

Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 24 Sep 2013 20:12

I'm still relatively new here (about two weeks) yet have gained so much (hopefully contributed a little too). I introduced myself to this forum with a question, is acting out an addiction or an unhealthy way of fulfilling a need like food to hunger? And I tried to prove that it is not an addiction from the fact that sex is not inherently a bad thing like alcohol, drugs, etc. and is in fact the first mitzvah in the Torah.

Three things were pointed out to me:

- 1) There is a difference between sex and lust.
- 2) My question was a reflection of my own reality not the reality of others who are really addicted to lust, sex, porn, masturbation, etc. in the same way others are addicted to substances (alcohol, drugs, gambling).
- 3) Regardless of whether it is an addiction or not a person cannot use their circumstances as an excuse for unhealthy habits, and that the question can sometimes distract from correcting the problem. (I still believe very strongly that this distinction is critical to finding the most effective way of dealing with the issue, but that's not why I'm here today, it is discussed more at length in other threads).

I am here today because after looking around for a while I found something very interesting, while I am not addicted to any specific bad habit, no alcohol, drugs, gambling, overeating and for two weeks now I have nipped the occasional urge in the bud without a struggle, at the same time, the descriptions of the addictive personality resonate very strongly with me: "allergy", fantasy, lack of control, and when I'm being real with myself (which is most of the time) I feel the term "addict" sits very well with me as a description of my personality although I'm not addicted to anything in particular.

So here's my problem, if I'm an addict that would seem to suggest that I need to become sober, but if there is no particular addiction or it keeps changing, then where do I go to get sober? Addicts Anonymous? Is it even possible to become sober without an addiction? Is there a "cure" for an addictive personality, or is it just a personality type I will have to struggle with for the rest of my life? Which is perfectly fine with me, it just means I have to stop trying to "fix" something that is not "fixable". Maybe I should develop a harmful addiction (I'll choose the least harmful one) so that I can join a ?A group... (OK, I'm joking, sorry if it was in poor taste)

The problem with turning to rabbonim and therapists is that from following the topic of addiction for a while I feel that the common rabbonim and therapists are not familiar with the addictive

personality and how to deal with it. Maybe I need to speak to an addiction specialist. But what do I say? "Hi, my name is smiley and I'm an addict but not addicted to anything in particular..."

). Maybe that's exactly what I'll do...

Thanks for listening.

(Actually, that's not entirely true, I'm currently addicted to the GYE forum, totally out of control...

Gut moed, happy zman simchoseinu!

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 24 Sep 2013 22:02

As I'm thinking about it, I'm realizing that it's not just an addictive personality, which is usually described as a "tendency" towards addictive behaviors, it is an "all or nothing" personality or an extreme personality. It's not just that I can easily get addicted to certain behaviors, but I feel that by nature and by nurture (see more about this [here](#)) I cannot do anything unless I am totally "addicted" to it and totally involved, less than 100% won't do. Even my approach to dealing with acting out was a "zero tolerance" approach, and I wouldn't even consider dealing with it unless it had a 100% percent chance of success, in the end I took the plunge and settled for a 99% chance, so far so good...

This seems to be a pattern in my life in which something that doesn't work for me I just totally shut it down, and something that does work I just keep going at it uncontrollably. In the case of acting out, I guess shutting it down is a good thing, but in other areas of my life it is quite a disaster, both for me and for the people around me.

I think it's the Rambam who writes that a person should always live in the "middle ground" and keep away from extreme behaviors, i.e. not be stingy but also not splurge, etc. (besides anger, which a person should always be extreme and never get angry, at most they can pretend to be angry when the situation warrants it), unless they developed a bad habit in which case in order to end the bad habit they have to go to the opposite extreme for a while until they have uprooted the bad habit and then move back to the "middle ground". The question is what does one do with a behavioral problem of "extremism"? What's the opposite extreme of extremism?

In any case, I am running into a thought process that takes me a while to work through, I think I'm gonna carry on offline, if anybody is interested in following, feel free to PM me.

Gut moed.

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by tryingtoshteig - 24 Sep 2013 22:18

Being an addict or having an addictive personality does not have to be a bad thing, it just the way Hashem decided to deal our hand. However, it just requires a couple of things

- 1) That this is a chronic condition that will never go away.
- 2) We have to constantly be making the effort to keep things in check.

I just started to write a paragraph comparing to diabetes, but I erased it. I like the peanut allergy moshol better. Let's say a person, we can call him Bob, is allergic to peanuts. (Not to mention)

He may have the following questions:

Why did this happen? ANswer: I am not a novi, I don't know.

