

How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction

Posted by alexeliezer - 31 Mar 2011 19:16

Although this is my first post, I have benefitted from the GYE community for the past 2 years. My purpose in writing is to share with my brothers what worked for me in the hope of helping. I was lost in a very severe lust addiction for 30 years, starting pretty much from puberty. Gazing (live and in pics), fantasy, intrusive thoughts, obsession with various fetishes, self-pleasure. Numerous cycles of teshuva every Elul invariably ended in relapse soon after Succos.

All this while raising a frum family, learning Gemorra daily, listening to hashkafa tapes and attending shiurim.

It was only when I discovered GYE that I learned for the first time that I was an addict. I read voraciously and subscribed to both emails. I gained tremendous chizuk (encouragement) from those who told their stories on this forum. I made a commitment not to look at women (other than my wife) and still believe that this is the most important key to success. This is not easy. I love to look at women, and work with many young women at my job. I pinched my inner thigh if I caught myself looking, and in the beginning my thigh was quite bruised. Eventually, it got easier.

When intrusive thoughts (images, fantasies) entered my mind, I recited the following: "Ribbono Shel Olam I am powerless over lust and my life has become unmanageable. Only you can restore me to sanity. I turn my life and my lust over to your care and ask you to please heal me from this illness of lust. I don't want to lust. I only want you and a relationship with you." In the beginning, I probably said this dozens of times in a day. Now it's maybe once a month.

I worked on not lusting after my wife except when we were in the bedroom. I've gotten much better at this. This too is an important step for married men. The yetzer (evil impulse) tells us this type of lust is ok. [Late edit: since being on this forum, I learned that even lust [i]in the bedroom [i] isn't healthy either. Rather, the goal is healthy sexual attraction and interaction, utilized to bring us closer.]

This was right around Rosh Chodesh Nisan 2 years ago. I was then given a recording of a shiur about the hidden power of the Pesach Seder to overcome any yetzer hora (evil impulse or trait). I recommend downloading it from www.JerusalemPulseradio.com well before Pesach and listening to it twice so you can prepare properly and get the most out of this incredible power of the first Seder night. The title is "Higher order of the Seder." The speaker is Rabbi Yaakov

Labinsky of Aish Hatorah. He explains how to use the four languages of redemption and the four cups of wine to free yourself from the bondage (avdus) of the yetzer hora to a new level of freedom (cheirus)*. It worked a miracle for me. I have had NO RELAPSES in the following 2 years. After a couple of months I unsubscribed to the emails and have, for the first time, assumed a normal life. My connection with Hashem continues to grow immensely, my learning is going much better, my home is more peaceful. For the first time since childhood, I am alive and well.

I am now ending the selfishness of not sharing my story and not helping others suffering with this addiction. To be honest, I did not feel qualified to help because I did not follow the whole 12-step program. I also wanted to move on and not get dragged back in. My approach worked for me. No approach works for everyone. If I can help one person, that would be a success. I will monitor this thread, and I can be reached by email if there's anything I can do.

*I've posted a synopsis of the shiur here:

www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=3750.0

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by workingmyprogram - 16 Jun 2017 05:36

[GrowStrong wrote on 15 Jun 2017 06:39:](#)

[workingmyprogram wrote on 15 Jun 2017 00:52:](#)

Does anyone on here even know what "lust" actually means? Sounds like a non-Jewish word if you ask me. We should want to have sex with our wives just like we want to eat food. Nothing wrong with hunger and nothing wrong with a healthy desire to have sex. Just has to be directed towards our wife. Of course, someone can have some form of sterile sex thinking about their taxes if that's what floats their boat but probably better to start learning how to enjoy sexual pleasure in a healthy way than becoming a sexual anorexic in response to years of abusing our bris. It's ok to be a human, and maybe not ok to try to not be one.

The Hebrew SA call it Ta'ava.

Does that make more sense for you?

Can you see the difference between having a loving relationship with your wife that revolves around giving whatever it is she needs to her vs fulfilling your taavos with her?

