

Personal recovery plan

Posted by obormottel - 12 Aug 2011 22:38

I was pressed for practical steps I'm taking on the path to recovery. So here goes:

By way of introduction:

I've been a compulsive mast*****r since age 11 or 12. Started looking at internet p**n when it became available in my house, after being married for a short time. Can't tell you when viewing this garbage became addictive, but it's been years since I realized I have a BIG problem. I would come to shul to mincha with fresh stains on my pants, and people would ask me to be shliach tzibbur! The depression and anxiety, and feelings of hypocrisy! I don't have to tell you... I couldn't stop no matter how much I agonized over this. I installed BSAFE filter, and set my own password (dumb!!!). I took on hachlotois. I gave tzdoko, and even created a knas for myself of \$180 for each occurrence (turns out it's a legit technique; I just did everything else wrong). All to no help. About a month ago I gave up on myself, and gave myself over to G-d's mercy. I wrote a tzetle to a Tzaddik and gave myself over to the Tzaddik. Within 1 week of the latter I saw a banner for this website on Arutz7. Ever since then:

1. I had my wife install K9 filter and hold the password. In addition , she restricted my internet access so that now when I finish work at 6pm, my internet shuts down, so I have no reason to aimlessly (or, rather, intentionally) browse the web after I am alone in the office. Even with filter, there is plenty room for mischief on the web for a sick mind, so I find this trick especially helpful.
2. I subscribed and now READ daily the Chizzuk emails (both lists)
3. I got myself on the 90 Day chart (day 9 as of today, YAY!)
4. I am half way through the Handbook and Attitude handbook. Found both of them extremely helpful and lucid.
5. I listened to Rav Reisman's shiur on Yirmiyohu. (Did it on 9 Av, thought it to be appropriate). BTW, R' Reisman is great; I've been listening to his MP3 shiurim for a long time now.
6. I am obsessing with this site now, reading what I can, taking part in the forum etc. I probably spend as much time doing this as I used to do the other stuff, which keeps me busy and I do it from home in the evenings, not from the privacy of my office, so it brings me back home...

On the spiritual side, I kept the fence I've already created for myself before: to go to the mikva after each occurrence, and in general to be particular ab. tvilas Ezra. I started learning a particular kuntreis on shmiras eynaim (and once I know you better, I'll tell you which one it is), and plan on doing more of such reading. I also decided to keep my mouth shut in shul, if an argument of any sort ensues (I am usually very vocal expressing my opinion), so that I learn to not have attention focused on me. Also, I promised (in that above-mentioned tzetle) to wear a hat every time I daven, bentch, say Birchas Hashachar, or Al Hamichyo. I think it should add to the additional yiras Shomaim I'm trying to instill on to myself.

What else? I apologized to my wife (for which I was ostracized by some on this forum); and I actively turn my head away if something comes into my line of sight that I know will bring me to hirhurim.

And finally, I am making this kabolo allehabo (Bli neder, it's not a vow just yet): before acting out the next time (should a time like this come, Hashem yishmerenu), I will put on my hat and jacket and say my kappitel tehilim. If I don't do it and act out, C"V, then I will pay 10 times the mikva fee the following morning (I've been pretty consistent with my mikva promise).

Your input is welcome. Please don't beat up on me too much, I'm still working out my sensitivity issues:)

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by gibbor120 - 04 Oct 2011 17:56

I don't see why you can't lose your ego and keep your self-esteem. Losing your ego means not putting *yourself* in the center. Self-esteem? You were put here by the RBS"O. He does not make mistakes. He believes in you, believe in yourself. Just don't put yourself in the center. As Dov says, focus on how you can help others (with your G-d given talents). We know you have them.

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by Dov - 04 Oct 2011 22:02

[obormottel wrote on 04 Oct 2011 15:52:](#)

So far, I'm just feeling down, which is definitely not the way to go.

Hey, can't imagine not being able to write a long post! (haha)

But seriously, the overwhelming majority of the time I go around with a down feeling - especially when it's about me feeling down about myself - it is my gayvo that is causing it.

