

My nisayon

Posted by mynisayon - 18 Oct 2011 03:09

hi. I just wanted to introduce myself and tell a bit of my story. I'm a married guy with kids k'nh and I have been struggling with this stuff since I was 12. The past 5-6 years have really been more of a challenge. Prior to that period, I would fall but I could always get myself out of it and be clean for months and even years. I started masturbating before I even knew what it was. Over time I was able to really stop and I felt a tremendous connection with Hashem. Somehow I always felt that dealing with tayva was my avoda. So when things were going well I felt that connection and when things weren't going well I felt like I was waiting for lightning bolt to strike. Over time i've learned not beat myself up too much when the falls happen, but i still feel like garbage. B'h until about 5 years ago things were pretty much under control but now I feel like I don't know where to turn. I want my special relationship with Hashem back. I know reading this u r thinking. Get a filter, start the 12 step program and u'll be fine. But there is something else. I do have a special nisayon. My issues are with same sex attraction (SSA). Since I was 12 my interests were guys with only a very little attraction to girls. In yeshiva it was torture and I fell at times but it was under control. I never wanted admit that I might be gay and I convinced myself that if I got married it would be fine. Well I was young and maybe not that smart. I have a wonderful family that I love very much but it did nothing to solve the issue. For the past many years I have struggled with this alone. My wife or for that matter anyone else knows nothing. Coming clean in this forum is a first for me. I can't begin to tell you how difficult it is harboring a secret like this. Everyone thinks they know the true me. I learn, I am respected but no one even my own family knows nothing about my issue. Its an awful feeling. At this point I couldn't bring it up to my wife, it would cause too much pain so I try dealing with this alone. My connection to Hashem is most important to me. Without that connection I could never have happiness and that's what keeps me going.

Ok so those reading this may still wonder why ssa lust is any different than any other lust. In my case at least its very different and those who suffer from ssa may get it, but those who don't may not. Let me explain. I have two types of triggers. One is seeing things or thinking things that will trigger me. That's no different that a regular guy who sees an attractive girl in the street. The way to deal with that is shmiyras enayim and gedarim. In the past when i was younger that was the primary trigger and I used these methods to keep it at bay. But in my the last five years as I was in my mid thirties approaching 40 the other trigger became the primary trigger. These triggers are emotional triggers. The feeling of being alone is a trigger. The feeling of not being able to be myself is a trigger. I feel like i'm an actor starring in my own movie. The feeling of knowing as i get older that I will never satisfy my desires is a trigger. The not being able to fully accept my situation is a huge trigger. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed and that feeling leads to porn and masturbation. Of course then I feel disconnected and the cycle starts again. To better understand, picture a normal guy being told he could never be with his wife again. I think his reaction may be the same.

I can't seem to be able to get beyond these "emotional" triggers. These triggers are voids and

unfortunately with these voids comes pain. If there are any ssa guys who have successfully dealt with this, please let me know how. That said I need to clean up my act. I'm hoping by being open about whats going on it will somehow help. On yom kippur I resolved to get beyond it. I sometimes wonder how things would have turned out had I not had ssa. honestly I don't think I would have a porn issue by who knows. Does that mean i'm an addict? I'm not sure. Well that's my story. I'll do my best dealing with my situation

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by gibbor120 - 01 Nov 2011 17:30

I like your attitude HY. I will just caution you about a couple of things.

You say

[Hashem Yaasfeni wrote on 01 Nov 2011 17:11:](#)

The YH still lurks but never gets to hold the steering wheel of my world as long as i stay in charge.

You win this battle by letting Hashem be in charge. Don't worry if this does not make sense to you yet. Read some dov (you can click the link to My Links in my signature. I have a storehouse of dov treasures).

Don't ever get complacent. In my relatively short time here, I have seen people fall like that. Hey, I don't even have to look at others. I have fallen after loooong streaks. One streak was over a year long. We never "WIN" once and for all. We just (try to) appreciate each day.

