

Good intentions

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 19 Apr 2012 21:34

Hi everybody,

After almost 6 months of observing this forum as a guest, I finally decided to introduce myself (...painfully shy - even in anonymity). I'm not a youngster - over 40 years on the roller coaster; so obviously my addiction started long before the internet. Like many of you, I've tried and failed over and over, but B"H never gave up. Until finally Hashem helped me discover GYE. I had a good streak of 168 days which ended this week (still not ready to say "f-e-l-l"). I am starting again be"H. The following is my 3-point plan, based on what I learned on this forum.

I am using a Mishne in Pirkei Avos to remember these 3 points:

Im ein ani li mi li - I must avoid all forms of lustful images and thoughts at all times.

Uchshe'ani le'atzmi moh ani - I must surrender my lust to Hashem and pray and ask for his help.

Ve'im lo achshav eimosai - Forget about yesterday or tomorrow - one day at a time.

Looking forward to meet you

MT

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 23 Oct 2013 02:33

What an interesting thread.

I have the skills to live both as an addict and as a healthy person and switch back and forth, and I can testify that both sides are correct.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by SIB101854 - 23 Oct 2013 05:19

How you can compare being healthy to being an addict? A healthy person acts because he or she knows what is healthy, and an addict, based on a whole self created rationalization, abdicates all freedom of choice

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 23 Oct 2013 05:45

When I am an addict I believe with all my heart I could not stop. That is not a rationalization, it's a thinking error. Like Dov says, the mind does not work.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by SIB101854 - 23 Oct 2013 05:55

Actually, when you are in the grips of addiction, you invent one rationalization after another and convince yourself that it is impossible to stop. That exactly is how Acher mistakenly viewed himself-beyond the possibility of Teshuvah.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 23 Oct 2013 06:03

I don't call that a rationalization. To me a rationalization is when you believe you are an addict but you don't want to face it.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 23 Oct 2013 08:57

[SIB101854 wrote:](#)

Actually, when you are in the grips of addiction, you invent one rationalization after another and convince yourself that it is impossible to stop. That exactly is how Acher mistakenly viewed himself-beyond the possibility of Teshuvah.

It sounds sort of like you are saying that addiction is just a state of mind that can be abandoned, by choice. Many in certain psychotherapy communities believe that...for, after all, would there be a place for psychotherapy without that? Maybe, maybe not.

Addiction recovery in 12 steps is kind of funny, though. Anyone who needs to be 'convinced' by others that he or she is unable to really win the battle - has no 1st step anyway. There are ways to come to see it - but if anyone needs to convince me, then I don't have it and will not have it, till I see it. 12 steps is not a religion, and non-addicts do not need it! There is no 'mitzvah' to admit powerless, for normal people are not!

...though some here have *begged* others to 'just see they are powerless' - as though it was 'a madreigah' of some sort. How can an untruth be a 'madreigah'?

The program people I know, seem to agree that the one thing we bring to recovery, is our own pain. The pain that brings us to an inner admission of our complete failure at controlling and enjoying lust the way that others seem to be able to with impunity. And that *admission our of pain* is where our 100% free will is found. It's what **we** contribute, and Hashem gives us the rest.

Funny that this is so similar to the song of R' Levi Yitzchak m'Berditchev (I think) that goes something like this:

"Ribonno Shel Olam! We want to make a good business deal with You!

We ask you to give us all Your forgiveness, all Your love, and all Your parnossah!

- And what will we give You for it, dear Tatty?

We will offer you all our sins, all our deceit, and all our selfishness!"

Sweet.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by tehillimzugger - 24 Oct 2013 14:06

[Dov wrote:](#)

To my friends MT and TZ, I want to say that *of course* masturbating compulsively is a bris issue, too. But my point is that there are a huge number of guys for whom seeing their struggle as what it is not, is the *main* thing holding them in the problem. I meet guy after guy who keeps using porn and sex with himself and does not get clean because he *insists* on seeing the entire thing as about kedushas haBris.

There are many sweet chassidishe guys and yeshivishe guys I can connect you with on the phone who will tell you that the big change came for them when they finally realized that their religious problem was actually not mainly a religious one. In other words, that their issue was *not* really that they are resho'im. Now, they may have indeed been resho'im (and may still be, depending on your definition of that)! But they came to see that this was not the issue, as I will be"H explain.

Now, for many sweet, good yidden, it sounds crazy to say that "being a rosho is not your main problem". It sounds like one is saying goodness doesn't matter, c"v. Not true.

