

My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by time2win - 22 Jan 2025 01:56

I've been struggling with whether or not I should share my story on the forum. Because This isn't a forum for people struggling with faith, it's a forum for people struggling with P/M addiction. That being said, my addiction is a result of my fall out with halachic (I.e. authentic) Judaism. So, to begin with the end of my story-where I am now:

I'm not that religious at this point of my life. I don't learn Torah anymore. I don't daven mincha/maariv during the week. For shacharis I daven shema and shemone esrei at home. I don't fast on fast days, with the exception of Yom kippur. I'm shomer Shabb-ish (tear toilet paper, brush teeth, put on stick deodorant etc.) I'm not going to go through the whole Shulchan aruch, but you get the gist.

on the bright side, I'm twenty days clean for the first time in a while:-)

to be continued...maybe

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by jewizard21 - 21 Mar 2025 21:53

This is so hard to read because it's stark reality. I can't imagine how you've gone through all of this and are still standing. I am actually in awe at how people like you are so resilient. Thank you for the sneak peak because it gave me simcha to know that you are happily married after all of these hardships. You have my upmost respect, especially for doing this out of integrity for your wife and children.

Have an amazing shabbos!!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by time2win - 31 Mar 2025 16:23

My story part 9:

My marriage was an utter disaster from the get-go.

In the bedroom:

The first night of marriage, my wife wouldn't let me touch her. (I am not exaggerating.) That only lasted the first night, but suffice it to say that it took us a couple months to consummate the marriage. Doing so felt like a gynecology appointment rather than two people who love each other. She was stone cold in the bedroom, and our intimate life was dysfunctional during shana rishona. Our sex life started coming together during our second year of marriage, and by the end of our second year, it was functional. However, true intimacy and love eluded us for obvious reasons - I was living a double life. My wife simply didn't know me, didn't see me. (I once heard a chassidishe vort on the word intimacy. It's *Notarikon* for Into-Me-You-See.) I remember every time I would hug my wife, there was such a deep need to be seen, accepted and loved, but I could never confide in her about my painful religious disillusionment without her walking out the door. It was like there was this thick, opaque barrier between us that no physical intimacy could penetrate.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by time2win - 31 Mar 2025 16:27

Part 9 continued:

Outside the bedroom:

1) Even in a normal marriage (which our marriage was not), building a loving relationship is difficult. And difficult (impossible?) it most certainly was. There were so many things that we

were utterly mismatched on. It was hard to see how we had missed all of these during dating. Different dreams of where to live (I desperately want to live in Israel, and she gave a politicians answer to my question of making aliyah which I misunderstood as her agreeing that she wanted to live in Israel as well. It was nothing compared to what I was hiding, so I've long since forgiven her), *radically* different spending habits, different eating habits, different ideas of how to spend free time, different financial ethos, how many kids to have, when to have kids, the role of the husband/father with respect to household chores etc. It was so difficult just to live together under the same roof. And we didn't even have the benefit of infatuation at the beginning of our marriage to help us get things started.

2) Of course, there was the elephant in the room - my lack of faith and extreme discomfort living as a frum Jew. While at the beginning of our marriage I was still fully observant, she **very** quickly recognized my attitudinal misalignment. And inevitably over time, my actions followed my beliefs. Years of religious inertia wore off and I slowly began dropping areas of halacha that were too burdensome and painful for me to carry.

This was not me cavalierly tossing away religiosity. *Au Contraire*, I held on for us long as I could, until I could no more. (This reminds me of a description I once read of a rabbi's son who went OTD. He poetically told his father "Abba, I haven't cast down the 2 tablets like Moshe in anger. Rather, they slipped from my grasp because they were too heavy for me to carry.")

I tried to hide my halachic violations as much as possible, but my wife started catching on to some things, and while she didn't know the extent of it, she realized I was not the ben torah she thought she had married, to put it mildly.

I tried speaking to therapists and rabbis to try and resolve my religious issues, but to no avail. My marriage specifically, and life generally, was an emotional hellscape. This whole time, my only escapes were fitness, sleeping & of course... porn & masturbation.

To be continued...

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by jollylemur95 - 31 Mar 2025 16:41

OUCH!