I could be wrong, but I remember hearing a gemorrah that said that having sex without taiva for your wife is a bad thing. Also, it's not black and white. You can have sex to both give her what she needs as well as to fulfill a normal need of your own. It's a waste of time and energy to believe that the sexual drive is bad, and then spend time repressing and fighting it, even though I know this is what SA preaches (I've had over 11 years of experience with that group). The idea that we have to wage war on "lust" is rooted in non Jewish and shameful interpretation for what the sexual drive is. You see, historically, non Jews have always viewed natural human urges as evil, and therefore the only solution is to repress them, fight them, whatever. That's why historically their holy men don't get married, don't drink alcohol, etc... Jews take a much different approach. We believe that instinctual drives can be used for the good, and our job is to learn how to do that. We make a bracha on wine. We make a bracha on food. It's a mitzvah to have sex. Rather than fighting our urges, we give them holy outlets. The sex drive is no more shameful than the drive to eat or sleep, but its our past abuse of sexual pleasure that makes us believe that so called "lust" is the problem when it really isn't, rather it was how we used "lust" (I hate that word). SA is a good program but I think that their misguided assault on the sex drive, or what they term "lust", is unhealthy and not Jewish. It's like if OA would wage a war on hunger. Hunger is not a bad thing, it's a good thing, without it we wouldn't eat. So too with sexual desire, it's a good thing (nobody would procreate without it according to the Gemorrah), now just learn how to channel it into what's permitted. So, yes, it's possible to enjoy the feeling of sexual pleasure and at the same time try and give pleasure to your wife.

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by Bigmoish - 16 Jun 2017 11:47

[workingmyprogram wrote on 16 Jun 2017 05:36:](#)

[GrowStrong wrote on 15 Jun 2017 06:39:](#)

[workingmyprogram wrote on 15 Jun 2017 00:52:](#)

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Chazal made takanos to ensure that talmidei chachamim are not like "chickens" who are having relations too often. Wouldnt such takanos be inappropriate according to your reasoning?

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by GrowStrong - 16 Jun 2017 12:29

[workingmyprogram wrote on 16 Jun 2017 05:36:](#)

[GrowStrong wrote on 15 Jun 2017 06:39:](#)

[workingmyprogram wrote on 15 Jun 2017 00:52:](#)

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Where in SA does it say you are not meant to have sex with your wife without desire for her? Or that you are not supposed to enjoy it and enjoy the sexuality of it?

Thats not the SA i know.

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by cordnoy - 16 Jun 2017 12:40

I wanted to dismiss what Mr. Workin'myprogram said, but there is merit there. There might be a difference between ordinary fellows and those of us who are beyond the norm (a.k.a. split the damn site already!), but regardless.....

I'd like to ask that we forget for a moment all this fancy mumbo jumbo philosophy and talk practical: I walk down the street, my eyes wander, I see nice cleavage, enticin' hips, loooooing shapely legs, and I lust (ha) after her/them, and I think: if only we can both....etc. So, you tell me to channel that lust towards my wife, for we have a kosher outlet. Ok. Please tell me the next steps after I walk in the door of the house. Explain please the "channelin" process.

[Ed. Note: I might have a way with words (I certainly don't have a way with women), but, at this point, I am askin', not arguin'. Thank you.]

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by MayanHamisgaber - 16 Jun 2017 13:38

I have not gone to SA

I have not read the books

But what I understand from some of the fellows here and a few calls:

One who is "normal" can freely enjoy and "use" the "mutur" outlets

However one who is addicted has abused what he has and must go to an extreme to "fix" himself

This concept is found in the Rambam hilchos middos....

Just my \$0.02

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by eslaasos - 16 Jun 2017 14:00

I'm following this discussion with bated breath - maybe I'll finally find a heter to be a menuval birshus hatorah. (sarcasm intended)

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by Workingguy - 16 Jun 2017 17:32

An obvious point is that there is a difference between desire and lust. Lust is a strong animal based urge, to oversimplify. Mitzvos are about channeling and elevating natural desires, not about taking animal urges and just putting them in a permitted context.

So eating is a normal desire, and we elevate with brachos and seudas of Mitzvah. But to pig out ok kosher food is not elevating.

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction

Posted by workingmyprogram - 16 Jun 2017 20:00

My post was definitely meant for people who have recovery and sobriety. Those that are struggling with active addiction are naturally going to view their sex drive as their worst enemy and try and take extreme measures to bring it under control or destroy it entirely (which they may very well need to do in the beginning). But as we get healthy and grow up, and hopefully stop seeing the world as so damn black and white, we see that moderation and balance is key. This means that we can even enjoy sexual pleasure as long as it's in the right context. For someone that is so used to misusing sexual pleasure and can't separate the idea of sexual pleasure from porn, prostitutes, etc...., this sounds blasphemous.

