

My journey to recovery

Posted by pitka - 26 Feb 2017 20:26

I am 50 years old, married, and in recovery for four years. I had been addicted to porn since my early teens, but didn't realize that I had a problem with it until my late 20's. By my late 30's I realized that I had a serious problem, but it wasn't until my mid 40's that I was able to identify it as a true addiction. I am always searching to understand myself better, and as my problems grew more severe my exploration grew more intense. Through therapy and with the help of a recovery program (curethecraving.com), I was able to find true recovery and have experienced real freedom for 3 years.

But the reality of recovery is that there are slips. These are not proud moments, and each time they occur there is something to be learned. I think that the goal should be to make those slips fewer and fewer, to understand that recovery is a process. Each time that we slip we need to learn why, and really try to understand what led us to the incident. We've got to get back on our feet, have compassion on ourselves, and do the hard work to address the core issues.

The core issues are not "how can my internet filter be better", although these front-line defenses are absolutely critical. The struggle to recover happens long before we hit the "front lines" of the battle, when we are in the grip of a compulsive urge. The real struggle needs to occur off of the battlefield. When slips happen, we have to look at what we are doing off the field. What's going on in our heads, why did we get triggered, and what was not in place in our plan of action that could have save us from the fall.

I am here now because my last slip was one of two that happened relatively close to each other, and it was brought about by something that disturbingly put me back into mentally reliving a molestation that occurred in my teens. I thought that I had dealt with this, but I see now that it is still haunting me. By tremendous hashgacha, I discovered this group quite by accident. We daven, and if we really want the help and to grow, then Hashem provides the healing.

I will get to my story shortly, but I would characterize my current recovery as one in which lust, porn, and cravings to see acts and images have been replaced by feelings of gratitude for my wife, my kids, having back my life. It's amazing. But I can still get into a danger zone when certain things trigger memories of early trauma. That's when I am vulnerable, and that's when I really need to reach out.

So here's my story:

As a young teen I was often subject to a great amount of verbal abuse and bullying from my peers. My parents, who have long-since divorced, were embroiled in much fighting. My Dad was pretty emotionally abusive to my Mom. My Mom tended to confide in me too much about her feelings toward my Dad. My brother had been sent to a boarding school during my most formative years, so I had to take the brunt of this alone. As a way to cope from the pain both at home and in school, I withdrew to the fantasy world of pornography.

I was a highly intelligent young man, and used sports, good grades, and my musical interests to boost up my self-esteem. But inside, I was a mountain of pain during those years.

I left for college when I was 17. In my first week of college I had a emotionally painful experience for which I wanted to seek help from someone safe, other than my parents who were really not available. I naively chose to confide in the wife of a graduate student, who was about 9 or 10 years older than me. I thought that she would be safe, since she was married to a graduate student that I trusted. I shared with her what had happened, and that left me very vulnerable. She then used that to coerce me into a situation and basically molested me [some triggering details removed by admin]. It was a horrible first sexual experience, and it formed the template for much of my relationship with porn and feelings about sex. I was too ashamed to tell anyone, and thought that it was all my fault and I felt horribly guilty.

During these tumultuous times, I continued to explore Judaism. I began keeping kosher. I learned about Shabbos. I became involved with Chabad. But I was always trying to get "good" with God for the terrible adulterous "sin" that I had committed.

During my senior year, I met a wonderful Jewish girl that I really fell in love with. She was kind and loving. We became very close, closer than I had ever experienced with anyone. She also became pregnant, and chose an abortion. That was awful, and I felt terribly guilty. My parents were in the process of an ugly divorce, and had the gnawing feeling that if she really knew me then she might reject me. So after dating her for close to a year, I broke it off. It was very hard.

She tried to reconcile with me, and told me not to be afraid. She told me that I was not making sense, and I know that she was right. I agreed to start seeing her again, but not to stay overnight.

One night in early September, she called me and begged me to come over. She said that she wasn't feeling well. She told me that she thought she was going to have an epileptic seizure, something that she hadn't had for 10 years. I knew that she was just trying to manipulate me, to get me to come over late at night to sleep with her. I had been there before. I stood my ground and refused.

That was the night that she died of an epileptic seizure.

I was so ridden with guilt, that I can't begin to describe myself at that point. It wasn't until a year

later, a hospitalization later, a suicide attempt later, that I finally came out of the darkness. It took me over two decades to fully recall the events of that night.

It was at this point that I made a decision. I saw that I could choose to believe that life is meaningless and empty, or that life is filled with things that I don't understand but it's still worth living. Fortunately, I put my energies into the latter. I asked God for help, to understand, to figure out why I am here.

There was still one more hardship that I had to endure in those early twenties - another dominant woman, a broken engagement - but my life began to turn.

At 24, I became aware of and enlightened by authentic Torah Judaism. I finished graduate school and took on my first "real job". It was in this setting that I began to meet many frum people. I saw how beautiful and functional their homes/marriages were. I saw the values and middos absorbed by their children. I became inspired. I discovered that I didn't want to stop keeping Shabbos before I even realized that I already was keeping Shabbos.

I began to learn how the Torah could guide my life. About a year into this teshuva process, I met my wife. We have, B"H, a beautiful marriage. We got married and went to E"Y, where I learned in yeshiva while she studied in a seminary. We dumped the TV. We learned to change diapers. We began to build a beautiful bayis together.

I thought my desires for porn would be gone for good, but soon after our first child was born I discovered that my dark side was still a very potent force. For the next twenty years, I lived a double life. I couldn't wait for opportunities to watch porn. The material became more and more edgy, and I could never be free. I began to hate myself, to loathe myself, and found myself in a cycle in which the indulgence led to unrelenting shame, which then required only more indulgence to find escape.

I was too ashamed to talk to anyone. I cried to Hashem so much to help me. I was sure that he hated me and that I was being punished for "committing adultery" with my friend's wife, "killing" my girl friend, and aborting fetuses. Porn became a way to punish myself, because I deserved it. And all this was going on right underneath my family's radar. I was trapped and alone. I felt like a forgery.

About six or seven years ago, I began to sort out these traumas and feelings with a therapist, as well as with my Rav. I did not reveal my porn issues, but I dealt with much of the underlying traumas that brought me there.

Four years ago, my life changed forever when I discovered the anonymous 9 month program for solving porn addiction found a curethecraving.com. The program involves bi-weekly calls and exercises. I took the program very seriously and got on the road to recovery. My entire view of myself changed. My relationship with God, family, friends, and co-workers improved immensely. I found new emotional "space" and energy. I began to appreciate my family and my life in a way that I had only dreamed possible.

Obviously, I am here now because of a relapse. Something came up that triggered the experience of being back in that woman's apartment at 17. It has happened a couple times, and it scares me. I want to stay healthy and sober, and I want to use this "slip" as a God-given opportunity for further growth. Maybe I'll be able to help others in the process.

A few things that are on my mind as I write this -

Reach out - we are not alone! It's the only way to break the cycle of shame.

Talk to a Rav, if possible. Tremendous healing occurred in my life because I took that step.

The brain on porn is, physiologically, a brain on serious drugs.

We make up stories about ourselves, especially when young, that are not necessarily true.

Our journey is a tremendous opportunity for growth, as painful as it is.

This is God's plan for us, it's not an accident... so let's embrace it.

Address the underlying issues

Working a plan to stay out the ring is much more important than what you do once you're in the ring.

Good luck everyone! Feel free to reach out to me, and I will surely do the same!

=====

Re: My journey to recovery

Posted by growup - 07 Jan 2022 02:04

Where the ---- did you go ? love you man

=====

=====