

Hello

Posted by TahorVneeman - 05 Feb 2010 20:45

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Hello everyone,

I have hesitated a long time before posting here for many reasons. One is a fear that I am not "frum enough" to be here because it seems so many guys have been in Yeshiva or Kollel for a hundred years. Another reason is that I am just overwhelmed by the many things I have read on this site. Some of it is contradictory. But I need help-that I know. And if you can't jump into something just before Shabbat Yitro, when can you?

I am a Kippah Serugah kind of Jew. Lots of time in Israel. A Davening, learning Jew striving to grow always who falls over and over again because of my slavery to lust. I grew up in a secular Jewish home with hardworking parents, not so great with intimacy and communication. My father and uncles traded Playboys in front of us. We watched a lot of tv and as time went on, the images of women got to be more and more explicit. And I fell into it.

You know the rest. Along with growing in observance and learning, I also became more and more encased in shmutz. Buying magazines, videos, and then the internet. Much worse in many ways, phone sex. All the money, the time, the waste down the tubes. I shake just typing this.

I am married to a marvelous woman who knows of my challenges and now thinks I have mostly overcome them... But she suspects and has reason to. I no longer have the ability to satisfy her without medication and am often distracted and tense.

What have I tried? Lots of learning, Mussar, Jewish meditation, calming herbs, some therapy, davening up a storm, Teshuvah with tears, fasting, exercise, and lots more. Some things help a bit, I know how to calm myself, I can have some disciplined days with early morning time with a Sugya or Mishnah, some exercise, lots of things accomplished... and it feels like Gan Eden. Then it stops.

What doesn't seem to work is Torah alone- I often get tense just as I am about to end a session and know what will be next... The same with Mussar practice. It buys me a little time at best....

I have no doubt that some of this is about intimacy, ego, spiritual deficiency but what it overwhelmingly feels like is a chemical addiction. My body craves the high and I don't need the internet to trigger it. I shut it down a lot and it doesn't matter because almost anything can set it off. I practice Shmirat Haeinayim, offer Tefillot to Hashem and do all sorts of things but just saying no to the Yetzer makes it come roaring back even stronger.

A typical day involves great intentions but time wasted in mbtn and sometimes prn. No need even to spill zera. I get my high. After getting the chemical high, it takes hours for my body to come back to reality. In the meantime, I am disoriented, disorganized, agitated, short-tempered and filled with self-loathing. How could a lover of Torah and one who wants closeness with the KB"H so such a thing? Again and again? How could I become so isolated from my wife, kids and others?

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Re: Hello

Posted by me - 11 Feb 2010 16:03

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The language of powerlessness just tends to get me into trouble...I use it as an excuse so I appreciate your insights.

I understand you completely. "Powerlessness" here has a double meaning.

It does NOT mean that I am powerless so that I must do whatever my addiction tells me to do.

It does NOT tell me that I am powerless to do a cheshbon hanefesh daily in order to see which things are dangerous triggers for me, (**so that I may AVOID them**)

You see **power** means you have to "fight" with these dangerous triggers, and "Powerlessness", means that you have to AVOID, (and not fight), them.... because we can't. We fall, and then we get depressed, and then we fall again, and this leads to further depression, and anxiety etc.

Powerlessness is THE shift in thinking from:

I have to fight, and win; to the new way of thinking which is:

"I have to avoid that fight (by removing as many triggers that are under my control, and by **using** my power to run to Hashem, so that he will fight the other triggers which pop up suddenly here, and there.

Powerlessness is not that I just sit and become dead meat to the addiction. This shift in thinking is a new tactic which is the realization that I no longer can fight this addiction, but I CAN give it over to Hashem, and learn how to really rely on Hashem's unlimited rachmanos, the one that we have read about in sifrei mussar.

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Re: Hello

Posted by briut - 11 Feb 2010 17:14

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Wow, the quote from Dov was indeed gevaldig. Thanks. (Others on this thread should read it!)

I do think further comment is fair, though. Forgive me if this gets a little too cerebral (I confess to living "in my head" a lot – hope it won't bother you).

I think the balance between "let go & let G-d" and "pay your own dues" is complex. When I say, "Tatty, you've got to help me," I am definitely NOT thinking The Good Witch is going to wave her magic wand. That's not the Master of MY universe, Ch'V. Yet I tend to suffer (!) from the other extreme – thinking that only my own efforts define success, and that He'll only help once I've exhausted myself in effort.

I have an ongoing theme in my life (once a literal dream, now just a moshul) that I'm stuck by a brick wall. No door, no pole vault, nothing. I start to bang my head against the wall. Harder, harder. My head goes numb, and I can bang even harder. Finally, I pass out. Mysteriously, I awaken on the other side of the wall. Not always just where I planned, but often better than my original target.

