

Hello from a newcomer

Posted by Desperate Yid - 13 Dec 2012 19:42

Hello chevra,

I have been watching the chizuk emails for a sort while and have decided to jump in myself. i would describe myself as having come some distance since my first unfortunate encounter with a computer (bought it for my job; downhill form there). There are many areas in which I have succeeded in limiting opportunities to act out on my addiction.

However, it always seems to find a way to creep back in. As Dov wrote the other day, I am constantly on the Aliyah/Yeridah roller coaster.

For one example, i was on a high though (most of) Yamim Noraim. Came Succos, and someone brought us a computer without filters installed. Of course, i had to check it out. After a terrible night, I put on WebChaver. Then we got a gift of two tablets (no pun intended). Try to put Webchaver on one of those! Another day gone. Comes Simchas Torah (hakafos were a tremendous high), and my sister-in-law made an off-color (flirtatious?) comment in the afternoon. Back down under.

I have come to realize that rather than relying on limiting the situations, I need to also change my own inner quest for the stimuli to feed my addiction. I have finally begun davening to Hashem for His help; I hope that you can help me break free as well.

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Re: Hello from a newcomer

Posted by moish u.k. - 13 Dec 2012 20:52

Welcome on board. I hope you find What you are looking for.

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Re: Hello from a newcomer

Posted by Dov - 13 Dec 2012 22:38

[Desperate Yid wrote:](#)

Hello chevra,

Comes Simchas Torah (hakafos were a tremendous high), and my sister-in-law made an off-color (flirtatious?) comment in the afternoon. Back down under.

I have come to realize that rather than relying on limiting the situations, I need to also change my own inner quest for the stimuli to feed my addiction. I have finally begun davening to Hashem for His help; I hope that you can help me break free as well.

Sweet! Being open about this here is going to be a great help for you, be"H, as it is for me in the SA meetings I go to. Not just for staying clean, but for growing up. It's so fantastic that there are people who actually come out from behind the computers and start posting here. May it be the beginning of opening up more and of making great recovery friends for you, ad meyah v'esrim, chaver.

I have a question for you. When you wrote after the apparently flirtatious comment, that you were down again...what exactly do you mean that happened? Was it bad thoughts you had, or did it lead to your getting into actual sexual trouble (with yourself) again?

Chanukah is a great time to let the light shine on our secrets!

Hatzlocha!

- Dov

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Re: Hello from a newcomer

Posted by Desperate Yid - 17 Dec 2012 18:46

Hi Dov,

Back from Chanukah, kind of survived.

The flirtatious comment from my sister-in-law got me to go down and act out (after a 20 minute struggle with myself. Tried leaving the room, sitting outside and learing, but to no avail.)

I am actually now struggling with another interaction from same SIL. At a Chanukah party, she asked to hold the baby. When she gave the baby back, she brushed her hands against mine. I have not acted out about this one yet and hope not to. I know that thinking about this makes it even harder to move past.

Had a good davening; I don't want her or other such thoughts to steal my ruchniyus.

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by nederman - 17 Dec 2012 19:08

Hi Desperate Yid,

So you are desperate when you do porn. If you stopped doing porn would you be happy or do you use porn to help you cope with life? Imagine I have a big red button, and if you push this button you will never again do porn or masturbate. Would you push the button?

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by Desperate Yid - 17 Dec 2012 19:36

In half-a-second!!!

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by Desperate Yid - 17 Dec 2012 19:38

I actually have a very good life - hampered by my addiction. If I can break free, I will be able to have uninterrupted aliyaos in learning and davening, time to get all my work done, and energy for my wife and kids.

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by nederman - 17 Dec 2012 20:22

[Desperate Yid wrote:](#)

I actually have a very good life - hampered by my addiction. If I can break free, I will be able to have uninterrupted aliyaos in learning and davening, time to get all my work done, and energy for my wife and kids.