The hidden reason for me being *so disappointed* with myself over the years was an immature expectation that I should be outstanding - or at least, *great*. Now, I am *not* referring to 'perfectionism'. I am talking about a deep-seated belief that I picked up somewhere that I really should be one of the top guys in yeshivah, outstanding in some way, mekarev nearly everyone...or I am actually a failure.

I am not talking about what I would have always told you if you asked me. I am referring to what I actually believed inside my heart. It was a devastating sheker. It (among other things) pushed me to desperately seek sex and porn for a very long time. I needed it just to feel OK. Porn gave me a warm, sweet accepted feeling that my yiddishkeit couldn't give me, ***cuz I did not let it***. As hard as I'd try in Yeshivah and at home, I hated myself (and life) for not being what ***I*** considered "OK": truly great.

I know this may sound like the *opposite* of a nechoma to some folks, but it is not. Knowing ***and accepting*** the truth about myself is the greatest nechoma I have ever experienced. And for me, my inherent gayvo in expecting much more of myself than I really have the ability to achieve and be, is far more poisonous than porn is.

Some respond to this saying it is selling ourselves short - "we must reach for the stars or we'll be stuck in the mud," they will say. And of course, they are right - ***for normals***. But not for many addicts. As an addict, I do just fine when I accept that I am simply *not* endowed with the brains of the average acharon, *nor* the connectedness of the average tzaddik, ***and that Hashem still has a plan for me, too***. I may expect less from me - but *I can still expect the world from Him!* He's G-d, for crying out loud. He can lift me! But I need to be real, first. And it cannot be just 'words'.

If this is painful, then to me it is all the more proof that it needs to be accepted. Not if you are normal, though. It's probably poison for a *normal* person. But the sinking addict is *fueled* by lies. Lies he feeds others, and lies he feeds himself. He thinks the lies are what is keeping him afloat - he truly believes in his heart that the lies he tells are the *only* things keeping him afloat. But really *they are the water* that is drowning him. And the biggest lie of them all is sometimes a false self-image. Even in pretending I am too 'good'. *Al titzdak harbei*, indeed.

Recovery is time for me to grow up, and (among other things) that means accepting my limitations. Once I accept my limitations, Hashem will start raising me up. Eventually, He raises

a person far above their natural limitations....but it's not Chanukah time yet, so I'll hold off on that idea for now. Aseres y'mei Teshuvah is first, cuz it's a time for acceptance of our limitations.

Hashem knows what to do with us as we really are. He does not do much with us as long as we are still 'somebody else'.

Humility. Nu. It's precious.

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by obormottel - 05 Oct 2011 00:47

[gibbor120 wrote on 04 Oct 2011 17:56:](#)

...focus on how you can help others (with your G-d given talents). We know you have them.

An article I read on self-esteem the other night tells you to learn to accept compliments.

So, as a step towards self-esteem build-up: THANK YOU.

Dov, as always, precious. Nu, vot else is nu?

The ga'avo being the reason for feeling down - that's very wise, I never thought of it that way, it makes perfect sense. Why else would I be feeling down if not for my perceived lack of assumed greatness? How is it not perfectionism, though?

Also, Dov, you're the only one (so far) who advocates different prescriptions for addicts and normals. It seems right in principle, but I don't see a disclaimer **anywhere else**, that says: ok, now normal people tune out, advice for junkies only.

It would seem that a lack of self-esteem is a universal problem, and so is the egotism. Now, the toytzo'o of egotism may be an addictive behavior, ditto for a marred self-image...

I was trying to convey the message of "one day at a time, get off your high horse, baby steps" to

one of my normal friends, and he told me exactly that: "you must reach for the stars or else..". He gave me an example of an indoor treck bike race: they always have a motorcycle leading the race to show the bikers there is room for going faster....

So the question is: living with unreasonable expectations of one's own performance is just as damaging to a normal, as it is to an addict. How do you convey this message, though, and, at the same time, how do you encourage an addict to try harder? Is there no room for growth for an addict?

So that was pretty long, right?

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by JackAbbey - 05 Oct 2011 15:41

the tanya sais that atzvos is created by gaaveh, if you wouldnt expect whatever you think you deserve, you wouldnt be depressed when you dont recieve it

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by gibbor120 - 05 Oct 2011 16:02

I also don't quite get the "normal" vs "addict" thing. To me, first you need to be rooted in reality before you reach for the stars. We often do things that make us feel like a tzaddik, and then think of our other behaviours (which would seem to suggest otherwise) as somehow not part of ourselves. Meaning, sometimes reaching for the stars distracts us from seeing who we really are. We *feel* we are reaching for the stars, but forget to look at what kind of ship we are taking to get there.