Yes! Their (our) behavior was bad. Very bad sin. But once they realized that *it was **also** crazy and stupid* from a totally Derech Eretz perspective, they were able to quit and get into recovery. And in recovery they are. And life is amazingly changed. And they are clean - or at least cleaner than ever.

Until that conclusion, they could not stop sinning, at all, and were mostly getting worse.

And telling them that their recovery 'is really just Teshuvah dressed up in plain clothes' is just as silly as thinking that an addict says he or she is an addict just to kill the guilt that depresses them and makes them sin again. It's missing the point entirely.

Finally, a moshol:

There are many things that are ossur and *also* dangerous and unhealthy. But when Chaza"l say ***chamira sakanta me'isura***, does that mean that there is no issur? No. There is surely still issur - but their point is that the sakonah is far more relevant than the issur, even though sakonah is a *secular* issue (and so it is distinct from 'issur').

Same thing here. There is vadai pure evil and hence issur itself in sex and lust addiction - unlike alcoholism. And for the normal Jew there is Teshuvah for the issur. But for the addict, there is no Teshuvah, for Teshuvah will not work. For the addict there is sakonah. He is sick and will not get well. The illness **overrides** the issur aspect completely. *Sakanta chamirah me'isura*.

You may think this a stretch, but I don't: The Ba'al Shem Tov used an emphasis on *simcha* and *kabolah* to raise the downtrodden masses of his time. What about telling them to learn a little more Torah? What about "*Hafoch boh v'hafoch boh dekula boh*"? What about "*ki heim chayeynu*"? No, that would spell churban. He dealt with the sakonah of the times in his way. And see the rebirth that came from it.

Many addicts in recovery discover that the sakonah must be the **only** focus - for the addict has crossed into sakonah from issur. His sanity and future are in the balance, unlike the sinner. That is his 1st step.

I think it is a tragedy that some people in recovery tell non-addicts that "you must come to believe you are powerless and addicted". They are not. There is issue and non-addicts need to fight and fight! But addicts are the ones for whom that does not work. Their own stories - not the pontification of others - must tell them this. They (we) are failures, and eventually see that. They alone, need to depend on G-d and cannot. And that is all the 12 steps are for. Letting go and getting a G-d.

The drinker and masturbator both play G-d in their addiction and lifestyle, no matter how religious they may be, though they do not see it.

But a normal person just sins.

This seems like a very fine hair to split, but it is the difference between recovery and more of the same garbage, for so many I meet. And I have been meeting at least one new guy a week now, on the phone - just on GYE. And nearly all tell the very same sad story. I am not making this up.

'Chizzuk' will kill them, their families, and their future - if they are addicts.

OMG

Dov! You think I have patience to read through all this?

I do have ADD you know, point is:

We all know what Dov's opinion is. We all know what MT's opinion is. This has been discussed countless times [actually I remember 4]. Point is: MT is allowed to post a vort that gives him a warm glow in his heart [or an A&W moment for you] without being bashed.

Get it?

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 24 Oct 2013 18:56

I think someone in the 12-step program has constraints about what *other* people read. After all, if you believe there are special-status people in this world, a newbie could be normal or he could be special-status.

In addition, step 12 is not just nice to have. It is essential for staying sober. Step 12 is the life you wanted to have in the first place, the axe in the hand of the Woodchopper so to speak. And it depends critically on a steady stream of special-status people coming into the program. So when you are in step 12 you are going to make sure you grab just as many special-status people as there are.

So you might have to put up with some debate.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 25 Oct 2013 02:23

[Dov wrote:](#)

Thank G-d my problem was not and is not a '*shmiras habris*' issue, no matter how desperate some people I have come across have been to frame it as such to me. All the years I saw it that way, I got sicker and sicker and worse and worse.

I am a sober sexaholic, plain and simple. And I know many other sober ones like me, as well as many more suffering ones who are *not yet* sober. So many of them are held tightly into the old, sick holding pattern of 'obsession painted holy', 'the Nuclear Reset Button', and other excuses to fight and stay sick...and it is all based on BS. Fear, shame, and ignorance. Those are b'ochreinu. And all of them can be tools of 'kedusha', nebach.

Seriously!

But thanks for that great vort, MT!!

Now I am upset.

All I wrote was the above, and you were the one who responded that I was going overboard. So I responded davka because I felt that you were denying that great Torah vorts like that *can* be utter poison for *some*. And that is all that I wrote.

In the above, I made it very clear that I was not saying that 'vorts are bad', but was only sharing what works for me and those like me. I took MT's truly nice vort as implying that the Bris issue was the obvious and only serious focus of this struggle. He was not writing about what works for *him*, but rather about Torah: G-d's Will. That is general. I was being specific.