I wish you much hatzlacha. Keep us posted!

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by Hashem Yaasfeni - 01 Nov 2011 18:46

You are right when i said I hold the steering wheel, I mean I DONT LET him (YH) take control of me.

I have been in the yiddishe world long enough that the term 'Hashem yaazor' was too often used as a cop out. I think we need to give ourselves more credit and responsibility. I turn to Hashem for help but there is only me to keep out the YH, or at least keep him away form the controls. I think that makes sense. What do you think?

sure I may fall at some point. so I brush myself off and start again. Im around long enough that I wont let YH get me down or depressed, just keep on truckin.

As long as Im going up the ladder I wont look down. Anything wrong with that? Im happy to hear about your experiences or opinion.

HY

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by alexeliezer - 01 Nov 2011 18:53

I agree. I have an unusual degree of self control in so many areas of my life, but continued to fail to get a grip in this area until I came here and changed tactics. As an addict, I focus my willpower on turning the fight over to Hashem. I do my hishtadlus and don't look at women. But when lustful thoughts come, my hishtadlus is to get davening.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by gibbor120 - 01 Nov 2011 19:36

HY, the question is where does our responsibility lie. We need to know what part of the avodah is ours and what part to rely on hashem for.

One part that is certainly ours is to steer clear of the YH so he cannot take over the controls. Too often, he stops us on the street "just to ask for directions". Before we know it, HE is at the wheel taking US for a ride, and we are left to wonder "how'd that happen.... again" :-[

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by Dov - 02 Nov 2011 00:07

Yeah, it's a head-spinner, this "facing that the responsibility is entirely and totally our own - to let go completely and let Hashem run the show for us," thing.

But the funny thing is: It works.

Surrendering the nisayon completely, works for a time. But eventually, if continue to be honest with ourselves (for those who work the steps that comes naturally, whether they intentionally try to be or not), something funny happens:

When we stop *analyzing* and start **doing** - *writing* out our stepwork, *sharing* the stuff we are told to share with others, and taking the *actions* that recovering people before us took, *things change all over the place!* We discover that figuring everything out is just another lust obsession we have. Taking action that is not always easy or comfortable is the way things get better.

Or we can just continue to suffer worse stuff...

As the novi once said to us, "Kir'u levavchem, v'al bigdeichem."

May I also always remember that.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by obormottel - 02 Nov 2011 05:31

[dov wrote on 02 Nov 2011 00:07:](#)

May I also always remember that.

« *Last Edit: November 02, 2011, 02:53:20 AM by dov* »

Perfectionism? I think it's a definite maybe.....re-read own post after forty minutes and added a line of quite major significance....

important lesson, thank you.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by Snow - 03 Nov 2011 11:45

I can relate to what you wrote. I from the yeshiva world & have dealt with SSA for many years. I am married + kids but....the SSA can really throw me off center when it hits.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by alexeliezer - 03 Nov 2011 18:34

Welcome Nicolo !

Good to have you aboard.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by gothika - 03 Nov 2011 19:08

[Nicolo99 wrote on 03 Nov 2011 11:45:](#)

I can relate to what you wrote. I from the yeshiva world & have dealt with SSA for many years. I am married + kids but....the SSA can really throw me off center when it hits.

Welcome aboard, Nicolo. Can I ask whats up with the username?

I know, tell me about it. Especially when it hits during the worst moment... Like Rosh Hashana, in shul or Neila or something. But this is what hashem want for me, and I am geting dangerously close to hosting a new pity party, so I just need to remember the following, as my Rebbi told me, "These are the cards that Hashem wants for you". If Hashem says that this is what I must deal with, even during Neila, then I guess I only have one way to go then, to keep on trucking forward!

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by mynisayon - 04 Nov 2011 02:52

Sorry for my brief absence...crazy busy at work. Thanks everyone for keeping this thread warm while I was gone.

