hello my friends....
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 19 Jul 2011 04:33

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I've been lurking here for a couple of months, and now it's time to introduce myself and share my story. I first would like to express my Hakoras Hatov to Hashem for giving me a second chance, and for leading me to GYE when I needed it most. Also my thanks to all of you here, who through your stories and struggles have inspired me to hang on when times are tough, and to strive to bcome the person that Hashem really wants me to be.

i apologize if this is a bit long-winded but I am not such a good writer and I have a lot to get off my chest. I also apologize to the mods if i get too graphic and you have to edit. So here goes....

I am in my 40's, what you would call a "working yeshivishe ben torah", grew up in a small frum community, went to the "best" yeshivas, and I am B"H married with a bunch of kids K"AH. That's what everyone sees and thinks..... they don't know about my dark, secret life.

I have been struggling with SSA since my teens. Actually "struggling" is the wrong word, because until recently I was just wallowing in it. B"H I never went as far as doing it with another person, though not from lack of wanting. My natural shyness saved me many times from following through when situations presented themselves. But the looking, the fantasies, the WANTING, and the acting out with myself totally consumed my life and made me miserable even as i was enjoying the momentary pleasures.

Igrew up in a small town with very few other boys my age. I am a loner type and very shy and I really didn't have friends. At Bar Mitzva age I was sent out of town to Yeshiva as there was no Yeshiva high school where I lived. I found myself even more isolated there, as most of the other boys had come in groups from larger schools and had their own circles of friends.

I had always "played with myself" even at a very young age. I had no idea what it meant or that it was wrong, just that it felt good. I guess i began using it to soothe myself more and more. At the same time, as my body matured, I found myself fascinated more and more with looking at the other boysn how they were developing. I had barely any idea what sex was at that point, and surely did not even know that there was such a thing as homosexuality. I atrributed my fascination to "scientific curiosity".

At some point around the age of 15, I did MZ"L for the first time, also out of "curiosity". I cannot even begin to describe the way it was immediately addicting, probably like a first hit of cocaine (I have never done drugs). I am sure all of us here know what I am talking about. before i knew it I was doing it every chance I got, even 2-3 times a day. As I got older I ealized that I was fantasizing about the other boys while I did it, and I began to realize that i had a "problem". But I couldn't stop, and there was nobody i felt close enough to talk to. So I went throug life walking the walk and talking the talk, while in secret i wallowed in my sick fantasies. I learned, davened and did mitzvos, and most of the time I even believed in it, even as I knew deep inside that it was all a show and I couldn't tell anyone about what was eating me up. I would cry on Yom Kippur, promising to be good, while knowing full well that the Yetzer Hora was waiting right outside the Bais Medrash door and i probably wouldn't make it 12 hours before i did it again.

There were times when I got into situations with friends who i think had similar desires. We would be together alone and we each knew the other one wanted it. Once a friend was telling me about his bodybuilding and wanted me to feel how hard his stomach muscles were. I knew what he really wanted, and he knew that I wanted it too. My hand was literally inches from that first contact with another boy's skin. But I couldn't bring myself to make that final move. I don't know what held me back but i knew that if I took that step there was no going back. I remember literaly shaking from the tension and the desire, but I pulled my hand back and said no. For years later I would fantasize about what might have been, what could have happened. Now I look back and am comforted that even at my lowest moments i still had some self control (maybe it was just shyness but it saved me from going all the way over the edge).

I got older and began to date, but my heart wasn't in it and it really did't go anywhere. I am attracted to women also so that was not a problem. I just couldn't "connect" with anyone.

Then I met my wife. From our first phone call it just "clicked". We got married and have a great relationship and a bunch of kids. I hoped that when i got married my 'problem' would go away. I actually stayed "clean' for almost a whole year, but then i fell right back in. My mistake was that I only stopped doing MZ"L, but would still gaze at every boy I saw, fantasize, and mast***** but without MZ"L. I quickly discovered that there's no halfway, but I could not stop and fell back in. This went on for years, I would stop MZ"L for a few weeks or even a couple of months, and then flop right back into the mud.