Am I a bad person? Answer: No, you are a good person who has an allergy.

Did I do something to cause myself to get this allergy? Answer: Maybe, maybe not, it might depend who you ask, but it doesn't really matter for you anymore, you have it. If you want to prevent your kids from getting the allergy, ask a doctor.

How should I manage? Answer: Carry an epipen, but more(?) importantly, stay away from

peanut products and packages that say "Made in a facility that processes soy wheat milk eggs fish strawberries Woodford What were we talking about again? peanuts and other tree nuts."

If you do that you will be fine.

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 24 Sep 2013 23:19

I'm not questioning if it's a bad thing or not, it is definitely not a bad thing because it's from hashem, the question is can it be changed or not? And this is how the moshol is not like the nimshal (I like the moshol very much, that's why I will now dissect it to pieces...), a peanut allergy is not really something that can be changed (at least not yet), however a behavioral personality type, while extremely difficult to change and not everybody is capable of such change, it is possible and has happened. So I guess I already know that the answer to the above question is, yes, it can be changed, but it is extremely difficult and is not for everybody. So now the question becomes, is it for me or not? Not a day goes by without me asking myself this very question.

But that's not all, going back to the peanut allergy moshol, what happens if the person with peanut allergy is living on a peanut farm and there is nobody else in the world who can manage the farm (because they are genetically modified peanuts and he's the only one who knows the technique, or for whatever reason) now the situation is totally different, if he leaves the farm to protect himself from his allergy the farm will need to close down, what does he do then? He can carry an epipen but he can't stay away from peanuts... To make moshol a little more convoluted, let's say he heard of people who have cured their allergy but it requires a lot of intense treatment and there is no guaranties it will actually work or how long it will take, should he give it a shot? For how long and at what cost? Either way the peanut farm is in a sorry state, if he leaves, the peanuts will die, or will never be the same even if taken over by others, if he stays, he is in constant danger and will probably end up in the hospital a lot, not good for the peanuts either, if he goes for treatment, he will have to neglect his peanuts during that time and during the rest of the time he probably won't have enough energy or money to give the peanuts the care they need, a lose, lose, lose situation for the peanuts...

It gets better, say this peanut allergy guy didn't know about his allergy before moving onto the peanut farm, he was just (very ironically) fascinated with peanut science, so now he can add the guilt of not finding out about his peanut allergy to the mix in dealing with the peanuts' misery... He can remove some of the guilt by believing that hashem wanted him to not find out about his peanut allergy so that he can create this unique farm that nobody else can, but it still doesn't help the difficulty of the situation he is in, and it doesn't explain how hashem wants him to

handle the information about his allergy and its impact on decisions about his future... Maybe he'll open a "peanut allergy awareness center" so that others don't make the mistake he made and move onto a peanut farm with a peanut allergy, yet again, this peanut farm would never have come into being had he not made that mistake... Oh, (pea)nuts!...

Or maybe we got this whole thing wrong and it is not an allergy after all...

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by cordnoy - 24 Sep 2013 23:24

or maybe...one should commit to stop, and not really be concerned as to why he has these urges in the first place.

Did I show this moshol enough love?...
talking to myself here.

I asked my therapist this question when he suggested a possible reason in my past for my behavior.

I said, "Now that I know, or might know, what really is the difference?"

b'hatzlachah

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 24 Sep 2013 23:30

[cordnoy wrote:](#)

or maybe...one should commit to stop, and not really be concerned as to why he has these urges in the first place.

talking to myself here.

I asked my therapist this question when he suggested a possible reason in my past for my behavior.

I said, "Now that I know, or might know, what really is the difference?"

b'hatzlachah

Commit to stop what? Is the question.

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by cordnoy - 24 Sep 2013 23:32

whatever it is that brought you to this site.

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 24 Sep 2013 23:39

[cordnoy wrote:](#)

whatever it is that brought you to this site.

I guess this thread is not so relevant to specific topic of this site...

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by tryingtoshteig - 25 Sep 2013 00:07

[smiley1900 wrote:](#)

Did I show this moshol enough love?...

Did you ever consider going into a surgical career? I think you have what it takes!

I guess what I am having trouble understanding is,

- 1) How do you go about changing your personality type?
- 2) Why do you want to (or are trying to figure out if you want to) do that?
- 3) What is the nimshal for your dissection?

You have been on this site for two weeks. How have you been doing with managing your issue? You have been staying clean, right? So what is the problem you would be trying to fix by doing a major personality overhaul, which, as you pointed out, would be extremely difficult and risky to pull off?