I once had a rebbi that said people generally work on madreigos (sorry dov) that are above or below our real level. First, we have to be "real" with ourselves. The stars can be a long term goal, but for now, we have to focus on what is in front of us. The lofty goal is in the back of the mind, not the front. The front is "what is today's avodah"?

On the perfectionism thing, there is some great reading and listening material at drsorotzkin.com/ from Dr. Ben Zion Sorotzkin. Someone posted the link recently - THANKS! I

just started reading and listening yesterday. There is some really good stuff there.

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by obormottel - 05 Oct 2011 16:38

Careful there, Gibbor, 4 more posts and you are a Hero Member! Everything you said rings true to my ear. A lot of normal people are unrealistic about themselves and therefore set a standard for themselves that is unreachable and get despondent when they fail. So a lot of recovery tools would do wonders for normals, I am just not sure how to rebuff the reach for the stars argument if the consequences of of falling are not as dire as for an addict.

My current self-esteem search is influenced by Dr. Sorotzkin's articles on that website, so it's a great resource. And of course I always fall back on Tanya (thanks, Shmeichel), which bashes ga'avo and atzvus and many other destructive character traits. I have to give it a thought, though, when it comes to building self-esteem.....I'm sure it's there somewhere, maybe Serene Smile can give me a maare mokoim?

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by gibbor120 - 05 Oct 2011 16:50

[obormottel wrote on 05 Oct 2011 16:38:](#)

I am just not sure how to rebuff the reach for the stars argument

Who says you need to rebuff it? What do you beleive? If you are like me, you want to be able to justify yourself to someone else. Let go. (talking to myself as well).

Here's a mashal. Let's say a baseball player wants to hit more home runs. Well, if every time he steps up to the plate, he thinks "home run", he will strike out a lot. If he focuses on hitting the ball, well, a lot of them will go out of the park.

A holier mashal. Let's say you want to finish a masechta. If you keep counting how many pages to the end, you will never get there. Do the work. Learn day by day and voila, before

Focus on the small, accomplish the big. (i made that up just now - sounds good)

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you know it, you finished it, one page at a time

Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by obormottel - 05 Oct 2011 17:16

I just finished the entire tehillim last shabbos before RH. Probably the first time ever in one sitting. You know what always stopped me before from doing that? Kapitel 119.

As I would get up to long samechs, or ayins, I would think to myself: just wait till kuf yud tes, and the sefer would immediately fall out of my hands. SO your holy moshol is well taken, thank you.

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Re: Personal recovery plan

Posted by obormottel - 05 Oct 2011 17:36

Ok, change of topic (somewhat):

As I said I was feeling down lately, not "feeling it" on Rosh Hashono, and having hard time with living in general. So yesterday something happened, and I only realized later at night how bad it really was. I'm hoping to get away with a warning this time, but if you guys think it was a fall, I'll take it, though it's sad, I am near 70 days now.

Here goes:

I was on this culinary website yesterday (I do that for living) and I started typing into the search box, and a list of search history appeared. One of the searches was a combination of words that I used in the not-so-distant past, AND I CLICKED ON IT. The furthest I got was to the google list of websites with those two words as keywords, which was pretty benign and mostly medicinal in nature, thanks to google search filter, I guess. The very first link had a vivid description which I actually read. Then I realized that I was "testing" my filter, like a lot of us do before falling all the way and I quickly got back to my casserole.

Only after I got home that evening it dawned on me that t wasn't just a benign detour or "the first look is on G-d" kinda thing. I actually consciously clicked on a word-conjunction denoting the only possible thing I could expect to see on the other side. Thank G-d for filters....

In conjunction with my feelings of depression and inadequacy lately, and following a search history to a sentence which, in retrospect, actually jolted me up a bit (I got a whiff of a fix I was looking for), AM I GOING INTO A RELAPSE?!

I saw a link somewhere to an article titled "Symptoms of oncomming relapse" or something, but I can't remember where. Zemmy?!