I just read your thread. I am crying as I read it.

I feel for you!!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by hashem help me - 31 Mar 2025 17:01

Just discovered this thread by accident. Rarely on the forum these days. Please come for a bear hug my friend. Drench my shoulder with your tears; maybe some of mine will mix in as well. I really mean it buddy. Look at PM.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 31 Mar 2025 19:39

My Story part 10:

Our first child was born, a beautiful little girl. Sadly, I was incapable of fully loving her, for two reasons:

1) We were not yet in a financially stable place to afford a child, as I was still in college at the time. To stay afloat, we would need to be on WIC, SNAP and Medicaid. This was (and is) morally anathema to me. I wanted to wait till I was done with college but my wife wouldn't hear of it.

2) While perhaps my marriage could survive without kids, having a child made things more complicated-the financial stress being the least of it. In theory I could white-knuckle my way till 120 as an Orthoprax Jew, but I could not survive the cognitive dissonance and moral messiness involved in raising a child in a lifestyle that I viewed as detrimental for them

Luckily, our marriage didn't implode. As long as my job was relegated to changing diapers and the like, I could handle it. Religious stuff wouldn't be relevant until she got older, and in any event, I told myself that educating her in Yiddishkeit would be the job of my wife and her teachers at school.

Eventually I finished college (want to add here that I graduated with straight As and had gone to school on a full scholarship, thank God, so life had its bright spots.) I received a job offer the day of graduation. It didn't pay much, but the work was meaningful, and the money was enough

for us at that stage in life.

Then came the pandemic and I lost my job due to lockdown induced layoffs. This was incredibly stressful. Stress + a lot of free time = porn and masturbation. There was still a 0.01% chance my marriage would survive if my wife found out I was a closet *kofer*, but it had a 0.00% chance of survival if she found out I was a porn addict. I tried to hold back, but I needed it as an escape and just couldn't give it up. I wasn't really ready for recovery yet.

Even though I was unemployed, my wife wanted to have another kid. (As I mentioned earlier, she has a different hashkafa on finances.) I tried talking her out of it, staking everything from my financial perspective. The real reason was that I was petrified we would have a boy. I had heretofore dodged the bullet of a daughter but was utterly incapable of modeling frumkeit for a son. The thought of having a son terrified me. Needless to say, I lost the argument. (Arguing with a woman who wants to have a child is a futile endeavor. The maternal instinct is impervious to logic. IYKYK).

Good News-I found a new job while my wife was pregnant. It paid more than my previous job, so that was nice. Not tons more, but enough to absorb the immediate impact of another kid.

Bad News-I prayed for a girl, but we had a boy, and I started losing it. The strain on our marriage was getting unbearable, and I started having a nervous breakdown. I never thought of killing myself (much less tried to), but begged God (if he was listening) to ideally make some miracle to get me out of my predicament or at least kill me and make me die peacefully in my sleep. Anything to escape the hole I had dug myself into.

We started going to therapy to try and save our marriage. I knew I couldn't keep my secret any longer. It was time to bite the bullet and get the amputation. With the therapist mediating, I broke down in tears and panic, and told her that I wasn't the ben torah, or even frum Jew, that I presented myself as during shidduchim. I thought I could be that person, hoped and prayed I could be that person, but was simply not that person. Not anymore. I braced myself for her response...

To be continued...

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by alex94 - 02 Apr 2025 14:33

Wow

From your words I'm getting an inkling of the heaviness of the load you are carrying.

So much pain, shame, and guilt.

Big big hug

Like you say,

It's time to win.

Im rooting for you.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith

Posted by time2win - 03 Apr 2025 18:21

We started going to therapy to try and save our marriage. I knew I couldn't keep my secret any longer. It was time to bite the bullet and get the amputation. With the therapist mediating, I broke down in tears and panic, and told her that I wasn't the ben torah, or even frum Jew, that I presented myself as during shidduchim. I thought I could be that person, hoped and prayed I could be that person, but was simply not that person. Not anymore. I braced myself for her response...

To be continued...