Then I discovered the internet! first it was just some pictures, but more recently I found all the "goodies' that are available. Now I had even more material to satisfy my fantasies and cravings. I began to secretly look at g** po** more and more. as time went on i got bolder, even looking at it while my wife was in the next room. (I work in IT so I know how to cover my tracks). She still had no idea.

As I sank deeper into my "alternate reality" I would begin to think and question where I really belong. I felt like I was living a lie (I WAS living a lie, i just wan't sure which one). There were times when I would feel like an ousider waching myself acting in a play, davening, learning, raising my kids to be good Yidden, all the while knowing that i couldn't REALLY believe in it if i was acting the way i was. i began to identify myself in my mind as g*y, wondering if I really belonged in the community where i lived. I wondered if Hashem really knew and cared, if He was really there and didn't want me to be like this why did He play such a nasty trick on me and make me this way....(vlo sosuru....zu haminus). I couldn't take the conflict in my head and wanted out. There were times when i contemplated running away and joining "them", and even considered ending it all....

But Hashem sends the refuah not before the Makkah, but IN the makkah itself. I eventually was compelled to break free...

This past winter I discovered what to me was the most destructive form of porn. Stories. I found a site with literally thousands of stories of boys having relationships. Not just s*x, but friendship and romance. A video is just fun while you see it, and you can only watch it so many times before it gets boring. A story makes you think, and you get emotionally involved with the characters. The stories are serials, with a new chapter added evey few days. I would be checking 10 times a day to see what was new. I found myself getting so caught up in them emotionally that it started to affect my daily life.

I also started to realize that as I was getting older, my fantasies were becoming less likely to be fulfilled, what teenager was going to do anything with a guy old enough to be their father? This just increased my sense of emotional desperation. I realized that I was yearning for the friendships i had never had in my youth, and sexualizing them because I had no proper frame of reference due to my stunted social development. I was turning into an emotional train wreck, and that just made me act out even more.

Then hashem started sending me messages, things that would open up my feelings in ways I had never experienced. For a year or 2 now i have started occasionally davening in another shul, wher they daven with intensity and feeling. I thin my own davening started to improve then, and hashem hears it when it comes from the heart even when we don't deserve it....

There are 2 boys in the shul that I daven in that are extremely close friends for years. One in particular was a big "trigger" for me and i fantasized about him all the time. I always imagined

that the 2 of them had "something going" (i hope it's not true, I'd hate for them to suffer like this). This past year they went out of town to separate yeshivas and did not see each other for six months. i was in Shul the shabbos before Pesach when they greeted each other after their long separation. They hugged like brothers, and I burst into tears. I never had a FRIEND like that, that I could hug in public. I never felt more alone then in that moment.

Then over Pesach I had a terrible dream. i dreamt that I had a close friend that I had not seen in many years. he was on his way to meet me , and was killed in a car crash. I woke up sobbing, and could barely make it through davening that morning. I couldn't figure out at the time why i affected me that badly, but it was all the accumulated emotional junk starting to bleed out ofg me. Then by Birchas Kohanim, where we daven for Hashem to heal our dreamd, i totally broke down. i cried, i'm not even sure what i cried FOR. I just cried in pain. I knew i was a hopeless mess and at that moment, i knew that only Hashem could fix me.

At that moment I felt a calmness and resolve rest upon me. i knew that I must do whatever it takes to bring the two halves of my life together. I realized that i have to do something so shocking to me, that i would be forced to completely change my life. i resolved to "come out" to my wife and tell her everything, and take the consequences as they came. At that point I wasn't even thinking about doing teshuva, just to stop living in secret and to take whichever path presented itself. i was prepared for the ultimate rejection. I don't know where i would have gone or what i would have done if that happened, but i couldnt survive anymore with what had been bottled up inside me for so long.

