

Who am I

Posted by TheJester - 11 Apr 2011 18:03

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I feel bad hijacking the threads of others, without introducing myself to the forum properly. It is terribly bad mannered on my part, and I apologize. I'm not certain why I am here, other than "this forum applies to me in many ways".

I am an addict. I'm not sure if I have specific addictions, but I get addicted to things. Compulsive would probably be more accurate, but I can safely stick with addict. I am an addict with variable levels of self-control - sometimes my addictions just "stop". Sometimes, I have needed to be "shocked" out of them. Sometimes, I can control them to a degree. If there is yo-yo dieting (addictive eating with dry spells between?), then there must be yo-yo lots of things.

To what am I addicted? Anything. Anything that takes me from reality to fantasy. Anything that pushes boundaries. Anything that wastes time. Bad things. Sexual things, too. *Baruch Hashem*, not drugs - I thank *Hashem* for the fortitude that kept me well away from those, because I would have been a very easy victim. In the past, my compulsive behavior led to real-life encounters that were damaging to all concerned. I got caught, I dealt with the symptoms and some of the causes, and moved "on" to significantly lighter *issurim* (in terms of damage), such as encounters with myself. This (of course) didn't last, and I went back to full-scale sexual depravity. OK - I suppose I could have done worse, but certainly not by much.

Compulsive behavior. Addiction. For me, it was "stuff I just couldn't stop myself doing, even though I knew it was wrong and had consequences". The theme was helplessness. It still is - I can feel it, like the darker side of "*Ki karov aylecha*". Even in the depths of depravity, Hashem is a breath away. Even on the high of recovery, the abyss is similarly but a breath away. I am not recovered - it is even questionable whether I am recovering. What I know is that I am not doing things I should not be doing, in previous quality or quantities.

Ever switch on a light switch on *Shabbos*, then think "oh, damn", switch it off, and think "double-damn"? Ever let your feet take you somewhere on auto-pilot, then realize you're not where you should be? That's what my compulsion was. Sit down, switch on, and before I'd thought about it, I'd have my webcam on, and my trousers around my ankles. OK, that might have been the exception and not the rule, but I just "did" it. And you know what? It wasn't necessarily for the "buzz". It's just what I did. It was part of me. No thought required. *Complex actions, including thoughts and planning* became auto-pilot things for me. And it's still there - I know it. I can feel it. *Ki karov aylecha*... It goes both ways, for an addict.

To all those who do not believe in evolution, I have proof: my *Yetzer Horo* evolved quite rapidly, and brought me to other compulsions, some of which may or may not have been worse than before - who measures anyway? I imagine that I have dealt with these through overwhelming willpower, and a change of lifestyle. More correctly, through having the willpower to make a few massive changes to my life, and "reset" some of my ways of thinking. Specifically, this included a somewhat new start, keeping no secrets from my wife, and giving her full access to everything I do online. All in all, I've been *relatively* good for a few years. No encounters with myself, for example.

Of course, my addictions have just moved elsewhere, to more benign areas. This doesn't bother me as much as it should (especially since these don't break *halacha, per se*), but it is something I try to work on a bit at a time. OK, I'll be honest - I work on it when it becomes a problem. Perhaps that just makes me human.

In fact - "when it becomes a problem" is a bit of a theme. If not for at least a clear and present threat of "serious trouble", I probably would not have ceased any of my activities. Actually, I am not sure why I no longer masturbate - I cannot for the life of me understand why I made that commitment, and why I keep to it, even when it is difficult. Actually, I know why I keep the commitment - I challenged myself, and I *hate* failure. But how did I make the commitment in the first place? I know my wife does not mind in the slightest. Probably because I saw it as a final level of protection on a Pandora's Box. Probably because I feel that if that were to crack, then I would open a floodgate to destruction. Selfish me can't be having none of that, now.

So am I clean? Hell, no! A *Lubavitcher* once tried to explain to me that a *Beinoni* (somewhere between *Tzaddik* and *Rasha*) is someone who does not even allow bad thoughts into his head, but must fight them off constantly, and only ever just manages to win the fight. If this is so, then I'm a *Rasha*. 1000+ days without masturbation does not mean clean. It means just that - 1000+ days without masturbation. I still catch myself objectifying women - often. I still catch myself lurking online where I should not.

In Yeshiva, I learned that helping others to learn was the best way to help myself to learn. Perhaps sharing some of my more positive experiences will similarly help me remain positive. Perhaps I will improve the things that need improving, and keep a lid on those that lie uneasily at bay. There are many, less healthy, places for me to lurk online. This is not one of them.

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Re: Who am I

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 26 Jun 2011 15:54

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hi Yossi!

you should feel at home here, you should feel

[ben durdayah wrote on 09 Jan 2011 15:25:](#)

like a Yossel among Yosselach

i didn't think 'TheJester' had any negative connotations, i thought it meant something like a 'badchan', but congrats on taking good steps in any event.

wishing you continued hatzlocha

zs

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Re: Who am I

Posted by kvetched - 26 Jun 2011 18:02

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Jester or Yossi (I like the new name by the way) you are among friends and helpers !

Kvetched

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Re: Who am I

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 26 Jun 2011 18:08

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Sometimes I re-read some older posts and things strike me that I missed the first time around.

You wrote:

[Yossi wrote on 11 Apr 2011 18:03:](#)

I am an addict with variable levels of self-control - sometimes my addictions just "stop". Sometimes, I have needed to be "shocked" out of them. Sometimes, I can control them to a degree. If there is yo-yo dieting (addictive eating with dry spells between?), then there must be yo-yo lots of things.

