

Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 22 Sep 2023 14:39

Hello to my fellow GYE warriors!

I figured I'd give it a shot at introducing myself a little bit, as I've read many threads here and value the growth and journey of all the amazing people over here!

My original goal when I got to this website a few months ago, was to deal with my addiction to porn and masturbation. It was getting way out of hand and it really disturbed my quality of life.

Thankfully, I have hit 90 days and I am shocked and amazed at how this was even possible, I had already written myself off to be a porn watcher and chronic masturbator for the rest of my life!

This is no doubt due to joining this website, reading the forums, chatting, and connecting via email/phone to some wonderfully amazing people here, and I want to finally say a **huge** public thank you to you all!!!

I owe my newfound life to this place, and I hope I can continue staying away from p & m.

Due to the fact that I have been clean from p & m for a while, I will leave that part of my life out of my story (for now) and perhaps revisit it in a later post.

What I would like to address, with as limited details as possible, is that I have been struggling mightily with cleaning up the rest of my act while also struggling with my religious identity.

For a good period of my life (not from birth) I was involved in an extremist, abusive and controlling group.

Thank Heaven (and I praise Hashem for this every day) I am done with that.

But it resulted in a massive religious identity crisis, which I am still struggling through.

I wanted nothing to do with religion, I am numbed by many aspects of it. The pain in some areas is almost visceral, like being scalded when getting too close to a hot fire.

Certain things about our way of life are too painful, and I just dissociate from it.

What does this have to do with GYE and addiction?

Well, the truth is, that although I am free of p & m for a nice while, there are other things I have experimented with as I have gone through my journey.

I started watching movies, and saw hundreds of them, and many were literally soft-core porn

films.

(I must say that thankfully, I don't remember when I've watched a movie last, probably a half a year, but it's not so much "b'sh*tah," I just haven't got the brain space to put myself into a good emotional movie)

I started finding meaning in non-Jewish music. What can I say? I enjoy it, and nothing really moves me like that, I identify with the lyrics and passion. I'm not talking about outright prust music, but certain genres appeal to me and I cannot go back to Yiddish music, I have tried to and didn't hold for more than a few days.

I also started browsing YouTube as a mindless escape, and very often a clip of inappropriately dressed women pops in and I just watch it without feeling too guilty about it.

From a religious point, I understand that this is against the Torah, but I have no strength to care. I am close to Hashem, I talk to Him every day, and I feel that Hashem understands my struggles, my exposure, the sexual abuse and religious abuse that I have been through, and that He loves me unconditionally.

But from an addiction standpoint, If I truly want to "clean up", I know I can't be staring at shikshas/tic dances etc.

And I'm not even *talking* about the frum woman aspect, which I'm sure many people can relate to, I fall a lot with peeking glances at hot frum women and of course I should not be doing that, it's feeding the beast!

I know that addiction to porn and masturbation is like addiction to a drug, dopamine. I know that if I continue "feeding the drug", even in small quantities, I will not achieve full recovery.

But I am just so mixed up with it all, it's so hard to kick, and religious ideas don't talk to me. I don't want to identify as an Ultra-Orthodox Jew, I wish I could leave it all behind.

As part of the backlash of what I've been through, I've delved into Jewish history and have read stuff from non-traditional (read: non censored) sources, and I'm scared to death of the path open before me...I see corruption, dysfunction, and abuse and a load of BS in our "system", and coupled with the experience I had been through, it makes me want to run away from it all!!

If not for my wonderful wife and children, whom I love so much, I probably would have long ago left it all behind for a new life.

I feel trapped in my religious identity, not sure how to find solace and clarity, how to find a steady voice in my head to see through all the BS and serve Hashem as a true servant as I'm sure He wants me to be.

I feel trapped in the loop of feeding the little monster in my brain and I sometimes feel so alone and sad because even ideas, insights, and encouragements make me crazy.

