

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 become 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.

I grew 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 boys and 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 attributed 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 realized 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 through 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 literally 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 didn'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 masturbate 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 outsider watching 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 of 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 with 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 acknowledged 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 development 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 first 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 subconsciously 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 struggling 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 ourselves 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't 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 feel 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 chaimyakov - 18 Apr 2012 19:58

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Gevura,

MAZAL TOV!

Ad Meah V'Esrin Shanos (one day at a time)!

Hatzlacha in all things GOOD.

chaimyakov

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 20 Apr 2012 03:42

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OK, today was not such a good day.

yesterday i started on a bit of a high, being the one year anniversary of beginning to fight this. But later in the day a certain lethargy seemed to overtake me, almost as if nothing mattered. and i accidentally saw something on the computer that I should not have, and on my way home from work I was triggered strongly a number of times. when that happens all the old longings still come back. So I wound up depressed and hating myself.

This morning started a little better, but by the afternoon i was back in a funk again. I was thinking about what had changed since last year, and the bad side was winning. I still want all the same stuff, and still get triggered just as strongly, and now it just hurts more. I don't want to want these things, and I hate that i can't stop myself from reacting to it. It's not fair, I know I can't ever have it, why can't i at least enjoy looking? I already got forbidden pleasure from that first glance, so what if i get a little more? Will I ever know what it's like to be normal and see the world the right way? This constant struggle is too hard, i need a break... And I started looking at some borderline stuff on the computer, and crept closer and closer to the edge...

I don't think i actually went far enough to have to call it a full fall. but it was definitely stuff i have no business looking at. After a while i tore myself away, feeling even more rotten then I had when i started. And i realized that going back into the pit, as tempting as it seems, is not the answer. Under the surface pleasure lies bottomless depths of misery.

I thought it over later and took away two lessons that i must hammer into myself.

1. I am not perfect. I will never be perfect. I am not expected to be perfect. Aspiring to perfection is an exercise in futility that will only lead to disappointment and frustration. I am only expected to do the best I can at each moment.

2. I need to stop guilt-tripping over being triggered. At this point, when I see someone and I feel compelled to look at that first instant, and even the pleasure i feel at that moment, is beyond my control. It's not my nekuds habechira right now. It's not my fault. It's the way I am, the way the Perfect One wants me to be. He has His reasons, and I need to believe that it's for my good and for the Tikkun of the world in some way. He needs me to fight and struggle, for some ultimate cause that only He knows. So I need to stop beating myself up over it, and stop using it as an excuse to go further. Juts say "oops" and move on. And thank Hashem for giving me a chance to do my little part in perfecting His world.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 20 Apr 2012 13:05

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Upon further reflection, I decided that what i did yesterday was bad enough that I need to call it a fall. I was deluding myself that it could have been worse, and that it was ok because i didn't do anything physical. But some of what I looked at would definitely be considered p\*\*\*. So I have reset my count. Hayom Yom Rishon....

This morning in shul there were tons of triggers, but strangely i had an easy time ignoring them. Sure I noticed that they were there, and I could have looked and enjoyed if I wanted to. But I don't NEED to look, and right now i don't want to. Maybe next time I will want to and i will have to struggle, and maybe I won't succeed. But tomorrow's battles can be fought tomorrow.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by alexeliezzer - 20 Apr 2012 14:51

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That was some amazing work, Gevura!



[Gevura wrote on 20 Apr 2012 03:42:](#)

It's not fair, I know I can't ever have it, why can't i at least enjoy looking? I already got forbidden pleasure from that first glance, so what if i get a little more? .....

And i realized that going back into the pit, as tempting as it seems, is not the answer. Under the surface pleasure lies bottomless depths of misery.

This thought has kept me going through many a temptation.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 25 Apr 2012 14:40

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Day 5...

OK I had a few really good days where the whole thing seemed to fade away and I had an easy time dealing with any triggers that came along. I think the magic is wearing off now though... Last night i had a big stressful situation with the kids and the house (nothing serious b"h just time and money that I did not expect to need to spend). And I started to want to run and hide back in my fantasy world, and I caught myself again staring and fantasizing. And I dragged myself out. I don't want to go there. I don't need to go there. I wish I didn't get reminded of it all the time. But I'm not going to let myself feel bad that it happens. It's not by my choice. What I do afterwards is. And I am given the power to choose, and I can use it.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 25 Apr 2012 14:58

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Hi Gevura,

I can relate to your day 5 cuz that's about where I am standing. I had been on the chart for 168 days but then I HumptyDumptyed off the wall. Anyhow, my new streak be"H is looking good and I pray the same for you.