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by inastruggle - 25 Sep 2013 02:14

I have a few question about the mashal.

What if the peanut factory shut down due to it's debts? would this guy get a job at another peanut place? what if there weren't any other peanut places that needed him because they weren't gmo? what if the other places didn't know of his allergies? if they discovered the allergy after he was promoted would they fire him? Would they fire him if he became the ceo? If they would then why didn't the other company do it before they went bankrupt? Maybe the other company went bankrupt after the press discovered their ceo was allergic? Did they deserve it? Was the reporter allergic as well? If he was how did he get in to the factory without dying? How did the scientist get in? If it was that they used epipens maybe that's how the press found out? Would the huge orders of epipens alert the press? Was it the investigation of gmo that triggered the whole thing? Are gmo seeds healthy? Can you get addicted to gmo? did the companygo bankrupt because gmo were found out to be unhealthy? Is that fair? What if the company didn't know the seeds were unhealthy?

Sorry for using your thread for this. Is it right to? Should I of not posted it? Maybe.....

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 25 Sep 2013 06:50

[tryingtoshteig wrote:](#)

[smiley1900 wrote:](#)

Did I show this moshol enough love?...

Did you ever consider going into a surgical career? I think you have what it takes!

Do they have a "learn to be a surgeon" forum somewhere? Otherwise, I don't think I would have

[tryingtoshteig wrote:](#)

I guess what I am having trouble understanding is,

- 1) How do you go about changing your personality type?
the patience to sit through medical school... But, thanks for the compliment.
- 2) Why do you want to (or are trying to figure out if you want to) do that?
- 3) What is the nimshal for your dissection?

You have been on this site for two weeks. How have you been doing with managing your issue? You have been staying clean, right? So what is the problem you would be trying to fix by doing a major personality overhaul, which, as you pointed out, would be extremely difficult and risky to pull off?

My issue is a lifetime of unfulfilling relationships (peanuts). Acting out was just an unhealthy and somewhat effective alternative (wrong epipen?) to fill that void, my intention in coming here was to switch the unhealthy alternative for a (more) healthy one (correct epipen), b"h this has been pretty effective and together with the 90 day chart that habit is not a problem for me anymore (at least it feels that way). The problem is that my personality (peanut allergy) is not letting me enjoy my current relationships (peanut farm), and compensatory alternatives (epipen) are not easy to come by nor are they effective in leading a normal productive life. I'll leave it to you to figure out the other details of the nimshal, the link in my second post should help, or pm me and I'll bl"n clarify.

As for how to change a personality type? I don't know exactly how this is done, but I think it has to do with "fake it 'till you become it", and even if the core personality type remains, the new

personality can at least become a second nature to remove the "allergy" effect.

I want to point out to those visiting this thread that this topic has nothing to do with the specific issues this site is here to address, although it has everything to do with how this became an issue for me in the first place and my philosophy about uncovering and treating the core issues as the most effective method of long term recovery (this philosophy is discussed more at length in another thread called "core issues"). I use this method in almost all problem solving and while it takes longer to reach the solution, and sometimes there is a need for temporary solutions, it usually pays off in many different ways (effectiveness, lasting duration, and sometimes even resolves other seemingly unrelated problems), I call it the "derech arucho uktzoro" and highly recommend it for anybody struggling with long term recovery.

It also has everything to do with keeping me occupied, a sure way to keep me (or anyone) from falling...

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 25 Sep 2013 06:57

[inastruggle wrote:](#)

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Sorry for using your thread for this.Is it right to? Should I of not posted it? Maybe.....

This is hilarious, you have a great imagination!

Can't say if it's right or wrong, as long as my thread doesn't end up belonging in the "having fun" forum, it's fine with me...

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by skeptical - 25 Sep 2013 07:45

I would just like to point out something that stuck out at me as I read your posts.

smiley1900

...I cannot do anything unless I am totally "addicted" to it and totally involved, less than 100% won't do. Even my approach to dealing with acting out was a "zero tolerance" approach, and I wouldn't even consider dealing with it unless it had a 100% percent chance of success, in the end I took the plunge and settled for a 99% chance, so far so good...

This seems to be a pattern in my life in which something that doesn't work for me I just totally shut it down...

It is not always such a big struggle to be clean, especially if one is desperate to prove that he is not addicted to the thing in question.

