few minutes, this would mean 1 thing....death.

For most "normal" people, they eat their peanuts, and others are on the way to the hospital....to treat their allergy which could lead to death.

For most "normal" people, they can enjoy a little lust as a prelude to normal marital relations. BUT for those who are allergic to "Lust"???

We aren't allergic to lust in a physical way. We just have to learn not to let lust control us .

It has already been proven that the lusting of an addict releases chemicals into his body, and brain that are as potent as the strongest narcotics. Can a heroin addict control his "shooting up"?

"Our" bodies, (i.e. lust addict's bodies) are portable laboratories, manufacturing the strongest

addictive drug known to mankind. And, just like one who is caught drug trafficking, he will be sentenced to prison, so too,...if you read the papers, lust addicts can/will eventually get themselves in enough trouble to find themselves in prison.

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by destructive cycle - 29 Jun 2010 12:53

Hi,

I am new to this site but no newcomer to addiction, recovery and unfortunately, relapse. Hence the name destructive cycle.

I hope I am not overstepping my boundaries as a newcomer to this site by posting my opinion on the matter. But unfortunately, I have learned the lesson the hard way. And I hope I can share something half intelligent based on my painful experience.

If you define your problem as having sexual desires, then you are right that complete abstinence would be deemed unhealthy. Though, of course, those sexual desires should only be with ones wife, during appropriate times. However, if we try to simply focus on the behavior, at least for starters we will see that complete abstinence is in order from an addiction point of view. As far as I am concerned my behavior problem is looking at pornography and masturbating. From that definition, it is inconceivable for me to make my goal in recovery to be able to masturbate once a week and take a nice peek for an hour sunday night. This is true for two reasons. Firstly, for religious reasons, obviously. And second, is the idea of the "allergy". Even if theoretically I was not a frum yid or if the Torah never prohibited such activity, complete abstinence would be in order. It is unrealistic for me to think that I would be able to moderate my activity. This is what is meant by an addiction. The addictive mind tells me to keep looking. I convince myself that there will be no harm in having another peek. There is nothing wrong of a quick masturbate. To briefly pleasure myself would be just fine. And the truth is once we start, we cannot stop (at least for me. If you can control yourself, B"H, you may only be a moderate addict, ashrecha) I know there are other activities that I have a hard time pulling away from like eating chocolate. Lets differentiate. Firstly, it is not as destructive as porn and masturbation. More importantly, I would never spend eight consecutive hours indulging in chocolate. Because, it comes a point where I am ready to stop, albeit a bit too late to prevent my stomach ache from kicking in. But, besides that stomach ache, not much was lost. And I do not go back

for more just five hours later. Not even the next day. Usually there is a large lapse between "chocolate binges". But an addict will go back for more even if he feels sick. And sick I felt even from porn. It is worse than hangovers, in a physical sense, emotional sense, and spiritual sense. And yet, I will go back for more. Do you know how many times I convinced myself that taking one peek at a porn site would be just fine. And before I knew it I was masturbating incessantly and uncontrollably. So the action is not only "Assur" it is unhealthy and "addictive".

So, the point is that yes, complete abstinence is in order just like an alcoholic. It is important to note that there are different theories about this. There is a school of thought that moderation should become the goal even for porn and masturbation. B"H, for us Jews we do not need to "decide" between these two schools of thoughts. We are bound by G-d's Torah. The activity is prohibited, period. And so we can take the AA's approach, which in my mind is a lot safer, albeit more difficult to strive for, and not have to double check ourselves and play with matches unsafely.

The same goes for looking at women for pleasure. we can discuss from today to tomorrow whether we can achieve moderation and be able to look at women and for pleasure and be "unaffected". But, once again, from my own personal experiences, R"L (you should never be zoche to know first hand), it does not stop there. My first broken barriers are always in the area of "site gazing". And once those barriers are broken, you never know where you are taken next (take a look at Mes. Shabbos 105b). And so from the perspective from addiction, not just from a religious perspective, this is a danger zone. If we were not frum, we may fall prey to the lies and trick ourselves that moderation in these areas are not harmful and restricted to matters of preference. But, B"H, we were given the Torah Laws as a tavlin to 'protect' ourselves (This is the simple meaning of torah tavlin, not that limud hatorah will protect us, but the laws themselves, if we abide by them, teach us how to properly direct our actions), without us having to rely on our intellect, which is not too intellectual (see chovos halevavos shaar avodas elokim, perek 3; 5th reason why G-d gave us the Torah despite the fact that we have a seichel). So while we struggle with accomplishing our goals, R"L, at least the goals should be clear to us and this will make it much easier.

What is even more encouraging though, is the fact that Rambam explains that while most people do not realize that gazing at women is prohibited, the reason one of the reasons why it is assur is for the very reason we are discussing. It is assur for what it will lead one to do. And for an addict, this is even the more true.