Okay. I know two sure-fire ways to break free:

1. Pursue the idea that fundamentally the desire is too much for you and stay free of porn through others and G-d, and in turns help others stay free of porn.
2. Learn to believe that the desire is not too strong and choose to stay free of porn.

Any preference?

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by jack - 18 Dec 2012 01:47

just a tip from a fellow struggler - dont say 'IF' i have found 'IF' is never helpful'

hatzlacha

jack

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by Dov - 18 Dec 2012 03:07

[Desperate Yid wrote:](#)

Hi Dov,

Back from Chanukah, kind of survived.

The flirtatious comment from my sister-in-law got me to go down and act out (after a 20 minute struggle with myself. Tried leaving the room, sitting outside and learning, but to no avail.)

I am actually now struggling with another interaction from same SIL. At a Chanukah party, she asked to hold the baby. When she gave the baby back, she brushed her hands against mine. I have not acted out about this one yet and hope not to. I know that thinking about this makes it even harder to move past.

Had a good davening; I don't want her or other such thoughts to steal my ruchniyus.

Dear Desperate Yid,

The focus on this forum (and in an addict's avodas Hashem) is all about quitting, stopping, fighting the tayvos and being tahor. That emphasis not going to change here - for if it did, few would ever come here and get the help they often get to recover! Nu. Hashem works through funny ways sometimes.

But in recovery, the emphasis is on growing up and *accepting* the facts about ourselves for a change, taking personal responsibility for our behavior **today**, and demonstrating the willingness to do whatever it takes to really be clean - so that we will have a chance to really live this day in sanity instead of in the same old familiar goofiness.

Are you basically describing an obsession with this SIL? I can certainly understand such an obsession and such a tingling 'worshippy' feeling to her body and her attention when she is around. I know it well - if that's what you are experiencing. It's so common.

But I am posting here today to try and share two ideas: a big-picture idea and a small-picture one.

In a general sense (big picture), preoccupation with feelings of lust are part of fighting and beating, not surrendering. People who are ready to surrender the right to lust and really give it up for today - or as you put it: *to push that button and never be dependent on lust again* - are ready to take real action...but "Trying to leave the room, sitting outside and learning, all to no avail," is not taking real action. Those things are just about trying to beat it with your brain. And your brain is what is so obsessed with this woman's image, body, and attention! Ein kateigor na'asoh san'eigor.

So in a specific sense (small picture) I suggest to you that if you were indeed ready to "press that button," you would be ready to take real action to be free of it when you get it. To do something real like calling a safe friend, admitting to him simply and humbly that as much as it frightens and upsets you, you still love seeing this woman and that you feel power in her touch...in other words, that you lust after her. Big deal? Shame in the simple truth? No need for that, chaver. Everyone who understands the problem *respects* honesty when they see it, and loves the share-er even *more* as a result of vulnerability. We suffering people love and respect each other **in our struggle**, just as Hashem loves us. He must love Emess, if He makes it His signature! We try to be like Him, too. This is not about shame c"v - it is about honesty and

acceptance that are real when put into action. Sforim like Peleh Yo'eitz explain ideas "al derech avodah" - well, recovery is *only* al derech avodah.

And just as Rav Tzi Elimelech wrote in his Tzet'l Kotton (os #13), openly admitting the truth about our secrets to another *safe* person puts the light on them and they start to shrivel, right then and there.

There are other great and real actions that we can take when we feel lust...but right now I am here just to mention this one for your consideration, chaver.

How desperate a Yid are you, is the question?

Desperate enough to keep playing mind games in order to keep your secrets - or desperate enough to surrender the lust with real action?

You have come a long way here and will keep growing, I know. Was anything I shared here helpful to you?

- Dov

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by Desperate Yid - 18 Dec 2012 09:21

(I feel so mechuzak by all the responses!)

Nederman, if I understand what you mean, I have tried option 2 for long enough; intellectually, it is teh most useless thing in the owrld, but bottom line, i can't just "decide" to live without it. I need tools!