So that firs Motzoei Shabbos after Pesach, i sat down with my wonderful wife and said "I have something to tell you about myself that i have been hiding from you all these years.....I'm gay.....". Her reaction stunned me; "That's not so bad, we will work on fixing it together". In that instant i knew it would be OK. I shared everything with her, all the desperation, all the filth, all the loneliness, all the hopeless yearning for things that cannot and will not be.

We resolved together to work on making it right. The very first thing we did was to install K9 on every computer in the house. From that moment on I have not MZ"L, I have not mast**** (except one slip recently), and I have not looked at porn (with one exception). I promised that any slips i would tell her immediately, and that I would see a therapist. I began from then on to daven with kavana and with tears, begging Hashem to give me the strength to hold on and continue, and to fight the Yetzer Hora for me because I cannot do it alone.

The first weeks were sheer hell. Just like starting was like a drug, stopping was like a physical withdrawal. i walked around in a daze, shaking from tension. i committed to making an effort not

to look and not to fantasize, but it's not that easy. My triggers are EVERYWHERE, in the street, in the store, in shul, at work (don't even mention the mikva). i don't even have a mechitza to hide behind. I constantly have to force myself to look away. i was literally whimpering whith the desire for another look, another trigger to release that good feeling in my head. It's a little easier now, but still a constant struggle.

I had finally acknknowledged that I am "gay" and i felt totally disconnected from reality. I would play with my kids in the yard and think to myself "What is this gay guy doing here, i don't belong here". My wife quickly set me straight (pun intended) on that one "You are not gay, you are a yid with a strange and powerful yetzer hora and you are finally fighting it!". I eventually realized that rejecting the label was one of the most important steps in recovery.

I also met with a frum therapist who deals with these issues. He helped me to understand how certain issues from my childhood cause the stunted social developement that leads to this problem, and gave me some tips how to control and redirect my thoughts away from the dangerous fantasies.

Sometime during that fist desperate week, ~~i discovered~~ Hashem led me to GYE. I had seen the ads before, and I always thought it was for a filtering service like JNet or Yeshivanet, which i was subconciously resisting because i didn't want to lose access to my precious secret world... But then i was on another website, one that often mocks practices of the frum community. They had a post making fun of the GYE handbook (specifically the "rubberband snapping" thing). The post actually had a link back to the GYE handbook, and i was curious so i clicked it. It was like being transported to a new planet. Suddenly i was not alone anymore, there were so many others who were sruggling with similar issues AND SUCCEEDING. I spent hours reading the handbook and browsing the forums, and got tremendous chizuk from it. I even discovered that i was not the only SSA addict out there, and that it can be successfully suppressed.

The entire secular culture is obsessed right now with being "Born This Way" and that it can't be changed and you should just "be yourself" and "it gets better" etc. as much as we strive to separate ourself from the Goyish attitudes it seeps in like a poison and in moments of self-doubt the Yetzer Hora tries to convince us that they are really right. My weapon is to turn the slogans against them and use it to my own advantage. Yes i was "Born This Way", a member of Hashem's Chosen People, tasked with the mission of spreading His light in a world bent on ignoring Him. we each have our own mission and our own fight, and I have been tasked with a special job. I have a special and unique Yetzer Hora to fight, and although I was held captive by the enemy for 30 years, i have now escaped and i am fighting back! With sweat and tears (lots of tears) I try every day to resist the temptations placed in front of my eyes and the fantasies that linger in my mind. Eventually "It Gets Better", when the desires will fade away with time and it will be easier to resist. i know that just like I will have to pay and burn for each time I don't look away fast enough, so too i will receive infinite reward for each time I resist the urge for a second look, and each time i suppress the fantasies that constantly try to creep into my head.