NebulaMud I hear you loud and clear. It seems SSA strikes at the weirdest time. I too have had hit in very inopportune times. I think its similar to what you said that Hashem is reminding us that its tayva that was given to us and we have little control over the feelings. If we did, we would surely choose not to be bothered by it during neila. But we don't and Hashem is telling us that so we understand that having these feelings is nothing to feel bad about. It doesn't make us bad people on the contrary it is a gift from Hashem. Its what he wants. I know u r saying "some gift" but if used right it can be a fantastic medium to gain a special connection to Hashem. Of course we probable won't be perfect at all times but I think that goes with territory and again Hashem knows that as well. Thats why its important not to feel like we r terrible if we do have any falls. I think the true nisayon is how we approach our special challenges and as we go thru each day and challenge we ciment that special connection.

Been doing some thinning and while my focus has been on the emotional triggers I think I have been dismissing the lust addiction component. I think in my case its there as well. So like most guys especially with SSA i think we have this double whammy. Its been a tough week for me but I keep plugging away..

Thanks again for everyones input. I'm glad this have become an SSA thread. I think there are important issues that need to be discussed and understood. It also gives SSA guys a place to discuss them with a proper Torahdik approach.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by mynisayon - 04 Nov 2011 03:17

One other thing,

I strongly feel that key to my success is accepting that hashem wants me to have the struggles I do. Living with SSA in a non-SSA world can be tough. On the outside I'm a married father b"h who is a regular guy who learns, is active in the community, who is just a regular joe. When these challenges get tough I too (just like nebulaMud) tend to host wild pity parties. Of course

that becomes a huge trigger.. If I focus that this is a gift (see my previous post) from Hashem its not about pity anymore.

There is one element though that causes me more pain than others and that is knowing that my marriage is not and probably will never be as good as someone who doesn't have my issue. True I need to do more but in reality I'm not really wired for the life I live. Wondering if anyone had any thoughts on this...

MN

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by obormottel - 04 Nov 2011 06:56

All good thoughts, buddy. KUTGW! Good to have you with us.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by gothika - 04 Nov 2011 11:41

[mynisayon wrote on 04 Nov 2011 03:17:](#)

One other thing, I strongly feel that key to my success is accepting that hashem wants me to have the struggles I do. Living with SSA in a non-SSA world can be tough. On the outside I'm a married father b"h who is a regular guy who learns, is active in the community, who is just a regular joe. When these challenges get tough I too (just like nebulaMud) tend to host wild pity parties. Of course that becomes a huge trigger.. If I focus that this is a gift (see my previous post) from Hashem its not about pity anymore. There is one element though that causes me more pain than others and that is knowing that my marriage is not and probably will never be as good as someone who doesn't have my issue. True I need to do more but in reality I'm not really wired for the life I live. Wondering if anyone had any thoughts on this... MN

Well MN, I wasn't going to say anything but you did say the very words "Wondering if anyone had any thoughts on this...", but I have been doing a lot of reading, but **much** more importantly, self introspection about what I have read, and if it rang true with my