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by Desperate Yid - 18 Dec 2012 09:39

Dear Dov,

You really gave me a lot to think about (I love your picture - it says it all).

I know that my obsession with my ister-in-law is not the problem; it is an outgrowth of an underlying problem that has existed for a long time, before I knew her. Yet, I have gotten to that point that you described so well. In all honesty, my excitement began even while we were standing and schmoozing.

I davened before I went into the room that I should not be affected by feelings for others; I think I didn't expect to still feel that way - especially since she has seemed to see-saw as well between being affectionate and catching herself and being very proper. I shudder to think that my overtures over the years may have caused her to be lax in a way she never would have; she is essentially a good, frum bas yisroel.

I have wanted for a long time to come clean about this obsession and others, but to whom? My wife?? My chaverim? Members of the kehila where I am considered a choshuv Ben Torah?

I am ready for real action - I hope it can be done in a safe way.

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by nederman - 18 Dec 2012 16:28

[Desperate Yid wrote:](#)

(I feel so mechuzak by all the responses!)

Nederman, if I understand what you mean, I have tried option 2 for long enough; intellectually, it is teh most useless thing in the owrld, but bottom line, i can't just "decide" to live without it. I need tools!

The tools are available. You have to write a cost-benefit analysis and learn how to remind yourself that you do have a choice (that choice to be tzadik or rasha that you thought you had lost.) If that's what you want, I wrote up some instructions here:

docs.google.com/document/pub?id=1pVbfoTbMQ0CHj61cOj4hPxxNdAc4OXU01VKkhuWFL68

If you are thinking of "dabbling" in option 1, watch out. You must be familiar with the concept of maris ayn. You avoid behaviors that you could rationalize into beliefs that you don't want. If you "surrender," look away really fast when you see a woman, or engage in other behaviors for people with no choice you will cement your belief that you have no choice without external help. Eventually you'll believe you have no choice with such intensity that you'll *need* other people in order to choose not to lust.

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by Dov - 19 Dec 2012 05:47

[nederman wrote:](#)

If you are thinking of "dabbling" in option 1, watch out. You must be familiar with the concept of maris ayn. You avoid behaviors that you could rationalize into beliefs that you don't want. If you "surrender," look away really fast when you see a woman, or engage in other behaviors for people with no choice you will cement your belief that you have no choice without external help. Eventually you'll believe you have no choice with such intensity that you'll *need* other people in order to choose not to lust.

Dear Desperate Yid,

In nederman's quote above, there is some misleading information. I admire anyone trying to help - and he has learned some great tools that are used by many people in (and also out of) 12 step recovery and he tries hard to pass them on. Here are some ideas I'd like to share with you about what he warned you regarding "option 1":

1- This 'powerlessness' idea is actually all about taking personal responsibility for one's actions - if the person is an addict. It simply means that we finally recognize that all the good (or not so good) tools we have tried to use over the years (cognitive approaches and other therapy, meds, focus on depression or overcoming ADD, lots and lots of self-help books and mussar sforim, tikunim, great shmoozes, and lots of yir'as Shomayim, to name some) have not worked to keep us safe and sane. In the long run, the addict has only gotten worse in frequency - or in darkness of the behavior though it be less frequent. The 'powerlessness' idea in 12 step recovery has *nothing* to do with the nahrishkeit that one is not held 'responsible' for one's behaviors because of some inability to stop, which is a lie. And it's certainly not about condoning using our drug even further, either. Self-talk like that comes from the sick person, not from the solution. So let's not blame it on the program any more than we blame the Torah for sick thinking that frequently comes as a result of people twisting Chaza"ls all up.

For that has been the the addict's own invention *all along* - that "he needs it" and the opposite of the program. The program is about living without needing to use the drug - and submitting to the facts of my own nature is just **humility**. Humility invites G-d. The lack of it is *dochek raglei Sh'chinah* and forces an addict to eventually fall again. For an addict is someone who does not have the ability to remain sober without dependence on G-d. Simple. And there is no difference at all between goyim and yidden in that. Both get sober every day with His help.