I felt that your comment was casting doubt on there ever being a serious danger in guys with chronic masturbation and porn problems focusing on 'Kedushas haBris' as their issue.

So I responded.

Wouldn't you respond if c"v I or anyone else said something that seemed to say that 'vorts' are bad *for everybody* with this problem? I know I would argue with them and point out the other side, and I have.

And yes, I also take chizzuk like, "*Go bust the yetzer hora's stinky head wide open, man! You are a tzaddik yesod olam by keeping your zipper up!*", as implying that the entire issue here is 'your Bris'. So when I read it, I like to leave room for the (few) addicts who are here and in deep religious denial about what their real problem is. So I post the other side. Maybe my line about

them "holding too tightly onto their bris's" seemed offensive to you. If so, sorry. But were you around in the days before the GYE Mechitza? Just go and see what the females were posting to the men back then, ok? Does "SMITHEREEEEEEEENS!!!", ring a bell? Wow, that was effective back then, wasn't it? Not.

Ploni's words are well-taken. But it may have less to do with my own 12th step, and more to do with my fear of this forum enabling denial for those (few) addicts reading these pages. Sorry if I care too much. Maybe it is ego, period. Maybe it is dogma that's got me by the throat. But I will write it as I see it. And I only defended it when you, TZ, argue that there is room for feeding denial.

And yes, I happen to believe that - for the true addict- our sincerely religious denial and shame are often so deep and so protected and powerful, that any 'chizzuk' for 'kedushas haBris' at all, is poisonous for them and helps him or her hide and fight even longer. This may sound crazy, but I personally know 30-40 guys who (if they were still on GYE instead of sober in SA or other recovery now!) would speak up here and admit they too were in that 'holy toilet bowl' for years. You may not know that roller-coaster ride, but we do. The only way they got off it was by crawling out from under the weight of their self-imposed usernames and calling a real live person in recovery or really opening up to a good shrink...and not on some 'anonymous phone line'. They'd gladly describe the 'holy' denial and poison *that kept them from being **good, tahor, Jews*** to you, in detail.

If you saw this every day as I do with the new guys who call me and vomit religious excuses *together with their immense pain*, would you feel as I do? Maybe.

I love and respect MT and I love and respect you, TZ.

So:

1- I agree 100% with practically everything MT and others here write *and* with the way they write it...for non-addicts.

2- I believe many porners and masturbaters who check out GYE are *not* addicts, but just have a YH and a penis...not a convenient combination. But nu, Hashem knows better.

3- And I expressly write for the addicts who venture here, not for the normals (though I have written for normals when asked to try to). And I am mindful that true addicts like myself, are often in denial themselves of what they are and will gravitate strongly to the 'vorts' and the 'bris kodesh' talk. And there is nothing I can do about that but lay out the truth as I see it. You do the same, don't you - write the truth as you see it?

So:

Why is it that the frum, sincere guys like you and MT see me as though I am bashing you or what you say? I agree with it 100% - for the non-addicts among us, who are many!

I am annoyed, OK?

Thanks for letting me get that out of my system. If you could not really read or follow that, TZ, it's OK. Thanks for being a friend in your own way.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by MendelZ - 25 Oct 2013 02:37

Woah

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 25 Oct 2013 05:51

I went back to read what this was all about. I guess it was triggered by a 2-line vort, but there must have been a lot of water under the bridge already. Personally I think debate is good and the only thing that's wrong is that there's a feeling of uneasiness about open debate.

This vort about why Hashem had Avraham get a bris at the age of 99 is such a good example of a thinking error. The fact is, pure and simple, you don't know why he was 99 when he did it. The most reasonable explanation is probably that that is how long it took him to let go of the cover which stopped him from absorbing Hashem's word like a child does with his father's words, from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, so to speak. But we don't know that either. Something that you don't know for sure is not useful to a person with an addictive behavior.

Vorts might make you feel good when you are clean, but they are not helping you stay clean, something else is.

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 25 Oct 2013 09:34

Hey, I nearly forgot to post the two vorts I mentioned way back when...

But first: thanks Ploni. Though I do not understand the inyan u r referring to about Ahvraham avinu's age, I do appreciate what u wrote about the stuff we *don't* know. Y'yasher kochacho!

Now the 1st of the 2 vorts - the 'programmy' one:

What a test the Akeidah must have been. How did he do it?!