Somehow, in the dream I must beat my head into unconsciousness to get anywhere. Indeed, He'd never judge me as "deserving" of His help (Ch'V) until I worked myself to tears, pain, and unconsciousness.

The days of that dream may be (somewhat) over for now, but I've learned that the opposite extreme of "let go, let G-d, and take a darned nap while He brings it to me in gift wrap" is just as wrong.

Everyone's balance lies in a different place, and their solution to the challenge will be different. I'm really sorry for being so flippant and terse as to forget to address the need for hishtadlus (effort) along with bitachon (trust). That's probably the biggest piece of work for my lifetime (and maybe for others).

In short, I hope we're all taking about different sides of the same coin. A coin that relates to our whole lives, not just our sexual selves. This quest for balance IS the treasure. And even if someone could tell me how to click my ruby slippers together so they'll take me home to Kansas (for those too frum to know from movies, this is the Wizard of Oz, rabbosai ) – I'm not sure I'd even take it because as the Good Witch said, I have to "figure it out for myself." (Or at least make some effort....)

Anyone relying only on yourself is a heretic; anyone relying only on the RBS'O is a sinning fool. Anyone, though, who finds a balance has probably also found true emunah and true bitachon, which leads to tzidkus, dveikus, and more. (And, anyone who says they have that balance is lying.)

Your mileage may vary.

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Re: Hello

Posted by Ykv\_schwartz - 11 Feb 2010 22:23

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[TahorVneeman wrote on 11 Feb 2010 15:17:](#)

Please help me here. We are talking more Bitachon,honesty,siyagim,reaching out to Chevra? Is this what you mean. The language of powerlessness just tends to get me into trouble...I use it as an excuse so I appreciate your insights.

Read this quote from [recoverynation](#) to understand the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy attitude on powerlessness:

"Step One: We admitted we were powerless over our compulsive behavior; that our lives had become unmanageable.

### **A potentially unhealthy interpretation**

One of the earliest and most devastating misperceptions of implementing the twelve steps into a healthy recovery is found right here. More than any other misperception, save for the role of a Higher Power in recovery, the misbelief that by admitting that we are powerless, we are subtly absolved of our responsibilities; or that we are somehow damaged—incapable of developing the skills that come naturally for others; or that, by admitting that we are powerless, we will remain so forever, or that we had no power. Such false beliefs often have the following impacts on those seeking recovery:

1) They offer the lack of responsibility that produces “an excuse”, “an explanation” for their behavior—and while this may provide temporary comfort, it destroys the personal responsibility needed to actively develop the life management skills that are necessary to end the addictive patterns.

2) It turns off those who would have otherwise benefited from implementing such steps into their recovery. While some are comforted by their unhealthy perceptions of being “powerless”, others are infuriated by it. They have worked too hard, and have accomplished too much in their lives to consider themselves powerless. To them, such an admission is the ultimate blow. The ultimate failure. And because they refuse to accept it, they quit their involvement with the twelve step program. But again, this perception is also misguided...as such powerlessness is not intended to be an all or nothing phenomenon.

### **A potentially healthy interpretation**

For most, you have spent years trying to stop/control your behavior. You have likely tried many things: promises to God, your family, yourself...you may have spent time in a treatment center...you may have read fifteen books on recovery—applying what you have learned each time. And each time, your efforts have ended in failure. Or, what you perceive to be failure.

But the truth to the first step is, that what you are admitting, is that you alone are powerless to end your destructive patterns. You have tried unsuccessfully, and you are now ready to admit openly that this is something that you cannot control by yourself. Such a perception is not an admission of failure, but a statement of fact. With your current skills, your current values, your current experiences...you do not possess the power to end this addiction. There is nothing even remotely wrong with accepting such a fact.

This does not mean that you are weak, this does not mean that you are powerless in all things. And what is especially true, this does not mean that you have no power in your recovery. It only means that **you currently lack the power to take yourself all the way through the transition from addiction to health.**"

Hope that helps.

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Re: Hello

Posted by the.guard - 11 Feb 2010 23:25

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[TahorVneeman wrote on 11 Feb 2010 15:17:](#)

Please help me here. We are talking more Bitachon,honesty,siyagim,reaching out to Chevra?  
Is this what you mean. The language of powerlessness just tends to get me into trouble...I use it as an excuse so I appreciate your insights.

Like Yaakov brought above, the language of powerlessness tends to you into trouble because you see it as some sort of excuse to continue... So let me clarify: The "Powerlessness" discussed in the 12-Steps is completely **NOT** about absolving ourselves of responsibility, at all. And to prove that it has nothing to do with absolving ourselves of responsibility, let me quote a few quotes from a 12-Step book I have:

- We realized we were acting insane. It's not sane to repeat self-destructive behaviors.