Who *has* been stopping this fellow (us) from messing his life up with stupid decisions till now? . Will he persist in his destructive and compulsive behavior and now get even worse - just because he sees and admits that he is a failure at staying stopped? No. Unless his game is all about machismo and beating it (as so many feel it is)...then he may cop out and pretend that the 1st step tells us that "we can't be sober!"...but that's not 12 steps. That is just him not having the gonads to admit he needs help, can get it if he needs to, and to go and get it.

AA and 12 steps are here to say that "*even if you are an addict like we are, **you do have a choice today!*** You *can* take the real steps to get help, if only you are willing." But to really do

that one needs to admit he can't do it himself. This is very similar to the Torah concept that developing real bitachon depends on whether a person still trusts in anything else but G-d. In other words, the fact is that if we need other people or 'the program literature' to *convince* us that we are powerless, then we have missed the whole point and are probably playing a role. Recovery and 12 steps is not a religion, but just a great set of tools that enables a way of life that actually works (for whatever healthy one wants it to work for). If we really need it, we will use it - if we really do not believe we really need it, it will not work. Either one believes or doesn't. There is no virtue in believing it - it is either true, or not. And personal history is the only teacher. *Leiv yodeya moras nafsho*.

[That's why neither AA, SA nor any other 12 step fellowship ever 'aspires' to convince anyone that [i]they [/i]need help to stop and can't do it on their own. If you think you *can* stop and keep your life manageable, then the 12 steps are not for you, that's all - and that's great! Nothing lost - we are not proselytizing. That is what the AA tradition means when it says "AA uses attraction rather than promotion". Unfortunately, there are times that I have seen just that - proslytizing to accept that "you must accept that you need Hashem to succeed, and that you are an addict!" written to people here on this very forum. That's too bad. I have never seen an addict in 12 step recovery try to convince anyone else to 'join' AA or SA or that they are in fact addicts. But many here on GYE see this battle always as a religious one, and see using twelve steps tools as Torah, rather than derech eretz. So they naturally use promotion for it as though it is Kiruv.

An addicts problem is not about *issur* at all, but about *sakonah*. And the halocha is that ***sakanta chamira me'isura***. It's much more serious than aveiros, for an addict, and the fact that this addiction happens to be an *issur* or *z'nus* is completely irrelevant to the problem - and to the solution. So talking of the 'yetzer hora' is silly and confusing. [If it is the yetzer hora at all, then it is the yetzer hora in it's desire to kill us, not in its desire to 'make us to aveiros'. But that is another discussion.]

But this all depends on whether the person is an addict, or not. The average man may like the way porn and masturbating himself feels even though it generates problems called guilt, *gehinom*, etc. Doing that very thing here on GYE dilutes recovery and creates failures. For only one who brings their honest self-appraisal to the program can use it. Looking honestly at our own personal histories is the *only* thing that teaches us the truth about ourselves, not anything else. Not even the Torah. That's what "Derech Eretz kodmah laTorah" means, to me.]

And addicts **are** able to stop. We are experts at stopping, in fact. But the sad fact that our track record teaches us is that we, on our own, end up failing even though our cost-benefit analysis tells us we do not want to! It is a tendency we have, that's all. We need tools - **but not for stopping** (we are great at that!). We need tools for *not needing to pick it up yet again, today*. Accepting my own powerlessness today (even though I am sober be"H 15 years and ~9

months) means that it is ultimately a gift from Haahem that I do not need to pick my drug back up today. It's a wonderful miracle just like being able to breath is - "umafli la'asos".

Based on my personal track record from ages 12-35, I know that once I *start* using lust (not sex, but *lust*) even a little, I will eventually fall back into a pattern of lusting progressively and compulsively and end up making my life very unmanageable - and this is not a process I can stop. It will snowball, eventually. When it does, I also cause wreckage in other people's lives. Should one be ashamed of that? I do not think so. Should one be ashamed of diabetes and the inability to tolerate Carbs? Nope.