Regarding the general issues of lusting, we should all be zoche to reach the madreiga to work on controlling our thoughts. But one step at a time. And the truth is even in this area, moderation should not be the goal. Both from an addiction/rational perspective and from a Torah perspective. Lusting and fantasizing of the mind only leads us to bad places. There is no such

thing for me to simply just think about a pleasurable thing and stop there. Do not fool yourself. But again, the Torah prohibits this activity. Even from ones wife during her niddah days, is it prohibited to lust after her. Otherwise, perhaps muttar, in the strict sense of the word, but not advisable.

So I will take the AA's approach to alcohol and carbon copy it to pornography addiction anytime.

Good luck with your search for truth,

destructive cycle

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by yedidya aleph - 29 Jun 2010 15:50

as a vetran compulsive overeater,please allow me to add my comments to the thread. First as a clarification the addiction to food is the inability to stop eating once he is full. Believe it or not this is a major problem for many who fail to admit it.

this is manifested in binge eating which is disruptive to normal living and relationships. i will not own this,but i did meet someone at a OA meeting that admitted that he was not able to have ishush with his wife because he was so obese he had no energy for s*.

anyway,the focus of the program as i see it, is to develop a healthy relationship with food,using food as a source of nutrition not as a drug. the thing we put down is "the compulsive bite"

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by frumfiend - 29 Jun 2010 22:12

I will rephrase my question. In alcoholism there is two parts to the disease. Part one One you drink one you can't stop. Part two is that you can't stop yourself from taking that first drink even after becoming aware of the danger of taking that first drink.

The program only helps for part two since part one is a physical allergy.

In our fight against lust what are we using the program for, not to drink at all or to prevent spiraling out of control after seeing something on the street.

From the responses received and especially of Me that we also have a physical allergy it would seem like the program is to prevent the first drink. Does everyone agree?

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by frumfiend - 30 Jun 2010 12:17

of a life of living self-rule. When living to get more for self we have to fall because self thinks that the addiction is the best thing. When I live for Hashem what I want is irrelevant.

The SA book seems to say that the feeling of powerlessness continues for ever and Hashem rescues us.

Quote The Turning Point We become able to transcend lust more and more by calling on God's power to expel the obsession, surrender temptation, and trust Him in all things. The SA culture is full of the concept of turning your lust to Hashem. The AA book talks of turning your will to Hashem.

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by frumfiend - 30 Jun 2010 12:18

It seems that the steps are very broad ideas that can be understood and applied very differently according to the needs of each addiction or addict.

The biggest difference is that according to the first understanding, step three is just a decision. A decision to live ones life according to Hashem`s rules. Those rules are explained in steps four to ten. A quote from NA workbook The central action in Step Three is a

decision. End quote. According to SA it is a positive action of turning over your lust.

According to the first understanding, a frum Jew has to work on the whole torah because for him

that's Hashem`s will.

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by me - 30 Jun 2010 13:42

Part one One you drink one you can't stop.

Dear Frum.....

We xaholics (lust addicts) cannot tolerate ANY lusting(drinking). This means Zilch, Efes, Klume, !!! Not even 1 drink. It is POISIN to us! Take a guy with 0 postive blood, and give him just one drink of A+ blood, and guess what....he cannot tolerate it period. This is the metzios.

This does NOT mean that we are unable to walk through a crowded mall of pritzus, and come out unscathed. We can...if we work the steps. We can walk by pritzus, and come out unharmed only if we **do NOT begin to lust after them**. We can look at the bottle, even hold the glass in our hands, and still live a normal life, but....to start drinking from the bottle, i.e. (lust) this is putting the wrong type blood into our veins, and we will perish. This the allergy affect. I can hold peanuts in my hand, or at least look at them, but.....no eating is permissible.

You must understand that the "decision" you refer to in step #3 is merely a prerequisite to working the following steps. The "decision" withoug going vyter is useless. They are what catalyst us into actually "working" the steps which will eventually enable us to "realy" truly "sincerely" rely only upon Hashem 100%. This is the key.

According to the first understanding, a frum Jew has to work on the whole torah because for him that's Hashem`s will.

The entire point of the 12 steps, and their unprecedented success rate is due to the fact that they enable a person, (not just a yid) to fulfill for the first time in his life the very 1st of the 10 Hadibros.....Anochi Es Hashem..... EMUNAH, Emunah first, and foremost. Once we REALLY begin to believe, and trust in hashem, and stop just talking like we do, then we can try to fulfill the entire Torah as we are commanded to.

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by frumfiend - 01 Jul 2010 12:25

Dear Mr. ME thank you for your second post I am really flattered.

About the issue of taking that first drink your position is clear.

I just wanted to understand something. You also agree that the third step is the desion to live your life according to Hashems will. Step four is about acting on the desion. Lehavdil naase vnishma.

So where did this thing about giving up your lust and asking him to remove it come from. There is no parallel to it in alcoholism. It is like a new step between the second and third.