life experiences, and I could not believe what I found, and you asked my thoughts so ;D I think that wired isn't exactly the most correct word. Even the studies nowadays that insist that genetic makeup aka being wired a certain way, will cause a person to develop SSA. But nevertheless there has been absolutely NO conclusion that it is a definite conclusion to ones genetic make-up that they will develop SSA. This is beyond debate. I challenge anyone to find me anything that suggests a full genetic link that will cause SSA with the same certainty that other genetic results will result in, for example blue eyes, or hairline recession, anything like that. It is impossible to show anything like that with all the current research. So we must conclude therefore that it is a mix of genetic predispositions and then life experiences. Now life experiences can be examined. They can be understood by the individual *sufferer* (for lack of a better word, since we do suffer with it, since our internal feelings are at odds with our religion and chosen lifestyle, family society etc, and so many of us at one point wish we never had this to begin with) and with understanding comes processing and understanding, and psychological state shifts and eventually with all the fundamental therapeutic methods of psychology, they can be integrated into ones personality and change it for the betterment of ones psyche, and emotional health. As a proof to anyone still in doubt that we are still helpless sufferers doomed to just have these feelings and just have to contend with them for the rest of our lifetimes, I will offer this list of my own personal experiences from my own Journal that I personally believe resulted in my own SSA, and even though this list is immensely personal and private to me, I feel that I must share it, if it will help even only one other reader in their own personal growth and self understanding. Bear in mind that of course there are different causes of SSA, namely pre-gender and post-gender SSA. Pre-gender is by far the most common form of SSA, upwards of 80% and develops when a boy is of a very young age, 1, 2 or 3 years, but only manifests at age 6 in an emotional sense for some, and for others only at the onset of puberty in a sexual direction. This type of person will mainly be attracted to others who have an element of masculinity that they desire, and this is mainly sourced, at least for me, from as yet unmet masculine identity strivings. Then there is the post-gender type, I won't go into the causes because I cannot speak from personal experience over here, whereas everything else is 100% my own, but it is characterized by a striving toward a more youthful, gentle, boyish, perhaps even effeminate man. So as I was saying, the following is a list of stuff from my own Journal, and any combination of these can result in SSA:

1. Being a Kitchen Window Boy: I always fearful and cautious towards other boys my own age, staying close to my mother and grandmother, aunts, and my older sisters. I became a "kitchen window boy," and I looked out at my peers playing aggressively and, what appeared to me, dangerously. I was attracted to the other boys at the same time he is frightened by what they are doing. By doing the above, I was 'defensive detaching' myself, emotionally isolating myself from other males, and from my own masculinity. This was always true: Females are familiar, while males are mysterious.
2. Here are some instances where I know that I frequently tend to defensively detach myself.
 1. Dancing with other men, usually in context of shul, yeshiva luncheons etc.
 2. Growing a beard. [I know weird right, this one's probably just me but you never know]
 3. Davening in a minyan for shacharis.
 4. Playing team sports.
 5. Being part of a clique.
 6. Singing at meals and other types of gatherings.
 7. Playing with other peoples young kids.

3. I felt outside the gatherings of other boys my age.
4. Alienation From My Body: I can remember from an early age, always being fearful of being naked in front of others. I developed a need to always have the door securely locked when changing or bathing. This generally was applicable to both males and females, contrary to the fear of males only as expressed in Nicolosi. Perhaps this was due a manifestation of being unfamiliar with other males, and yet also embarrassed by my own masculinity in front of males.
5. Having an idolized transitional figure: At a certain age (13), there eventually occurs a transitional phase, when the affectionate hunger for my male attention transformed into a sexual striving. I developed an intense interest in another boy, often older, who seemed to possess those qualities that I admired. He was particularly good at sports, very friendly, and outgoing, and especially handsome and self-confident. I developed an infatuation that at first was nonsexual. Later, there followed a transitional phase in which my admiration for him became eroticized.
6. “ The partner is often the externalized symbol of the lost, repressed part of his own self, for example, his 'masculinity' “ Nicolosi p72 The above quote is the one from that section that I believe expresses how I have felt for a long time, but have never really tried to figure out what the cause was. On Hoshana Rabbah I was at a minyan a “minyan factory” shul, since I had overslept shacharis at the yeshiva, due to going to sleep too late, as usual, and so I davened at home for the most part, and then went to find 5 aravos to beat on the floor, as per the usual custom and I caught the end of the late minyan service at the shtibl, precisely at the “hoshana's” right at the end of davening, which I was happy about since at least I would perform this last service as part of a minyan. I was feeling rather frustrated at myself that morning for sleeping in, or more specifically, for not having had the self control to go to bed at a reasonable hour the night before, and I noticed as we were encircling the bima, that one of the people in the minyan was this tall, 21 year old guy, he was overall very attractive, and first noticed his biceps, which had a bigger than average, powerful look to them, they looked particularly good in the shirt that he was wearing, a tight Levi's brand, that has narrow halfway sleeves which hug the bicep very well, and I thought that he looked amazing in that look, and I thought that I wouldn't be able to pull that kind of look off, as my biceps don't have that specific quality of size to them, and so it would just look average on me, but on this guy, it was breathtaking. He also had this boyish face, that was kind of mischievous, but still sensitive, and this ever so slight stubble that you had to focus on just to observe, which reminded me of the boy that I was first attracted to Now what I am observing from this incident, is that although I thought that I looked at him and immediately felt a strong sexual desire for him, there were actually two stages which I am only noticing now[as I type this Journal]. I thought about all those qualities that I listed above about him, and they reminded me of how much I wish that I had those things. I have always wanted to have that tight “bicep-py” looks, and I have also always wanted to just constantly have that carefree, yet somehow simultaneously serious expression, instead of my usual uptight, cold expression, or alternatively my idiotic trying to look carefree and smiling, but ending up looking like a serial killer expression.[:'(] I was also feeling generally disappointed at myself, since I couldn't even muster up the willpower, or strength