It also doesn't help that Wife is destroying what's left of my self-esteem with each interaction we have, she is so ruthless....And the Garden of Peace says, she's merely a reflection of me, so arguing or trying to stand up for myself is like trying to slap a mirror. aaaaarrrrrrgggghhhhhh!

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Re: Personal recovery plan
Posted by gibbor120 - 05 Oct 2011 17:57

I'm no posek, but I'd say not a fall. KOT! FORWARD ONLY, NO REVERSE!

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Re: Personal recovery plan
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 05 Oct 2011 18:56

Mottel, tayere heilege Mottel,

There is a story with Reb Yisrael Salanter (i think). someone came to him and said he was thinking of becoming a shochet but he is worried about the responsibility of providing kosher meat to people. what happens if he makes a mistake?

Reb Yisrael answered "would you rather someone who is not worried about that responsibility be shochet?"

Are you heading for a relapse CH"V? dunno. but it is always possible and we all need to be on our toes and alert to the beginnings of a slide. so be happy it wasn't worse and let that

experience bring home the point that we are never 'farzichert' against anything until they start shoveling stuff...

So keep on keeping on, you are rocking and rolling, lechtachila aribber!

p.s. pass the casserole please

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Re: Personal recovery plan
Posted by obormottel - 05 Oct 2011 18:59

any idea where this article might be?

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Re: Personal recovery plan
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 05 Oct 2011 19:13

[obormottel wrote on 05 Oct 2011 18:59:](#)

any idea where this article might be?

Casserole is in the cholint thread.
nope. I searched but did not find it

[Holy Yid wrote on 19 Oct 2010 23:37:](#)

Read "Relapse Traps" by Roger and McLillen

www.amazon.com/Relapse-Traps-Common-Pitfalls-Recovery/dp/0553354795/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1287531365&sr=8-1

www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=4346.msg115765#msg115765

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Re: Personal recovery plan
Posted by Dov - 05 Oct 2011 22:35

[obormottel wrote on 05 Oct 2011 00:47:](#)

How is it not perfectionism, though?

Maybe. But the pride I am talking about is a false self-perception. Perfectionism, I think, is not aiming at any specific thing, but a general demand for perfection in whatever one happens to be engaged in. It could come from pride, from fear, or perhaps just a feeling of not being good enough unless everything I do turns out basically perfectly. It is actually a *beautiful* characteristic - once a person learns how to use it and live with it. Till then, it is torture and destructive. But at it's worst, it is not living a lie, just living stupidly.

Also, Dov, you're the only one (so far) who advocates different prescriptions for addicts and normals. It seems right in principle, but I don't see a disclaimer **anywhere else**, that says: ok, now normal people tune out, advice for junkies only.

Ok, so is it my fault that almost every single frum yid who comes here, comes with the aspiration for a long-awaited, oft-promised, glorious chance at trampling their yetzer hora to death under the boots of kedusha? C'mon. So few come here saying I am mentally ill (an addict). If they really felt that way, they wouldn't be coming here, they'd be going to a shrink. So they are coming here to be told (yet again) sweet nothings like, "you can do it!" "take up your rightful yerusha of Yosef haTzaddik, and vanquish the YH for arayos!" Some make it - I say that these are not addicts, but just regular men with a yetzer hora. Normal! Good for them! They come here and get what they need, which is a little less shame so they can admit the truth about themselves and see that Hashem has not cast them away. They discover that what they thought: that they are the **only** guys in yeshivah who masturbate themselves to porn over and over in bed and in the bathroom - is a big lie. They discover that their 'deep shame' was really just a way to hide - so they can keep doing what makes them feel good: using porn, fantasy, and sex with self. And discovering that it's all a lie, they are freed to actually be responsible Jews who do not typically turn to porn, fantasy and masturbation to feel good. I maintain that this type is - and will always be - the majority here on GYE.