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by me - 01 Jul 2010 20:22

So where did this thing about giving up your lust and asking him to remove it come from. There is no parallel to it in alcoholism. It is like a new step between the second and third

The 12 steps "are" paralleled in ALL addictions. Drinking, gambling, drugs, overeating, LUSTING.

The word "Lusting" is just exchanged for the word "drinking", which is what an alcoholic has no power to stop, just as a luster has NO power to stop. Just as a gambler, and drug addict has no power to stop.

So where did this thing about giving up your lust and asking him to remove it come from.

Step #1, "we addmitted we were powerless over alcholhol or in our case lusting.

So this means, I have learned the hard way that I cannot stop, and all of the times I thought that "I" had the control (mr. ego) to stop, I was kidding myself, which eventually led to the next bout of lusting-drinking.

ONLY when we finally admit that we are POWERLESS, (this takes honesty), only then can we come to step #2.. which is....

#2: Only a power GREATER than ourselves can restore us to sanity.....i.e. Hashem.

So, we are, (after finally admitting that we cannot stop ourselves, with drinking, lusting. or whatever, we must therefore turn to a power greater than ourselves, and this is...gues who, HASHEM, so we are ASKING throughout to remove our lusting since we cannot do it, and the Big Book is filled with prayer to Hashem asking just this very thing...to remove our desire for drinking, read: "LUSTING"

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by frumfiend - 02 Jul 2010 00:18

Thanks for your time and patience. Just one more one this topic.

Another question that I asked but perhaps not clearly enough is about the feeling of powerlessness. When we make the decision in step three to follow Hashem's will are we still powerless? Is the powerlessness because we were trying to run the show here is a quote from AA book "We had to have God's help. This is the how and why of it. First of all we had to

quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal, we are His agent. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom. When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. "

Or are we even powerless to fulfil Hashem's will.

In other words after subjugating ourselves to Hashem are we then empowered or not.

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by me - 02 Jul 2010 06:30

Or are we even powerless to fulfil Hashem's will.

In other words after subjugating ourselves to Hashem are we then empowered or not.

Dear Frum.....

After going through the 12 steps my first time, I had a question:

"How is it that a group of goyim drunkards were able to do something that I wasn't able to do? How could be that a frum yid with all of his learning couldn't stand together with them in the same arena of emuna p'shuta?

These drunkards, in the beginning had a belief, this belief is most likely the same belief that we share. "I", "ME", "MYSELF". I am in charge, I make decisions, I have the sechel, and chachma, to figure out my next hishtaduls. My gemora kup WILL find an answer. "I" won't give up. Eventually "I" will succeed.

If you read Bil's story in the Big Book, these are basically the thoughts of someone who is not living with Hashem. It's all about "ME". This is the big mistake....thinking that "I" will think my way out of this. I won't give up.

In the end, they found out that the "giving up", was the ONLY possible solution. Giving up on the "ME", giving up on the "I", and only then can one come to accept the idea that what....."I" am powerless. "I" can't do it. "This is too big for me"

It may take a little while to get this point. The first step. To finally raise your hands, and say "I" give up. But, this "giving up" does not mean to crawl into the kever. NO, this means to "give up" on the "I". The big inflated ego, that is fooling himself in thinking that he is in control. And, until we addicts finally admit that we have NO control, there will be no hope in living life, a worthwhile life.

You know what the mussar seforim say. When there is only "I", "ME", the thinking that it is me doing it. Me taking care of myself, i.e. gaiva, then Hashem is NOT with us. But, for an addict, he "really" must work this one out, i.e. to give up, to let go, and to "let G-d".

Or are we even powerless to fulfil Hashems will.

I think that instead of asking: "are we even powerless to fulfil Hashem's will", I would say, that becoming "powerless", is the fulfillment of Hashem's will. Powerless = putting myself completely on Hashem's shoulders, and letting him do what I cannot.....to carry me. I believe that this is the fulfillment of "Anochi Es Hashem Elokecha, Asher.....(to know that it is ALL Hashem, and then to live it)

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by frumfiend - 02 Jul 2010 13:19

Beautiful thank you

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Re: THE STEPS

Posted by Jooboy - 02 Jul 2010 15:44

This thread brought up a topic I struggle with regarding Step 3. We made a decision to turn our lives and will over to the care of G-d.

I feel like the goyim have it easy on this one - 7 basic commandments be nice to everybody and your done.

As a jew I have 613 and the 4 chalokim of shulchan aruch, 6 chalakim of mishna berura.....it seems so totally overwhelming to be able to say I am going to absolutely be able to do/not do every single thing the halacha demands of me. Will I really never say the first three brachos of shmone esrei without kavannah?? Unlikely. It can go on and on. I'm not yet up to step 3 but this particular aspect has been looming for me.

I would love everybody's thoughts on this. thanks

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