To the person who thinks that by being allowed to enjoy sexual pleasure with their wife is a heter to become a "menuval berishus hatorah", I hope you're kidding, but if you're not, my post was not meant for you. G-d wiling as you get more recovery and mental health you'll be able to relate to sexual pleasure in a healthy way.

To address what to practically do when feeling a sexual desire towards someone other than your wife, why can't you just keep doing what's been working for you while incorporating what I said? Just because I'm giving advice regarding one perception that I think is useful to incorporate, doesn't mean that all the other tools can get thrown out. Keep doing what works. Make phone calls, go to meetings, go to therapy, exercise, pray, etc... There is NO one magic bullet. There is no NO single midah or action that if only we changed we would be happy and sober forever. There is a myriad of negative attitudes and actions that we need work on, and G-d willing over time (yes we're in it for the long haul, there is no quick fix) we will be healthy enough to regain control over ourselves and enjoy a sober healthy life.

No need to get defensive over my critique of ONE area of SA. No program is perfect, including dare I say it, GYE. But in healthy sober life, we don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. We can disagree with something and still not reject it completely because overall it has value. I'm only speaking from experience with SA. If you're experience is different, great. I've noticed a lot of differences among different meetings so it doesn't surprise me that within the same group people can have very different experiences.

I might stop posting on the forum because it seems that my advice is geared more towards those that have recovery, while those that don't seem to be taking what I'm saying the wrong way. I don't want to cause these people more harm than good.

Good Shabbos.

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by Workingguy - 16 Jun 2017 20:50

Working,

While much of what you say makes sense, I do think that you were taking one side or a narrow view of the picture from a Jewish perspective. There are reviews all over the map with introduction of thought as to whether one should or should not stay away from sexuality, but for example, one thought that comes to mind is that the Gemara says about desire that you should push it away with the right and draw it close with the left.

The Rambam says that sexual sensation is an embarrassment to us. The Ramban says that someone can become a naval birshus Hatorah. The Gemara says that having intimacy is like paying your debt to your wife. And it goes on and on.

Yes, it says ?????? ?????? ???????? but the actual simple reading even for a non-attic is that a person should be very concerned that even his natural normal healthy desire for his wife can easily go off the rails to fulfill his own desires. That doesn't mean he has to have guilt about his desires, and it doesn't mean that he isn't entitled to have relations with his wife in a way that is pleasurable for him.

But ultimately, even for normal healthy people, we call these matters inyanei kedusha. Kedusha always indicates some level of holding back from indulging.

So even what you're saying, and even for non addicts or recovered people, has to be put through a huge filter. Of course a person shouldn't be ascetic at his wife's expense, OR if he's not holding there, but the baseline assumption of chazal is that while a woman is obligated to her husband and that technically (Even Haezer 25) he can do almost whatever he wants, siman 240 in Orach Chayim tells a very different story. How we reconcile those is a long sugya.

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by Markz - 30 Mar 2018 05:04

[Dov wrote on 07 Apr 2011 16:32:](#)

Yup, "the 12 steps" is not GYE, SA is not GYE, and so you can take a nice, relaxing shower now. Chill, brother.

When the ARIZ"l-solution guy above shares with us that he would talk to Hashem directly about his lust and schmutz use, he was accepting that he does not have the power to overcome it. Period. He admitted that he needed Hashem to help him out.

This is completely different from the frum line we all say that "of course, every breath we take is a miracle and we need Hashem for it!" No. That is not anything like the first step of "the 12 steps" - the twelve steps only work if they are **honest** - but the frum line of emunah and frumkeit work just fine even if we don't really believe them. Hey - didn't all of us say those things and even teach them to others? *While* we were still acting out our lust? We obviously had a problem *using* our emunah.

Could it be that we didn't *really* believe that schmutz was *truly* bad for us (no matter what the halocha stated)? Our guts - didn't they tell us differently - that it was sweet and in our very best interest? What about our seichel that told us it was the stupidest idea to act on that lust? Surely we kept doing it because we believed that we **could** tolerate more of it - till after we got the job over with, of course... Then it always becomes clear, the lie...till the next time when we again 'forget'. Why?

Could it be that we also did not *really* believe that Hashem knew what's *really* best for us? That He was not really our Best Friend of all? Weren't we sure - while planning and searching for schmutz and checking out that pretty woman's image, etc. - that the sweetness of the porn, masturbation and whatever else we liked to do was really, really **good** for us? Did we doubt that b'sha'as mayseh? How strong was the doubt. if it was there?