I am sorry for sounding negative and embittered, but I'm just pouring my heart out, and maybe just by writing about it, it will feel better.

In any case, I hope to continue documenting these little ups and downs, and I look forward to continuing to be part of this amazing forum!

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by anonymousmillennial - 22 Sep 2023 15:50

Congratulations on hitting this huge milestone.

It seems like you had a tough journey so far, and it's amazing that you're standing where you are. Being able to pull through is not always easy and you seem to be doing a great job.

It also seems like your true wish is to be able to connect better with yiddishkeit, but the trauma of the past is holding you back, and making it hard for you to do so, as there is a constant resistance.

I feel like I can relate to many of your points and allow me to address some of my thoughts on them.

"I started watching movies, and saw hundreds of them..."

Regarding movies, yes, it's something I can relate to and yes, it's something I've also had to work on a lot over the past couple of years. B"H, my perspective has massively changed on movies and the taivah for watching has massively decreased. And with that a lot of the taivah for inappropriate material as well. That is not to say I never watch, but it happens much more rarely.

"I also started browsing YouTube as a mindless escape, and very often a clip of inappropriately dressed women pops in and I just watch it without feeling too guilty about it."

Ah yes, recognize the pattern: brain numbing, too painful to care.

"From a religious point, I understand that this is against the Torah, but I have no strength to care. I am close to Hashem, I talk to Him every day, and I feel that Hashem understands my struggles, my exposure, the sexual abuse and religious abuse that I have been through, and that He loves me unconditionally."

He absolutely does love you unconditionally and he definitely understands you. But I feel , at least for me, when I use that reasoning, that it holds me back from growth. The problem is that because of the resistance to religion, growing becomes so heavy that the natural reaction to it, is to shy away from growth. It's important to be aware of this resistance and find a way, not to fight it, but to work through it.

"But from an addiction standpoint, If I truly want to "clean up", I know I can't be staring at shiksas/tic toc dances etc.

And I'm not even *talking* about the frum woman aspect, which I'm sure many people can relate to, I fall a lot with peeking glances at hot frum women and of course I should not be doing that, it's feeding the beast!"

Yes, it's true. But, I'm truly a believer in appreciating the small wins and just trying to get as many small wins as possible. Small things add up to big things.

"I know that addiction to porn and masturbation is like addiction to a drug, dopamine. I know that if I continue "feeding the drug", even in small quantities, I will not achieve full recovery."

True, we must change our actions. And we must also change our perspectives. I know that motivation can be sparse at times especially when everything feels so heavy.

But I am just so mixed up with it all, it's so hard to kick, and religious ideas don't talk to me. I don't want to identify as an Ultra-Orthodox Jew, I wish I could leave it all behind.

I know, it can be hard sometimes, when the outside world seems so enticing. Many times I also have the taivah to dress differently and have the freedom that doesn't come with orthodox lifestyle. What I find helps for me, is to play out this story till the end. Ok so let's say I wear that and that. And let's say that I do that and that. Now what. Do I feel better? Does it make me feel any different? From my experience of having given in to this 'monster' at times, the answer is no. It's like a feeling of "That's it? Like, I thought there would be more to it?". Perhaps the first second is a nice feeling of freedom, but tachlis this specific action doesn't provide any sustenance.

"As part of the backlash of what I've been through, I've delved into Jewish history and have read stuff from non-traditional (read: non censored) sources, and I'm scared to death of the path open before me...I see corruption, dysfunction, and abuse and a load of BS in our "system", and coupled with the experience I had been through, it makes me want to run away from it all!!"

No 'system' or 'framework' is perfect and you'll always find reasons to fault a framework. But I believe it's better to be inside a 'broken' framework (I'm not talking about extreme cases of abuse), than to have no framework at all. People naturally crave a system, and it's healthy to be in a framework.

"I feel trapped in my religious identity, not sure how to find solace and clarity, how to find a steady voice in my head to see through all the BS and serve Hashem as a true servant as I'm sure He wants me to be.