It seems that in order to actually pass such a test, Avraham Avinu (whose initials were AA,) must have already possessed the motivation, the faith, thrust, devotion, and guts to actually do it.

That's pretty obvious. How can anyone pass any test if they do not have the ingredients to pass it? They must possess them beforehand. The test is to prove, it...or so it seems.

But then why did Hashem have Avrohom Avinu - who very old at about 135 at the time - actually shlep all the way to the mountain to try and shecht Yitzchok, if Hashem already *knew* AA had all it took and even knew he would pass the test? I mean, the man was so old, why trouble him? To make him famous or something? Actually, this is asking what the purpose of tests is in general.

When do they actually **get** those madreigos? If before it - then why bother testing? If after it - then how did they pass it? If during...then how does that work?

It would be very kitsch to just say something sweet like, "passing the test *creates* the madreigo and they really *don't* have it beforehand." A Brisker might be pleased to be mechalek here about a 'chalos' of the kinyan of madreigos. Nu. But what does that really *mean*? This is huge...

The way I like to look at it is that certainly for a person to 'pass' a test, he or she must already possess the madreigos in some way. But this is Olam ha'Asiyah. Having a madreigo in the heart is really not worth much. Rav Twerski writes that only a person's actions show his true priorities, not what he thinks or says he wants.

There are so many who come here actually crying and sincerely claiming that they are "dying to stop masturbating and willing to do anything to stop (Help!!)", etc. Dying. Willing to do *anything*, we say. But just go and suggest a **real** action...and what happens so often? "Oh, I'm not 'ready'

And the program goes bit further and says like the RMCh"L and Sefer Chinuch: ho'odom nif'al k'fi p'ulosav. Chuck C of AA said it even nicer: "You can't think yourself into right living. You can only live yourself into right thinking."

Perhaps our desire for kedusha is really there, but we don't really have what we think we do. We often don't admit or realize how afraid we really are to go on without our best friend, lust, for example. Or we deny in our hearts in the first place that it really is our secret best friend. A dirty little secret...even to us. But not to Hashem. Our Best Friend knows exactly how much we love it and He loves us, anyhow. The only help there is, is taking real action of surrendering it. Wanting to give it up - even *really* wanting to give it up - does nothing by itself. And that hurts. It's gotta hurt or else it's probably not surrendering, at all.

Avrohom Avinu wanted all the same things after the akeidah that he did before it. But they were all just feelings. Only by taking action did they define him as the man he was. So he **had** to shlep all the way through desert and rivers with Yitzchok, climb the mountain and actually try to take the knife, even though Hashem knew he would do it beforehand. Hashem didn't need it, Avraham did.

So He said, "atah yodati ki y'rei Elokim atoh" - Now I *know* (da'as) that you are one who has yir'as Hashem. Hashem knew it before ('yodati' is in past tense, after all). Rather, He means that now it is now *known* - for Avrohom. Da'as is the neck - connector between mochin (the head) and midos (the body). It is where knowledge in the head can become awareness in the heart - and our behavior is changed. And that is only accomplished through *action*. Avraham did not resist anything - he did something he did not naturally feel like doing. Taking action is where it's at. But resistance: *not* masturbating, *not* looking at shmutz, and not, not, not - does not bring da'as/real change. Cuz it's not action! It is just *inaction*.

Maybe earlier on in Gan Eden at that close-to-perfect state, it would have been enough to just keep a lo sa'aseh (inaction) of 'lo sochlu mimenu', but since then, the requirements are greater and *action* is where it's at. That's the typical pattern of golus. It gets harder, not easier.

And indeed, in recovery, I have witnessed many dozens of men in phone groups and meetings begin to change dramatically after simply using their real first names and clear voices and *sharing their written sexual behavior inventory openly with the safe people without reservation*. After years of hoping, studying, and private 'Teshuvah', they finally start to have real change. It starts the ball rolling in us developing a lifestyle of opening up honestly, bond to the group and really start to know that we are not alone, not unique, and that it is OK to admit we are ill (if we are), as long as we are sober and taking actions of recovery every day. No fears or reservations are needed.

No dvorim sh'b'leiv do that. Wooh!

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by tehillimzugger - 25 Oct 2013 12:34

Dov, I couldn't read it, but I did anyway.

I think we should stop fighting here and maybe discuss it on the phone.

Can you email me your phone #?

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Re: Good intentions

Posted by Dov - 28 Oct 2013 04:47

PS I am gonna edit the above vort, just for two added points that came into the brain cell on Shabbos Kodesh.

...tho i think i scared away everyone anyhow...

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Done!