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Chazak ve'amatz, brother!

MT

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 25 Apr 2012 16:52

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Thanks MT. And unlike Humpty Dumpty, we CAN be put back together again.

KOMT!!

Gevura!

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 25 Apr 2012 21:08

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Yes we can! But we need to be more careful this time around.

Allow me to share with you and others an important lesson which I learned the hard way. As soon as I discovered GYE I got on the 90-day chart and gave it all I got to stay on the chart. I avoided all triggers. Also, each morning (right after Modeh Ani) I asked Hashem for help to make it through the day. I worked on it vigilantly a day at a time. And things went pretty smoothly for over 5 months.

Then the sneaky snake (aka YH) approached me with the following proposition: "Hey, I found a loophole in the GYE system which I think you can take advantage of. They only count P\* and M\* as a fall. Anything less is only a slip and you can stay on the chart. So why be so vigilant? Just for tonight, you can indulge in images that are not P\*. You can indulge in fantasies of any kind. You can arouse yourself and do enjoyable things as long as it's not actual M\*. And tomorrow you'll still be on the chart, so you can then go back to your vigilance."

I must admit that in my weakness I felt that he 'made sense' (I actually looked for a flaw in his logic and could not find any), and I followed his advice. I had a 'good time' (uch & vay), and yes next morning I was still on the chart according to the rules, but I felt like a jerk. And that was step 2 of his tactics - to make me think, "Now that I tasted the forbidden fruit and did not die, how can I go back to my former vigilance? What should stop me from trying it again and again?" And that's what kept happening, until I decided, "better to go all the way and get out of this vicious cycle..."

In retrospect, it was a 'yeridah letzorach aliyah' - because it taught me very clearly that there are no half measures in this game. As they say, the more you feed it, the more you need it. BTW, there's a saying, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you". And I think the converse is just as important for us, "Don't feed the hand that bites you!"

Hope that helps - for me, for you, for anybody.

MT

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 25 Apr 2012 23:43

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That's exactly what happened to me over the past few months and led to falling twice. The first time i slipped i felt bad, the second time a little less...then i went a little further...

But now the system is reset, and the bar is back in it's starting position. ANd there is no excuse to let myself slip.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by ontheedgeman - 26 Apr 2012 02:43

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Machshovo, that is brilliant!! Thank you for the share. So true. That's exactly what has been happening to me for the past 3 weeks. actually since Pesah. basically, "doing the permitted", to stay within the rules, but then, I've become obsessed with finding ways to stay in the rules, to the point that I can't focus on davning or anything else.

anyhow just wanted to say it was a great share. for 13 posts, you have some good wisdom! ;-0

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by JackAbbey - 26 Apr 2012 13:21

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MT thanks

went thru the same

lets hold hands strong

lets walk again along

getting in the truck with a honk

while singing a nice song

just be carefull not to get stong

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by alexeliezer - 26 Apr 2012 14:34

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Hopefully we can move towards not slipping because it feels really good to be free, and because, as Gevura mentioned, the other side holds "bottomless depths of misery."

The counts, the charts, these are tools, stepping stones, short-term goals. The real goal is a real life.

Good stuff goin' on in your thread as usual Gevura.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Eishhatorah - 30 Apr 2012 04:00

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You are sooooo inspirational,i cried sooo much ( in the bathroom) u touched my heart I feel that even today. I saw the guy I "love" at the mikva I tried to look away but I almost went crazy I looked at him and fantasized then and there, I saw his body I almost, got erect then turned away I said no your over that I literally got dressed and ran out

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by jack - 30 Apr 2012 16:04

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dear aish, maybe you should ask someone (like r' guard) if you should be going to the mikva at all-we ALL have to stay away from certain things that are triggers

jack

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 30 Apr 2012 16:30

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Mikva is a tough one for me too. I always only went on Erev Yom Tov anyway. And I looked forward to it for all the wrong reasons, and probably did more damage to myself by going than if I had stayed home. I still go, but I have set strict rules for myself (basically the opposite of my old behaviors).

- Glasses first off and last on.
- Face the wall as much as possible.
- Remember why you are here.
- Make it quick!

Eish, hang in there. It's really tough to give up what the world has been convincing you your whole life that it is your "real self". And it feels like death itself to think that you will never have any pleasure in life anymore. I know, I went through the same thing, and I am still struggling with it. But it does get easier with time.

And know that your true self is your holy Neshama that Hashem has given you, and that He has given you (and me) this awesomely difficult task, because He knows that we CAN do it!

Gevura!

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