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I know, and it's so painful and hard. And especially because you want to move upwards and yet there is part of you that just doesn't want it. It's like, "stop fighting me so hard". Perhaps a suggestion would be to find something really light and enjoyable to help you reconnect. I don't know if this talks to you at all. It's merely a suggestion for finding an entry point to reconnect.

“In any case, I hope to continue documenting these little ups and downs, and I look forward to continuing to be part of this amazing forum!”

Looking forward to reading more about your journey and really wishing you an amazing new year with lots of inner peace and joy.

Yours truly,

AM

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by eerie - 22 Sep 2023 22:38

My friend, I'm so sorry for the immense amount of pain you are carrying around. I wish I can somehow take that pain away. Ow, how it hurts. You are very special that you stood up to your P and M issues in spite of all the inner turmoil. My friend, please take your steps slowly. One step at a time. You just got past 90 days, that means you are still pretty early into your journey of freedom. Your inner landscape is going through some earthquakes. And you have gone through so much. Take a breath. Thank Hashem for the wonderful family you have. And maybe you want to seek out a professional to work through the trauma you describe. But take it easy! Be nice to yourself! There's so much to love about you!

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 24 Sep 2023 03:54

Welcome. Sorry you have experienced so much pain, abuse, and confusion. Time is a great healer. There is no need to make any major decisions right now. Just keep doing what you are doing. Hashem will help.

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by bright - 24 Sep 2023 04:10

[anonymousmillenial wrote on 22 Sep 2023 15:50:](#)

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"In any case, I hope to continue documenting these little ups and downs, and I look forward to continuing to be part of this amazing forum!"

Looking forward to reading more about your journey and really wishing you an amazing new year with lots of inner peace and joy.

Yours truly,

AM

beautiful

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by chaimoigen - 24 Sep 2023 04:11

Just want to reach out a warm and friendly hand.

I'm sorry to read about your pain and inner turmoil. But things are better when you aren't walking lonely and alone.

Many here have been through a lot, its good to be together. Hang on, and stick around. We'll speak more, imyh.

For now, please accept my heartfelt Bracha for a year of healing, warmth, and growth. ...

Chaim

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by bright - 24 Sep 2023 04:14

Ouch, I really feel for you! There was many, many times that I was, and still sometimes am angry with the "system". I feel for you! You mentioned you read a lot of posts. Amazing! How about reaching out to some of the wonderful olam here?

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by iLoveHashem247 - 24 Sep 2023 12:12

You are going through a difficult transition now and it hurts. I've been in a similar situation, and Hashem Help Me's comment held true for me - time truly is a great healer, but also know that time takes time.

if you want to talk about it, send me a private message with your phone number. I'm glad to hear you out.

also, therapy was a big help for me.

hatzlacha

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 06 Oct 2023 03:06

So many beautiful replies, from the elaborate and thoughtful comments of anonymousmillennial, to the empathetic and "time heals" approach of Eerie, Hashem Help Me, Chaimoigen, Bright, and ILH!

I really, REALLY appreciate it!

It's *just* what I needed to hear!

Some things.

It's Hoshana Rabbah.

Just a quick tefillah to our Father in heaven, as I sit in my car by a holy site.

Father in heaven, as I watch Yidden of all kinds scurry about on Hoshana Rabbah, please let me be from those who dwell among them. Please don't make me feel like a stranger.

I feel like crying, but my tears are frozen.

Father in heaven, please help me!

Father in heaven, I want to be a Torah Yid!

Father in heaven, how can I be, when the bottle of spirituality I so *long* to drink from, is labeled "poison"?

Father in heaven, can I grow and be a true yid, become even closer to You, when Your ways are something I'd rather forget?

How can I reach higher, when doing so brings up memories of things that pain me, torment me?

I try to grow, I try to move the needle, I try to reach higher, yet I flinch backwards as if scalded!