But there are still many *addicts* who come here. I believe that many of them do not realize they are actually sick with an obsession of the mind and an allergy of the body. They too, want the sweet talk of glory in beating down their menuval (finally!). They take it all in, hook, line, and sinker. They might even get better for a while....then they flop, dissappear, whatever. And they are left as confused as ever. What did GYE do for *them*? Perhaps it only convinced them all the more that they are just hopeless screw-ups, or permanently 'bad'. Some guys have confessed to me that they are losing emunah because they lose this struggle. They are fed the sweet, well-meaning lie that "they can do it!" - and they keep failing worse and worse. They are told that the Torah has the answers - and here they are, learned for years and still flopping. What is the teretz to this painful *stirah* between *their experience* and *what they have been told all their lives*? They often start to doubt the Torah. Hey, it is really hard to argue with personal, real experience. Telling them - as so many 'party-liners' do, is so very cruel, I think.

And then there are the types who totally misunderstand the *hopelessness* or *powerlessness* I refer to, and attack it. They try to 'love bomb' it, or they call it apikorsus. They do not realize they are not talking about addicts. It is just plain stupid to say that Chaza"l were referring to addicts when they said their eitzos for overcoming tayvas hamishgol and arayos. Heck, their advise is so poor a tool for so many people I know - how could that be? Obviously Chaza"l were not talking about mishugo'im. These guys sometimes quote Rebbe Nachman or the like and assume that anyone who does not succeed in this battle is simply not doing it their way 'well enough'.

In contrast, that is not what I say about "*my*" way. I do *not* believe that the 12 steps are for *everybody*. All I say is that they are *definitely* for some people, as they are (so far) for me. They have been my open door into a real relationship with Hashem, through really being *with* myself and others - not lying and faking any more. Not to myself, and not to anybody. And they are

simple. With a little help from another understanding sick person like me, anyone who wants to can use them.

But it all depends on the first step - do you really believe that you are able to control it, or do you not? *Your own history and experience* is the only teacher for that - not the Torah, and certainly not other peoples' example. No need to ever look over your shoulder. "V'yad kol odom bo" - nobody else shares your yom haDin. It's just you all alone with the truth.

If a person comes to see that he is hopeless and unable to beat it, then he can **start** depending on Hashem. But it is not easy - examples of others who really do this is usually needed. Through my admission that I am a loser at the battle with lust, I am sober today, for only a poor man really learns bitachon. Rich people don't often really **need** G-d. I am sober over 14 years of 'todays' so far, and this is not a miracle? And it gets easier, not harder. The ones who 'hold on' and 'last just one more day' are usually building up like a balloon. They explode - cuz it was all willpoer. If they are normal, they may be able to do it. If they are not, but are sick like I am, then they need to know they can't, so they start using G-d for a change.

Until then, all the 'bitachon' and "I will do it - **of course** with G-d's help," is all just words. And if it doesn't work, then that *may* be exactly why. Nobody can know they are a loser, except leiv yodeya moras nafsho. Then they can become winners - on Hashem's check.

It would seem that a lack of self-esteem is a universal problem, and so is the egotism. Now, the toytzo'o of egotism may be an addictive behavior, ditto for a marred self-image...

I was trying to convey the message of "one day at a time, get off your high horse, baby steps" to one of my normal friends, and he told me exactly that: "you must reach for the stars or else..". He gave me an example of an indoor treck bike race: they always have a motorcycle leading the race to show the bikers there is room for going faster....

So the question is: living with unreasonable expectations of one's own performance is just as damaging to a normal, as it is to an addict. How do you convey this message, though, and, at the same time, how do you encourage an addict to try harder? Is there no room for growth for an addict?

So that was pretty long, right?

The only thing that matters in making sense out of all this is - is koidem kol: the person an addict? Why would you want to give chizzuk to an addict? An addict is sick in the head, and

until he or she realizes that their problem is not the aveiro, but the out of control insanity that is motivating them and ruling their life, they will not change at all. They may need to *fail* more (and they will), not be encouraged more. And convincing them that they are powerless or failures at fighting lust is **also** a waste of time! The only person who ever will have the right - or ability - to effectively do that, is the person themselves. If they can, then they can, and are not addicts at all.

Maybe they are in the category I mentioned above (of most people), who simply love the way porn and sex with themselves (or others) makes them feel, so they keep doing it. Plain and simple. That is a religious or moral matter, not an addiction. I think. And it highlights the definite difference between those who use program ideas as *gimmicks*, rather than simply iving with them in real life.

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