I have been spending the last 15+ years doing my best - not just to stay clean, of course, but to learn and practice letting Hashem help me. Getting out of his way so that He will help me is a full-time occupation. One of it's fringe benefits happens to be a very intimate and beautiful relationship with Hashem, my G-d. That's great for avodas Hashem, too, so recovery can help Torah a great deal. Another great side-benefit is the intimacy I have with everyone around me - appropriate intimacy. With the people at work, with my family, and with my wife, I am learning appropriate relationships that get better and better.

2- Another misrepresentation in the post above is that if you choose 12 step recovery you would then lock yourself into needing to be dependent on other people for the rest of your life to overcome desires. I am so happy that is not true.

Though I am not sure what one would be so afraid of being dependent upon other people for - for many Jews believe in the power of a tzaddik (see writings of the Toldos, Rebbe Nachman, the Tif'eres Shlomo or Radomsk, and others) and that we need to have a relationship with a tzaddik. The gemorah also states that it is essential to have friends, for life itself. As in, "*O chavrusa (a friend), o misusa*".

The reason that 12 step recovery uses friends (as R' Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov instructs in his Tzet'l Kotton) is because honesty with ourselves is not natural for us. Rationalizations abound, and as the gemorah puts it, "*ein chavush matir atzmo mibeis ha'asurim*". The words quoted in Pirkei Avos apply more for an addict than for anyone: "*v'el binoscho al tisho'en*"...or as they say

So what does the program advocate? Blind following of a leader? Fascism?

No. It advocates simple honesty with others. To stop lying.

Desire (lust) is what gets an addict using porn and sex with himself so much. But what makes recovery so hard for an addict is not his lust - *it is his lying*. The way to break free of lying to ourselves is by practicing being honest and open with others, first. I know that sounds counter-intuitive, but it works if we want it to. And in the process of being honest with others who are also addicts and call our bluff cuz they see right through the lies (for they have told them, too!), we learn self-honesty.

And the best fruit of self-honesty is finally, finally being honest with our G-d.

For example, we think we are begging Hashem to "Help us!"...but are we? In recovery many come to see that, at best, they were begging G-d to "Please take it away, so that I will not have to give it up!" That is not prayer - that is giving orders to G-d. He is not a waiter, but G-d. An addict is sick and needs refuah - not more gevurah. And so, we frequently ask for the wrong things, etc.

You know how it says *yohiv chochma lachakimin*. "How can He only give wisdom to the wise", they ask. "for if He didn't give it yet, then they are not yet wise!? And if they are chakimin already, then why bother giving it?" Right...So here is how it works here with honesty:

First we hurt so badly that we are finally ready to be a little open and honest (for a change). Maybe we still use silly usernames or the like, maybe we just use phone meetings for we are so scared of actually getting help in person - that's too much honesty! "It's ME! Gevalt! I gotta hide ME, even from other addicts, of course..." Eventually we are granted some more pain - so we become willing to be more honest and open with others - but we still lie to ourselves that we can
) Eventually, we get the gift of willingness to be totally open and honest with safe people. It just hurts too much to hold on any longer and keep failing. And we start to open up to other people in successful recovery. And we start to get well. We start to let go of the silly notion that we need to beat this...and we start to live for G-d a bit, instead of for our precious self-esteem, tahara, and madreigos. We learn that recovery is **not about sobriety** - and that the big old struggle against lust is just a sideshow. A sideshow. G-d help us - how much time and heart we wasted over it. We can stay sober by just being open and honest with others - because it teaches us how to be open and honest with ourselves.

And it teaches us how to become open and honest for the first time, with our own G-d. That is called: integrity.

So 12 steps recovery is all about what it says in the 12th step: "a spiritual awakening". It is about gaining integrity. And the real integrity is only integrity with Hashem.