As you mentioned in your last post, you have used acting out to escape your unfulfilling life. This is very common among people with addictions, whether it be to drugs, alcohol, overeating, porn, or whatever. We find something that makes us feel better (even if it is a short-lived high) and rather than figure out how to deal with the issues that present themselves in our lives in a healthy way, we resort to these unhealthy temporary solutions.

You may or may not be an addict. I don't think it necessarily makes a difference. What is telling, though, is that you originally came to this site for a reason. I would venture a guess that you didn't come here to discuss addictions in general. For that, you could have gone to AA's site, or one of the many others out there. Presumably, you felt that your issue with internet porn was too strong for you to deal with alone. If you're like many of the others on here, you've probably tried to stop many times in the past and it has never worked.

Now you have discovered a support group, people who understand what you have been going through. There's a ton of reading material that could keep you busy and thinking for hours, and the writers are very often entertaining and down to earth. You made a commitment to start being clean, and chances are, it feels good. Perhaps you are beginning to see how life can be good. And as mentioned before, it could be that the need to prove that you're not an addict is strong enough motivation to keep you going for now.

That is all well and good, and I can relate. I've been there.

But what you wrote in the quoted portion above, sent off warning bells in my mind that I feel the need to share with you. Maybe with anticipation of such feelings, you will be better able to weather the storms.

We addicts tend to want to be in control of our lives. If things don't go the way we want, life isn't good enough for us, and then we resort to our escape. As you wrote, you don't bother with things that aren't 100%.

From my experience, and I believe the 12-Step program is on the same page, you may be able to put the addiction (or yetzer harah, or whatever else you want to call it) to "sleep," but the desire for such things will never totally disappear. Once awakened, it can very quickly spiral out of control. It could be after 2 weeks, a month, three months, six months, or even longer than that, but the urges do surface from time to time.

One of the things I first realized when I began staying clean on GYE, is that in the past, whenever I would fall, I would throw in the towel, because obviously, it didn't work. I had to learn from that and tell myself over and over again, that if I would fall, I would have to stick to the program and get back up immediately. We're not striving for perfection here. We're striving to make the right choices each moment. A wrong decision doesn't make the whole effort null and

void. It just means we have a pulse. It's not all or nothing. It's do the best you can in each moment.

Hatzlacha!

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by smiley1900 - 25 Sep 2013 10:03

[skeptical wrote:](#)

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smiley1900

...I cannot do anything unless I am totally "addicted" to it and totally involved, less than 100% won't do. Even my approach to dealing with acting out was a "zero tolerance" approach, and I wouldn't even consider dealing with it unless it had a 100% percent chance of success, in the end I took the plunge and settled for a 99% chance, so far so good...

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Now you have discovered a support group, people who understand what you have been going through. There's a ton of reading material that could keep you busy and thinking for hours, and the writers are very often entertaining and down to earth. You made a commitment to start being clean, and chances are, it feels good. Perhaps you are beginning to see how life can be good. And as mentioned before, it could be that the need to prove that you're not an addict is strong enough motivation to keep you going for now.

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void. It just means we have a pulse. It's not all or nothing. It's do the best you can in each moment.

Hatzlacha!

First of all I want to say that I very much appreciate being able to interact with others while trying to clarify certain aspects of my life, this goes for tryingtoshteig and inastruggle as well, doing this alone is not half as fun or effective.

Skeptical, your comments combine the lust and addiction aspects into one thing because that is your experience, this however is not my experience, and I am not like the many others on this site:

- While I did say I used acting out as an alternative for fulfillment in my life, it did not in any way contribute to what made my life unfulfilling and was not my primary way to escape an unfulfilling life, my life is unfulfilling because I have a yearning for deep meaningful relationships which I never had, and my primary escape method was emotional shutdown and depression, acting out was for the most part a symptom of that, like an escape of the escape, although it did also somewhat fill that void, that was not it's primary function.

- I did not come here because my issue with internet porn was too much to deal with alone, I came here because my unfulfilling life is too much for me to deal with alone, fixing the acting out symptom is for me just a bonus, and this is not the first place I came to in dealing with this issue (it is actually one of the last), I am looking to lead a fulfilling life, which it appears is what everybody else here is looking for, so while I am not traveling the same road as most of the others here, I feel that I have a lot in common and have a lot to learn here.

- I never tried in the past to stop, so I don't know if it would have worked or not.

- My life is not better because I stopped acting out, if anything it only got worse, because the GYE forum alternative for a fulfilling life, while a much healthier option than acting out still does not give me the fulfillment I am looking for and is much more involved than acting out, but I won't go back to acting out, because it is wrong and because I need all the zechusim I can get to keep my life from completely falling apart.