I think this is part of the addictive self-delusion, thinking we actually have some sort of control because we managed not to act out for some period of time. It's just like the smoker who says, "I've got no problem; I can quit! I've quit hundreds of times!"

Really, we're totally out of control.

--Eye.

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Re: Who am I

Posted by TheJester - 27 Jun 2011 09:11

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[Eye.nonymous wrote on 26 Jun 2011 18:08:](#)

Sometimes I re-read some older posts and things strike me that I missed the first time around.

You wrote:

[Yossi wrote on 11 Apr 2011 18:03:](#)

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--Eye.

Nice find. Of course, the line before that reads *"Compulsive would probably be more accurate, but I can safely stick with addict."*

I don't really want to get hung up on wording, but what the hey.

Once upon a time, if I filled out an "are you an addict" test, the answer would have been a resounding yes. Now? for SA? I strongly doubt it. Simply because I have not exhibited any outward signs of this for some time now, and because I have learnt (to a great extent) to ignore or destroy thoughts that come to me. Once, I made some of the biggest life-decisions and exercised some very, very poor judgment because of this behavior... Now, I no longer do.

Does this mean that I was (a) never an addict, (b) still an addict, or (c) no longer an addict? To be frank, I don't want to dwell upon it, unless I really need to know to help myself or others. Okay, being more honest, I *really* want to know, so I know whether I can "move on" or whether I need to "do something different", or whether I need to "keep fighting/surrendering/*shteiging*/whatever". But the part of me that is even more honest knows that this in itself is a distraction from living, and living well is what I need to do, above all else.

So what do I mean by control, and what do I mean by stopped? And why do I say "yo-yo", as in, "feast & famine"? Looking at the line before the one I quoted ("*I'm not sure if I have specific addictions, but I get addicted to things.*") and the line after ("*To what am I addicted? Anything. Anything that takes me from reality to fantasy.*"), I am talking about things that get me out of reality. Escape. It might once have been games or books. It might once have been the pursuit of new highs through highly inappropriate sexual activity. It might once have been learning! This is to give some clarity to what I meant when I wrote the lines that you plucked out.

So yes - you make a very good point - perhaps I am an addict, perhaps I am kidding myself. Perhaps I am deluding myself that I have control. The way I see it, I can control how I act, but not what I am.

I don't really know what "addiction" is - black and white, or a sliding scale? I don't really know how they stop - I know smokers and even a heroin addict who just "stopped".

Speaking specifically of my problem with SA, I do know that I hated my life where it was, and I made some changes to my circumstances (I call it cheating) to put myself in a position (I was done manipulating others, and decided to manipulate myself for a change) where it would be extremely difficult to "act out". Is this recovery? I don't believe so. Am I "clean"? Technically, yes. But I have this idea that when you are "clean", the fight kind of goes away, but it doesn't. I constantly feel that I am a step away from a word, a raised eyebrow, that once would have led

to something horrible. Each time I am in such a position, I am very aware that once, things would have been different, and I would have bitten at the bait. I don't want that anymore. But I don't know if it will ever go away.

Does that answer your thoughts?

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Re: Who am I

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 27 Jun 2011 10:17

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[Yossi wrote on 27 Jun 2011 09:11:](#)

Does this mean that I was (a) never an addict, (b) still an addict, or (c) no longer an addict?

Whatever you call it, I think the only thing that matters is this: Do you still need to be careful? I think, even in the official SA literature, it says something like, "we don't claim to be experts on addiction, but viewing our problem in this way has been helpful for recovery."

And, what is recovery? I know it's a lot more than just avoiding [external] triggers and not acting out.

The real triggers, I have found, is all the negative thoughts I carry around with me, and all the negative behaviors I display which wreak havoc on my life and, when life has gotten far enough out of control, I run to act out as an attempt to feel better.

So, I think real recovery is freedom from these thoughts and behaviors, which means an entirely different way of life.

Though the change is a radical one, change is gradual.

--Eye.

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Re: Who am I

Posted by TheJester - 27 Jun 2011 14:16

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[Eye.nonymous wrote on 27 Jun 2011 10:17:](#)

Whatever you call it, I think the only thing that matters is this: Do you still need to be careful?

I think that I will always need to be careful.

And, what is recovery? I know it's a lot more than just avoiding [external] triggers and not acting out.

The real triggers, I have found, is all the negative thoughts I carry around with me, and all the negative behaviors I display which wreak havoc on my life and, when life has gotten far enough



out of control, I run to act out as an attempt to feel better.

So, I think real recovery is freedom from these thoughts and behaviors, which means an entirely different way of life.

And this is exactly what I am trying to understand. So far, I can see it is to live live richly and honestly, with *Derech Eretz* and *Yiras Shamayim* in healthy doses. It is having the right advice and guidance when I need it, and not keeping all my stresses and pressures inside me. It is being able to admit a problem **before** it becomes a problem. It is being able to stand up and fight, or walk away, at the appropriate time. It is being able to admit I am not perfect, and sometimes wrong. That, really, is what has changed within me (to an imperfect extent) over the past 15 years.

But... Old habits die hard. And that is why I feel that I must always remain vigilant, and even *fight* the urges that will naturally pop themselves up. And it really isn't easy.

Though the change is a radical one, change is gradual.

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Re: Who am I

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 28 Jun 2011 06:22

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[Yossi wrote on 27 Jun 2011 14:16:](#)

No, I just picked this stuff up here. I think on-line hours at GYE are transferrable as class credits to many recognized accredited institutions of higher education.

You have a degree in philosophy, right?

--Eye.

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