- We recognized how insidious the addiction is, how it continues to tell us lies, getting us to continue to act out again and again
- We recognized that will power alone, is not effective in dealing with the complex problem of sex addiction
- **Powerless does not mean helpless.**
- **Powerless is never an excuse to continue**
- **We are responsible for our recovery**
- **Determination is completely up to us.**
- We cannot think our way out, we need to **act** our way into a new pattern of thinking.

If a cucumber falls into brine and you take it out right away, you can just wash it off and it will be a cucumber again. But if it sits in the brine for a little too long, it will become a pickle and nothing you can ever do will make it a cucumber again. It's the same with this addiction. Someone who fell once or twice out of curiosity can be washed off and get out of it. But once a person has sunk his mind into this stuff for years, and he has **learned to use lust as an escape** from life whenever feeling discontent, etc.. and he has trained his mind to be triggered by everything he sees, he develops an "allergy" to lust that never really goes away. What that simply means is, that for the rest of his life, he now knows that he can not take even the first sip of lust, because if he does he can easily lose control. His acting out all these years burned neuron pathways into his brain by "conditioning" himself to be aroused by everything. That is what is meant by "powerlessness".

It's just called "getting honest about the facts about ourselves". And the reason why that is so important for an addict is because once he knows he has this condition, **he stops trying to "test" lust and see if he can maybe lust a little**, like most people can... He knows that he simply needs to stay away from lust completely, not let it in at all - because if he starts to "struggle" with it, he'll fall.

If anything, "powerlessness" makes us have even **more** responsibility. We simply say, "I am a pickle because of all these years that I conditioned myself to use lust, and now that I know exactly what is "wrong" with me (like I am allergic to peanuts), I also know exactly what I have to do to stay sober!" And that's a huge MECHAYEV, not a PETUR at all.

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Re: Hello

Posted by TahorVneeman - 12 Feb 2010 01:35

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Thanks...This helps.. And I have read enough to know some of this though it helps to hear it again and again. I know that the sick perush I have given powerlessness is destructive. It probably goes there because of being in the brine for so long to use the admin's metaphor. So this helps.

I can't thank all of you enough for jumping in so quickly and offering such complete thoughts. I see the wisdom in balance, avoidance, bitachon in Hashem for the unanticipated moments and emphasis on acting over thinking and tempting fate.

I haven't been perfect but so much better.

TvN

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Re: Hello

Posted by briut - 12 Feb 2010 04:43

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TvN: I am impressed by your desire. Not just your desire to feel better. Or to do better in the eyes of Hashem, your wife, and others. But in what you've shown in just a few short posts about your desire to get to the bottom of this, to truly understand yourself and what you need/deserve/want.

I'm ignorant in the ways of how much falling into brine turns a cuke into a pickle forever. I don't know what generic theories of addiction theory and 12-step recovery theory might apply best to your life. And I wish I could say that there's some first step that's going to make an immediate world of difference.

But even without my knowing any of this, I am confident that you're going to make some great mental headway here. Simply because you want to. Keep posting, try PM'ing, look around.

I'll make my canned advertisement here that I'd give to any frum married man: The Garden of Peace, a book by R' Abush and translated by R' Lazer Brody. It could improve so many things



in a marriage that there'd be some headroom/slack/whatever for working on other things that could otherwise cause too much strain. Much of its advice might look crazy, but all of it is magic. And but for his admonition to live "shomer ha-brit" and without porn, I might not have hit the GYE site. Go figure.

If you know other items that could reduce any stress from your wife who knows that "something's up," for goodness sake do it – you'll want the strongest and most loving partner you can find as this work continues, so try to fill her bucket of kindness now. And do something nice for yourself, while you're at it.

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Re: Hello  
Posted by TahorVneeman - 12 Feb 2010 21:11

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Am going to check out the resources you have mentioned. And thank you Rabotai for my best week ever. Not overconfident, just feeling what it might be like to have the fog lift.

Have a Good Shabbos.....TvN

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Re: Hello  
Posted by silentbattle - 14 Feb 2010 00:44

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Starting to feel yourself see things clearly is an astonishing feeling, isn't it? Enjoy!

Glad we could be part of your growth! Keep on rocking, and have a fantastic week!

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Re: Hello  
Posted by briut - 14 Feb 2010 12:48

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If you PM to Guard and tell him you're married, he'll give you access to the Baal haBattim forum

here, on which he just posted some great excerpts from The Garden of Peace. There's more on the (Israeli) Breslav website in English: you can google the URL if needed.

I'll keep on plugging the book until you say you've read the first 3 chapters....

Remember: marbim b'simcha is a chiyuv.

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