Looking at it as "the YH" actually removes personal responsibility for us. People like to say that

calling it an illness does that. Really, I see it the opposite way: recovery says there are things wrong with the way I approach and respond to women, people in general, Hashem, life, and how things make me feel, that leads me to need to use lust. The responsibility I bear in recovery and as an addict, is in recovering the sanity Hashem made me with as a kid (or before).

That's all the steps are about. Nowhere in the steps does it talk about *self-esteem*, and nowhere in the steps does it talk about *lust* - except in the 1st step. As R' Elozar ben Durdaya discovered, **he** had to bring the 1st step with him. Even *Hashem* was not going to do that for him - only the addict (and I do believe he was an addict like Par'oh was, as well) can do that. He is a *yoreh chato'im baderech* - sometimes by showing us (yoreh deyah), sometimes by throwing us (yaro y'yareh)...but that's all he does till we take the personal responsibility and admit - if we are addicts and truly sick - that nothing will work to fix us but Hashem Himself. Not tehillim, not learning Torah, not sex with the wife, not tevillah, not tikun klali - nothing but Retzon Atzmuso Yisborach, period.

That is why the 1st step is the only *real* hisarusa d'l'sata in the program. The rest has nothing to do with lust, drinking, whatever (the problem), and is all about the solution. Any program of action that focuses on being a kodosh or doing teshuvah by constant vigilance to *avoid the drinking, lusting, etc.*, is doomed. Even though it is definitely a mitzvah to stop treifing ourselves up and being kedoshim. That doesn't make it the correct thing to do for us, right now.

Too long a post again. Whoever reads it, drop me a line or PM and yell at me about how wrong I am if you like. But I do not want to create machlokes. For those who are afraid of "blind 12 step-is the-only-way" disease, I am with you. 12 steps **cannot** be the only way! And I am always available to help you dispell that sh*ttah and keep room for the "ARIZ" program", taphsic, hypnosis, or any other program that has at least some evidence.

But I do see the 12 steps as a program of living yourself itno right thinking - very akin to the *words* and *spirit* of "Na'aseh veNishmah". Simple honesty that usually leads to sanity. And I have experienced honesty as a powerful tool for recovery, for those who need it. So I'd suggest it to anyone who has 100% made up their mind that he or she is in deep trouble and cannot get out of any addiction. It has been working for me in every respect so far - I believe you'd do the same.

Love and respect to y'all - **and** believing that 'alexeliezer's eitzah will help many,

Dov

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by ieeyc - 30 Mar 2018 05:25

[Trouble wrote on 15 Jun 2017 15:09:](#)

[workingmyprogram wrote on 15 Jun 2017 00:52:](#)

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The Torah instructs us as to what she wants and needs.

Chazal guide us on this.

Once a week, twice a week, five times every two weeks; depending on ones ability to recoup.

If she doesn't want, explain it to her that she really does want and you are doing this all for her.

Don't let the pesky yetzer hara get in your/her way.

i dont know what a man should do if his wife doesnt want to have sex, but one thing i will say, i was in a room when a chashuva Rov was sitting over a request for permitting a man to marry another woman when(it seemed that) his wife did not want to accept a get , its called a heter may`ah Rabbonim,the Rov asked on what grounds does this man want to marry someone else?they answered that the wife does not want to engage in marital sex(not only once in a while but on a steady basis) , right away the Rov said ,What?!shes crazy!and granted the heter. THIS IS NOT A THING THAT ANY ONE SHOULD USE IN THEIR SITUATION GOD FORBID,EVERY CASE IS DIFFERENT but it just shows the sensitivity that the Rabbonim have to a man in such a situation,and didnt coldly tell the man ,why remarry, if she doesnt want ,why

are you interested in it?

i dont understand how you, trouble can make such a cold statement.

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Re: How I used GYE & the Arizal's 4-step program to break a 30-year lust addiction
Posted by Trouble - 24 Mar 2019 20:01

[workingmyprogram wrote on 16 Jun 2017 05:36:](#)

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Lust is the over usage or abuse of sexual desire. SA does not advocate abstinence. They are not proponents of not enjoying oneself in the bedroom (together with his/her spouse). When one obsesses over having sex with his wife, he is lusting.

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