I mentioned before that there was one exception to stopping to look at porn, and that was the stories (i found a way around the filter for those). I just couldn't. I needed that fix of knowing what happens next. For few weeks I unsuccessfully tried to quit, I would manage a day or 2 then I fell in again. I wasn'r even interested in the s*x parts, just the storyline and the emotional buildup. But i knew it had to stop. Then one day i told myself "Enough! if you are serious about this there are no halfways anymore!" i went to Maariv that night and it was the 37th day of the Omer. The sefira of Gevura ShebYesod. I realized "that's what we are all about, Gevura, Kovesh es Yitzro, in the midda of Yesod, of self-control". I resolved that that day would be my personal Yom Kippur of sorts. I davened like never before, and promised that I would never go there again. B"H so far I have been successful. Hence my screen name.

I stayed clean until last friday. Then in the shower i suddenly found myself mast*** I stopped before anything worse happened, but i feell like i was teetering on the edge of a cliff. Then on shabbos i had fantasy dreams which i had not had in a long time. When i have these dreams they are so real that i experience every sensation. many times I would wake up wet, this time B"H I did not. but I need to strengthen myself over again. The events of the past week have affected me terribly and have left me emotionally drained, and maybe that's what made me vulnerable and in need of "soothing".

So here I am, trying to stay clean and to clear the bad thoughts from my head. It has its ups and

Once again I would like to thank all of you here on GYE who have shared your stories and your struggles, especially those of you who share my particular "flavor" of addiction. The chizuk i get from seeing how everyone encourages each other to get up and start again really inspired me in my darkest moments. Thank You.

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Yossi.L. - 15 Sep 2011 13:00

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Maybe theres something deep inside you thats still trying to hang on to the shmutz...

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 15 Sep 2011 13:20

Yossi.L. wrote on 15 Sep 2011 13:00**:**

Maybe theres something deep inside you thats still trying to hang on to the shmutz...

The same things that got me into this in the first place.....it's still there. Now that I understand it and am more conscious of it it's easier to fight, and I am taking steps to change my life in ways that will hopefully make me not feel it so much. But whenever I am feeling down or get triggered it all comes boiling back up and makes me want.....I don't know if it will ever really go away completely.

Just gotta keep on Trucking!

Gevura!

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by obormottel - 15 Sep 2011 16:08

Yossi.L. wrote on 15 Sep 2011 13:00**:**

Maybe theres something deep inside you thats still trying to hang on to the shmutz...

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Duh! and it's not so deep....Gevura, I like your like-mindedness

Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Yossi.L. - 16 Sep 2011 01:35

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obormottel wrote on 15 Sep 2011 16:08**:**

Yossi.L. wrote on 15 Sep 2011 13:00**:**

Maybe theres something deep inside you thats still trying to hang on to the shmutz...

Sometime simple things are right there for you to see....hakdamah mesillas yesharim....

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 19 Sep 2011 14:21

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Day 65.....

I think I have mentioned that one of the main things I need to work on is my social life, to get out

of my shell and away from my "inner child", and start having friendships with real people who are my peers. I mentioned that I was going to find some shiurim to go to to meet people that I might be able to be friends with.

Anyway last week I went to a new shiur for the first time. It's actually more of a Chabura, just a bunch of guys about my age learning together. Turns out that I actually know a few of the guys, that made it a lot easier to feel comfortable right away. It's very easygoing and informal, we sit around a table and learn halacha together. It will take some time to get to know the "new" people, but they seem like the kind of guys that I could be friendly with.

Afterwards I felt pretty good, both from knowing that I had done something concrete toward ridding myself of the underlying cause of my issues, and also because I had actually been soomewhere where I felt like i belonged.....Then I went to my usual weekday shul for maariv, and a bunch of the usual "sights" were there....POW! right back into the fight!

Sometimes lately I am having a "good" day and I actually can forget about all this for a while. But then I start to get this empty feeling, like something's missing.....I got so used to the wanting, and then the struggle and the pain.....Even my davening gets cold, the intensity of begging for help is gone....It's not normal for me to feel so normal.....I start to wonder, is it really over? Was it that easy?.....Then I see a trigger, my eyes automatically swivel and lock, my

??? : ???

I know, it's all just the YH playing mind games with me, trying to convince me that my problem really IS my identity, and that I can never escape it and I shouldn't want to. But I'm so confused.....