to make it to regular yeshiva davening, on that special day, Hoshana Rabbah which is a very special day on the calendar to be at shul, in time with your regular minyan. So really what was happening was that I sensed what I believed to be some serious character flaws in myself, and then upon feeling that, I was presented with this guy and his array of looks that said to me, "Hey don't you just wish that you could have all THESE things, ha! well you don't." It was only then, after that split second, and quite hidden thought process that I started to have some sexual feelings toward him.

7. My relationship with my mother was always too close, having no boundaries, and vicious fights between us are quite typical, despite my feelings of affection for her

 - My relationship with my father was always very distant during my childhood, even though it is quite close now, but we were very distant for the first 18 years of my life, I found him imposing, scary, mean, too strict, not understanding me, I saw him as inadequate as a man.

Ok this post has gone on enough but my point is that all the facts that we have are not because we are wired a certain way, but because we grew up in a certain way. I have found that I have already changed parts of myself just from knowing what has caused my SSA, and I can see myself changing in many ways already, Baruch Hashem. My point MN, is that although you may feel alienated from your wife, and not as close as others are with their own wives, there is a LOT that can be done in terms of changing that, true you may never feel the same way toward her as other non SSA guys feel toward their own wives, but there is much that can be done to improve that. I know that at this point I may be straying away from the wise principle of dov (above) of only speaking from personal experience, being unmarried and all, but I will say this. I have done much in terms of dealing with the stuff above in my own list, and I have no doubt in my mind that you can do as much, or even more as me, and therefore get so much more fulfillment out of even more areas in your life. That feeling of not fitting in, of seeming to be fitting into the community, but not really feeling it "deep down" not being a regular Joe, even though you look

P.S If anyone else Identified with what I have said but for whatever reason you don't want to discuss it here, I am happy to discuss it with you further via PM.

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Re: My nisayon

Posted by alexeliezer - 04 Nov 2011 15:41

[mynisayon wrote on 04 Nov 2011 03:17:](#)

One other thing,

There is one element though that causes me more pain than others and that is knowing that my marriage is not and probably will never be as good as someone who doesn't have my issue. True I need to do more.....

There's only one thing you can do. But first you have to truly want to change this aspect of your life. The Ramchal teaches us that the chitzonius awakens the pnimius. Which means actions lead to feelings (the opposite of what the rest of the world holds, although see the James-Lange theory which seems to adopt the Ramchal, adding that thoughts lead to feelings).

In the case of a wife, the "actions" are more than just the act. It's the thoughts behind it. That's all the chitzonius. Because that's all that's ever in our control -- our actions and our thoughts.

So get working on a plan of what you're going to think about during encounters with your wife. I'm new at this too, so can't offer my experience here. As mentioned previously, check out Yechida's Reflections in the Married section of the forum.

Good Shabbos

Alex

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