So I said, just *grow*, you don't have to **feel**, just *do*, but don't necessarily **believe**. But this only made me even sadder!

Father in heaven, I believe Your ways are sweet, a Tree of Life to those who cling to it, yet why

do you hide this from me?

Why do I feel that a life of purity of mind and spirit, is unattainable, I'm too far gone, I'm just another statistic of the yetzer horah to lust what is forbidden for the rest of my life?

Father in heaven, why do I continue to be convinced that I actually "like" this "stuff"?

Father in heaven, please help me! Please open my eyes to a Torah life that is sweet, uplifting and beautiful, isn't that what You want? You don't want a frustrated, sad and angry servant, You want a servitude of happiness and joy, Oz vchedva b'mkomo!

Father in heaven, please help me be a husband to my wife, a father to my children, a son to my parents, and a friend to my fellow yid!

How can I be a beacon of hope, light and spirit to others, if I myself have no clarity? If I myself don't feel comfortable in my own skin?

You, my Father, can turn it all around this year, as You have helped me so much until now!

You have gathered me from the ash heaps of despair and shown me what Life can be, now please bring me back to You!

Father in heaven, I love You, I trust in Your mercy, patience and compassion, and look forward to spending a happy and meaningful year together with You and all our fellow Yidden, Amen!

Next year in Jerusalem....

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by foolie - 06 Oct 2023 03:24

You say that the bottle of spirituality you want to drink from is labeled poison. I'm going to suggest a paradigm shift, when you go to the doctor for a shot, you understand that whatever is in that shot outside of that little bottle that the doctor is filling the needle with that stuff is

dangerous but once inside you the shot does miraculous things most of the time, so too is spirituality fill up a needle an inject yourself with some in that way that poison that you can't drink will nonetheless make it into your bloodstream.

I apologize for speaking in metaphors however when attempting to respond to a metaphor I'm not left with much choice

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by bright - 06 Oct 2023 03:38

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Beautiful prayer fro a beautiful neshama! Hashem loves you! Lo machshvosai macshvosaychem, the thoughts of how we view ourselves and how others view us, and certainly that of extremists are not Hashems thoughts! Hashem loves us more than we do ourselves, understands us more than we do ourselves and cares more than we do ourselves! IYH you will change and you will be brighter than the brightest star! Gut Kvittel keep us posted!

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by redfaced - 06 Oct 2023 13:25

[youknowwho wrote on 06 Oct 2023 03:06:](#)

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Father in heaven, how can I be, when the bottle of spirituality I so *long* to drink from, is labeled “poison”?

How can I reach higher, when doing so brings up memories of things that pain me, torment me?

Your pain is so real, it literally takes my breath away.

All I can say is that I am amazed at your strength and desire to do the right thing.

In response to the line that I bolded - Chaim.oigen recently told me a story with the Berdichiver , where someone came over to him saying he doesn't believe in G-d. The Berdichever replied, The G-d that you don't believe in, I don't believe in either. You are looking at God as some vindictive mean guy whos only desire is to torture you and punish you for being bad- I don't believe in that G-d . My G-d is warm ,loving caring who only wants what is absolutely best for me.

My point is that even though you had a horrible experience with the bottle that you so accurately labeled poisoned, that is not the bottle of spirituality that you desperately crave . The bottle you're looking for is labeled **life** in big bold letters.

And we are all here to hug you on your way towards reaching that bottle.

With much love

RF

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously

Posted by chaimoigen - 09 Oct 2023 23:50

My friend, I am reading your Hoshana Rabba post, in a post-Shemini Atzeres world.

It's difficult to find any words at all.

I have a few thoughts, or feeling to share, on being ripped into by the pain in your post(s)....

You speak of having no clarity in what you want out of religion, yet your articulate, yearning, outpouring of heart to the Rebono Shel Olam belies your claim. You seem to know what you wish you could attain and feel. You long for Oz Vichedva, to be a beacon, to **feel** and **know**. You recoil from the idea of merely doing without feeling....