Maybe so much self-awareness is not such a good thing.....

(One of my rabbeim used to say "Be careful what you daven for, you might get it!")

Trucking onwards.....keep your eyes on the road and ignore the people on the sidewalk!!

Gevura!

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mind starts to imagine.....yeah I'm still sick. Somehow that makes me feel alive again :

Re: hello my friends....
Posted by gibbor120 - 19 Sep 2011 14:37

Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 19 Sep 2011 14:21**:**

Trucking onwards.....keep your eyes on the road and ignore the people on the sidewalk!!

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by alexeliezer - 19 Sep 2011 15:29

Gevura,

You really are doing monster work and are an inspiration to us all!

Truck on!

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 19 Sep 2011 18:50

Nice post. Just make sure you stop for the people in the crosswalk

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alexeliezer wrote on 19 Sep 2011 15:29**:**

You really are doing monster work and are an inspiration to us all!

heartily agree!

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by obormottel - 19 Sep 2011 20:09

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Really is swell work, buddy, what with getting out of the house an' all.

I find it very difficult to get myself out of the house and join the chabura (though I have), I keep thinking to myself "who am I kidding, if only these pure souls knew, they would lock me out".

But I am so happy after the fact, and the learning is always so enjoyable.

Another problem I found, that when joining a new shiur or a chabura like you're describing, I immediately want a) to be the center of attention b) approval by all those present.

Now that I ~~know~~ was told that humility is key to recovery, I find it even harder to connect with people 'cause I have to now fight two of my natural inclinations: solitude and attention-grabbing when out of the self-imposed solitude. (in other words, before I could convince myself to join a group by saying "go, you'll see how they will be happy to see you", now I have to tell myself "go, but stay out of the sptolight, don't get into arguments, don't offer your opinion unless asked" so it's doubly hard).

Do you know what I mean?

As for the second part of your post, I think the idea can be expressed like this:

There are people that only strive in the interpersonal relationship when they are putting out a fire. They only feel in love when the love is doomed. they only feel close to someone after they had a really good fight with the person etc. My mom would pick a fight with me every time I was going away, so that she would really miss me when I'm gone.

Possibly, the same with our recovery: unless we're in the fight, we don't feel strongly about life.

So the fight is certainly ongoing, but when you have a peaceful moment, it's OK to enjoy it, IMNSHO.

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by helpfyi - 22 Sep 2011 01:59

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wow you inspire us all!!

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Yossi.L. - 22 Sep 2011 16:29

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Gevurashebeyesod,

Can you elaborate on your mention of the 'inner child' within you? I've heard this terminology from a few people and I don't understand what it is.

Yossi

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 22 Sep 2011 16:45

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" term that my therapist used, I'm not sure I can fully explain it. Basically it's that part of me that never grew up and is stuck at that point where my emotional and social growth got derailed and confused, and is still trying to mature but is going about it the wrong way, by using fantasy to create imaginary "relationships" of the wrong type. So I need to get out there and build mature friendships and relationships with real people in an appropriate way. It's very hard for the same reasons that got me into this mess in the first place, but I am working on it.

Gevura!

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by NOYA - 23 Sep 2011 01:51

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Hi Gevura,

Your story is very inspiring. That must be so incredibly difficult to deal with, mamash a milchama panim veachor. Do you still go to a therapist?

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 23 Sep 2011 03:15

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I went one time and he was very helpful. But he's quite a distance away, and also expensive. I am trying to find someone closer to home, hopefully who will take my health insurance.

Meanwhile I am finding that sharing my story and my feelings here on GYE, and learning from others' struggles, is working wonders in helping me understand and making me feel better about myself.

KVT & KOMT!!!!

Gevura!

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Yossi.L. - 23 Sep 2011 15:42

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Interesting.....I think I can relate to that.....it's hard to think about. How'd you get in touch with that inner child? How do you realize when it's the real you, or the inner child you?

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