- My need to prove that I am not addicted to porn has nothing to do with my desire to stop that habit, it is the need to verify the truth of my understanding of my personality and situation.

- My issue with "all or nothing" has nothing to do with how I measure my successes or failures in life, it has to do with how I live my life, I cannot live my life without being fully absorbed and involved with it, I have a very hard time completing tasks that are not meaningful enough to me.

However, I want to extract (some more surgery) the "addict" aspect from your post, one thing you wrote about addicts is very much my experience and I very much want to hear more about it because I feel that it might be the key to resolving my problem, you wrote:

We addicts tend to want to be in control of our lives. If things don't go the way we want, life isn't good enough for us, and then we resort to our escape. As you wrote, you don't bother with things that aren't 100%.

I hope you or somebody else here can expand on that, let me try to ask some questions that might help clarify what I am looking for (it helps me too):

- Why do we feel life isn't good enough for us just because things don't go the way we want? And how can we make life be good enough even when not getting what we want?

- What's wrong if we feel life is not good enough? Is it only because it causes us to resort to escape or is it bad in itself? What's if we don't resort to escape are we still addicts or should we just speak to a life coach to find meaning in our life? What's if we are so consumed with how life isn't good enough that we can't function and be productive, but we still don't resort to an escape, are we addicts then?

- What does the word "control" ("be in control of our lives") mean in this context? Why is it a bad thing, is it better for our lives to be out of control?

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Re: Addict without an addiction?

Posted by tryingtoshteig - 25 Sep 2013 19:15

[smiley1900 wrote:](#)

- Why do we feel life isn't good enough for us just because things don't go the way we want? And how can we make life be good enough even when not getting what we want?

- What's wrong if we feel life is not good enough? Is it only because it causes us to resort to escape or is it bad in itself? What's if we don't resort to escape are we still addicts or should we just speak to a life coach to find meaning in our life? What's if we are so consumed with how life isn't good enough that we can't function and be productive, but we still don't resort to an escape,

are we addicts then?

- What does the word "control" ("be in control of our lives") mean in this context? Why is it a bad thing, is it better for our lives to be out of control?

Let me start with your last question, what does control mean? The question is NOT, is my life in control or out of control, the question is **WHO** is in control? Who is calling the shots? Is it ME, or is it Someone outside myself, Someone Who sees the bigger picture with all its finest details, Someone who created us and our personalities and our spouses and their personalities, Someone who is a Rachum V'chanun, and a Somaich Noflim, Rofeh Cholim, U'matir Assurim?

How much is Kol Mah D'Avid Rachmana L'Tav Avid a part of us? We say it, but is it in our kishkas?

Hashem sent you a particular nisayon in your life, one that is eating you up because it is so difficult and so all-encompassing in your life. Like you said yourself, you did not plan to put yourself into this situation. But here you are. Hashem wants to see where you will go from here.

Sorry for lecturing. I am talking to myself as well. I am tested with this stuff all the time. Just to give a much smaller example, I came home from work the other day. My wife took off for chol hamoed and was home with the kids all day. I understand that she might be exhausted at the end of the day, and I am not the type to demand a perfectly neat house with supper ready to go when I walk in the door. That's good, because it was the opposite. The whole place was covered with toys, bills waiting to be paid, papers waiting to be filed, air mattress and linens from my sukkah sleeping adventures sitting in the middle of the living room floor, shopping lists and Yom Tov menus waiting to be written, supper waiting to be cooked or at least assembled and/or nuked, two cranky, overtired and over yomtoved kids, one frazzled wife and one nutty

So I come in, and we have about an hour to get the kids put asleep, or at least sedated, and start to have a hava amina about tonight's supper, before I have to go to mincha. After we eat, which was after mincha that night, the gracious hero of a husband offers to stay and help the wife straighten things up before I run out to go party. So the Mr. Savior-of-the-world-nanach-teddy-bear-lovable-sweet-husband is shocked to see his wife go curl up with a book after supper! I thought we were gonna clean up so I could go out tonight!

Anyway, my point is, how much did the thought, "Hashem is in control here, not me, relax" come into my mind that evening? Probably not as much as it should have.

(The story had a happy enough ending, in case you're curious. We did not starve, the kids went to bed, the mess got contained, I caught the last 10 minutes or so of the speech at the simchas bais hashoeva, and I went to sleep in the sukkah at a decent hour considering the circumstances.)

Sorry for rambling. Did I answer your question at all?

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