But the program did not invent any of this. Hashem gave us into the company of parents. We were dependent on people. And this dependence is a great thing to Him, it seems. For He put *Kabed es avicho v'es imecho* in the first set of luchos! That is the set for *bein odom laMakom*, no?

Yeah. Relationships with people: being a child, then having friends, then being married, then having children, are all the process to eventually get intimacy with our own G-d. Gaining those gifts is designed to lead us to the Great Gift of deveikus. That's why we are like that. Being alone and being able to be independent can actually be a curse. Just ask the nochosh...

Torah study and mitzvah performance themselves, may lead a normal person there. For Torah includes making and living through/developing all the relationships I mentioned above, and more. Hopefully most 'make it' to deveikus. But for addicts, it is plain to me that what gets us there is our disease - for it leads us to recovery, and to using people just as all humans are clearly designed to. We are so lucky! One of the most fortunate groups of all the people in the world.

For we addicts HAVE TO get this relationship, or we dissolve. It's not a luxury or a nice thing to have. We are **driven** to deveikus in some form. We are driven to be broken - *leiv nishbar v'nidkeh Elokim lo sivzeh*. And we come to Hashem for we have nowhere else to turn. [See the Divrei Chayim (hakadosh) on "[i]Vayikra lo Keil Elokei yisroel[/i]" in parshas vayishlach, for a very deep exposition on this very idea.]

So, as Rabbeinu Yonah begins Sha'arei Teshuvah: *Tov v'yoshor Hashem, al kein yoreh chato'im baderech*. Hashem is so good and so right - for He forcibly shoots us (Yoreh as by har Sinai and in "k'cheitz yoreh" in the novi) mistaken ones ('cheit' just means *missing*, as in 'missing the target' - sinning is ultimately just a big mistake and the symbol of all mistakes, as rav Noach Weinberg zt"l often said) onto the right path.

I have been in SA for a while, b"H. And I have seen many people gain integrity - a real relationship with their G-d. They are sober. And contrary to what the post above implies, they do not run to others breathlessly whenever they espy a woman in the street. If we need to, then we certainly use each other to help us regain honesty with ourselves and with Hashem. We lose the shame of needing help, and admit that we sometimes forget honesty - forget Hashem - and may even forget we are addicts. *Ashrei ish shlo yikachecho uben odom ytz'ametz boch!* Forgetting is a normal condition of Jews and everyone else. We forget sometimes. Thanks to the program, we do not need to say from this that our recovery is a sham. We are not perfect. And the fact that recovery is a process is not indication that it is a failure, either. Unfortunately, some have written as much, and perhaps try to shame others into admitting emasculation because they may need to go back to step one sometimes. Humility teaches "hatzori ein b'gil'ad?" - nevi'im slipped, too, in their own way. The Ba'al Shem Tov taught that Tzaddikim still have a lot to learn from the simple folk. Jews, of all people, ought to understand that life is a process - and that the need for growth does not mean it is a failure. Yehudi hu tamid baderech!

People in real long term recovery open up new layers of the onion, and that is humility and growth. In fact, that is real recovery. To see we are still lying to ourselves on some level and to care about that and grow through it be"H; to admit a defect of character or even lusting - and to work to grow through it just as a newbie would - that is real recovery. Humility is what is needed to see that for what it really is: living. Sadly, we harbor silly beliefs about 'having arrived' and 'beating this disgusting problem once and for all!' Nu. Fantasy is not good for addicts, even about recovery. It stymies the entire process, R"l.

Sorry this post was so long. I am sincere and just trying to set the record straight for the benefit of someone who is confused. I hope it is correct, and that it is helpful to somebody. Boruch Hashem yom yom!

- Dov

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Re: Hello from a newcomer
Posted by jjblue13 - 19 Dec 2012 06:14

Desperate Yid

I shudder to think that my overtures over the years may have caused her to be lax in a way she never would have; she is esentially a good, frum bas yisroel.

You CANNOT blame yourself for other people's actions.

Everyone has their own bechira.

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