My Story Part 11:

To my extreme surprise, after my disclosure, my wife didn't demand a divorce on the spot. We agreed to try and stay married for the sake of our kids. Things kept going downhill though and a couple months later, we were on the brink of divorce. We had reached the end of the road in our marriage and I was at the end of the road in my yiddishkeit. Once we got divorced, I was going to drop Judaism like a hot potato. (For perspective, I already knew which shiksa coworker I was going to ask out on a date-after I recovered from the divorce obviously).

As far as my addiction goes, this was rock bottom. Not because my usage had escalated to the point where I was involved in crazy stuff, but because the emotional pain, and the need to escape it, was so intense.

The details are a bit blurry, but something like this happened: Providentially, a rebbi who I hadn't spoken to in a few years called me out of the blue. I said "gosh, really bad timing, but my life is falling apart actually. How is your Tuesday going?" He drove 45 minutes from where he lived to talk to me in person. Through his intervention, and the intervention of another Rabbi in the community, we were able to stay married.

there's a **LOT** more I could write at this point, but suffice it to say that several years have passed, and we are very happily married. I'm not certain God exists, but one of the strongest pieces of evidence to me is our marriage. The fact that our marriage has not only survived, but thrived, is basically a hidden miracle. I would put the odds at about that of winning the powerball. Or perhaps, to borrow from Chazal, the odds of Krias Yam Suf. There was no scenario I could imagine where things could possibly work out. At this point though, it is clear that we are in it for life. We still have our differences, but I was able to recalibrate my religious life and have reached a point of stability with my halachic observance. I'm not the Ben Torah I used to be (I guess you could consider me technically MoDox, culturally Centrist Orthodox/Shtark YUish), but I'm in a healthy place mentally & emotionally.

So where does that leave me as far as my addiction? I still have my frustrations, as I've written about [elsewhere on the forum](#), but I don't have the same constant stress triggers that I used to have now that my life is stable. So I'm ready to quit, but old habits die hard. After years of using porn and masturbation as an escape, those well traveled neural pathways still create an almost insatiable pull to act out when I am emotionally triggered by stress, frustration and the like.

I use webchaver on whatever devices I can, and this has helped enormously, but logistically, I have not yet been able to cut off access to unfiltered internet entirely from my life. So here I am, fighting the good fight.

There's a lot more I could write, and if this forum was dedicated to helping people who wrestle with religion instead of lust addiction, I would. Basically though, that's my story.

Time2Win

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by time2win - 03 Apr 2025 18:24

P.S. Thank you so much to everyone who read my story and reached out via email, personal message on GYE, or google voice. I truly appreciate the empathy and chizuk.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by yitzchokm - 03 Apr 2025 19:10

Your last post sounds like you are in a very good place. You are ready to work on your addiction to P&M and you seem ready to talk about religion if only you had the right support system. I would think that there would be a Rebbe or organization that can help you sort out religion and marriage but I am not familiar with the Rebbes and organizations that do this. HHM is a very warm, caring person with lots of experience and I think you have a lot to gain by talking to him. You are a good person who went through many struggles in life but you are in a very good place and you have the potential for a very bright future.

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by cleanmendy - 03 Apr 2025 20:42

Why is this thread not on the front page of GYE?

I cant believe I never saw this.

Reb T2W, you wrote your story so well, I'm amazed by your perseverance.

Not everyone has the will to fight like that.

Keep it up my friend!!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by shalom1530 - 07 Apr 2025 22:48

I'm so amazed!! how after all you went through in life, you took the courage the sign yourself up to GYE and work on yourself to become a better husband/father,

this is by far the biggest chizzuk I have received since signing up to GYE!! thank you so much for sharing your story, you're truly an inspiration and may hashem bless you that your marriage should continue to thrive, and you should have a happy life free of any addiction or any other problems until a healthy 120!!!

THANK YOU THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by guarding130 - 12 May 2025 04:16

Dear brother R' TimeToWin, I really got inspired by your story, and by how far you've come, just keep on thriving and growing, wishing you all the best!

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Re: My Story - struggling with faith
Posted by ??? ???? ???? ??? - 12 May 2025 13:10

I just read through this thread. Thank you @TimeToWin for sharing your story so vividly.

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