Oy, my friend - In expressing what you **wish for** you passionately paint the clearest vision of what it is that you are questing for....

Yet your pain causes you to recoil, to avoid that which has burned you.

And, yes, to be driven in search of numbness, of distractions, in the red, twilight, twisted haze of lust and shadows... To search out feeling and fullfingness in the sick, cloying sweetness of the shall-not-be named, rather than where you dare not, cannot, go....

Of course you are searching, in music, in literature, in sights and sounds.... you seek for what in which to escape....

But i fear that your soul's thirst shall not be slaked by those waters....

Forgive me, my friend.

First things first - recognize that "the little monster in your brain", does not seem, to me, to be named "Lust". I fear he is, in truth, a fearful and pained, terribly scarred younger version of you, who does not want you to look him in the eyes....

I don't have anything else to say now. But my eyes are wet and bright.

Here is a heartfelt hug. Let's keep in touch....

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by adam2014 - 10 Oct 2023 10:10

That is an amazing and courageous story to tell. I am in the middle of something (slightly) similar. I have not gotten the P and M problem under control yet, but in my attempt to control that, my religious observance has struggled. It is like my brain can't handle both these things at the same time.

I have none of the abuse issues that you spoke of, and my observance is not at the level of most of the people on here...

You should be very proud of yourself for doing this. I am too new to give advice other than you came to the right place...

Best of luck with everything

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 14 Nov 2023 15:28

I haven't posted here in a while.

I've read, several times, your beautiful and heartfelt comments to my last post.

I want to say that it meant a *world* to me, **touched** me to the core!

Some thoughts I wanted to share...

B”h, I am clean from porn and masturbation, for 140+ days now, since I signed onto GYE.

The feelings of accomplishment that this brought to me, is indescribable. I never, ever would have believed it was possible!!

No doubt, it was my connection to this forum, and reaching out to some people here directly, some, only initially that were enormously helpful and some, I continue daily. You are all in my heart.

Yet, I still felt like I couldn't grow more, I was still not *Guarding my Eyes*. Still convinced, that I could never truly live without indulging in immodest images, albeit not porn, but close enough...

I was convinced that my struggles religiously are shackling me from true, real progress.

Today marks the first week that I am absolutely clean from immodest material, whether on the internet, or on the street.

A dear friend from here encouraged me to try not using the internet unless I can be mindful of a specific purpose. I still use it plenty, but try to be aware, "I am using it for this specific thing, and that's it". And I have to say, IT'S AMAZING!! ITS LIBERATING!!

Do I feel like I'm restricting myself from the pleasures of life? Sorry, "old me", but I have **not** felt this at all the past week.

Do I feel like I'm drinking from the "bottle of poison"? Not at all. I actually feel like I have bit into, and tasted, the Tree of Life.

And no, my viewpoints on religion have not been affected, meaning, I can be clean, while still maintaining a perhaps more liberal position on things that I was once very extreme in.

And the things I still struggle with in other areas of Judaism, whether from a lack of clarity or pain, is still there, and that's fine! Its okay.

If anybody out there is reading this, (myself included, when my hisorerus may grow cold...) Please be heartened! It's possible to be clean, pure and holy, and ENJOY it. And you're not turning into some embittered, frustrated, narrow angry right-wing wacko...on the contrary! Enjoy life, enjoy Yiddishkiet, enjoy all the beauty that Hashem has bestowed on us in this world. Enjoy Torah, enjoy relationships with your loved ones, and of course, with Hashem.

This sounds like someone I would like to quote, from the thread above...

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Thank you, redfaced, and chaimoigen, for sharing that story.

I hope and pray, and with the encouragement of my GYE friends, to make this modest 1 week into many, many weeks, slowly, one day at a time, that I can gain confidence that I don't need to indulge the perverted side of myself, for the rest of my life!!

A huge and hearty thanks to all of you!!

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