

IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual support

Posted by boruch - 20 Jan 2009 19:22

Firstly, a word of introduction. Let us first all agree on what ought to be beyond reasonable discussion.

A) Rabbi Twersky is a zoche umezakkeh es horabbim, he has helped an overwhelming number of Frum Jews. We should all stand in awe of the number of frum Yidden that he has helped. He solidly and exclusively advocates the 12 steps.

The 12 steps is Worldwide the single most effective tool in countering alcoholism and many other addictions. Be very careful if you want to argue with success.

C) People usually do best with a system to change and the 12 steps is a highly developed system that has been practiced by millions over many decades with significant degrees of success.

D) We live in a World which minimizes the role of Hashem and the 12 steps follows the Rambam's prescription. The Rambam says that when you have a weakness in an area you do well to go to the other extreme. In a World full of kochi ve'otzem yodi --- the self-destructive illusion of being a "Master of One's own Destiny" the 12 steps are a vital and absolutely necessary counterbalance by going to the other extreme and focussing on man's powerlessness and G-d's all-powerfullness.

Secondly, the purpose of this post is not to create controversy.

The purpose of this post is not to debate philosophy.

The purpose of this post is not to prove any point or win any argument.

It should be reasonable to assume that anyone on these forums should have more important

things to worry about than any of the above.

This post is to help and support those who have significant difficulty with the 12 steps and have come to realize that the fault **does not ,as some would insinuate**, lie with either themselves or the way they have tried to implement the steps. This is the place for mutual support and the search for a better way.

Next a word of caution.

IF either the 12 steps are already working for you or if you have just started the 12 steps then this post is not for you for two reasons.

1) Providing excuses, chas vesholom, for anyone to stop doing what works for them to experiment with something else is not what this post is about. Chazal say "Ein sofek motzei midei vaday" --- an unproven approach is no substitute for an approach with a track record. Please do yourself a massive favor and go back to the 12 steps and ignore this thread.

2) If the 12 steps is working for you, then you should rightfully be a believer and as we say in Yiddish you will no doubt be "a geshvoirener chossid" -- or sworn afficionado. As such the chances are very strong that you will see any discussion of an alternative to the 12 steps as one of:

- a) Apikorsus -- Heresy
- b) Meabed atzom ledaas -- Willful self-destruction
- c) Daiyos Kozvos -- fundamentally misguided thinking
- d) Zich-op-narren -- self deception

If any of a) through d) approximate your attitude to discussion of a non-12 step approach then please do those of us who fundamentally disagree with you a big favor and ignore this thread.

You may sincerely believe that you are trying to be mekarev us but I warn you of the potential harm that you could bring on your cause of promoting the 12 steps. By refusing to accept the possibility of another approach you will almost inevitably come across as dogmatic, unthinking and yes, even brainwashed.

But even worse and far more serious by engaging us in debate you are taking a chance, however slight, that by engaging us in discussion you will chas vesholom find your own resolve weakened and none of us here on this forum can take any risk of that.

Chazal say, "Al taamin be'atzmecho", don't trust yourself. If you could trust yourself you would never have landed on this forum in the first place.

Please, Lema'an Hash-m -- for Hashem's sake, don't take any unnecessary risks whatsoever.

If we who believe that there is another way are really wrong let us learn from our own experience.

IF YOU REALLY DO BELIEVE IN THE 12 STEPS, THEN DON'T PLAY G-D. CHAYECHO KODMIN, YOUR OWN SAFETY COMES BEFORE OURS. LET G-D SHOW US THE RIGHT WAY. FOR THE SAKE OF ALL OF US PLEASE PLAY IT SAFE AND LET HASHEM HELP US.

However if you feel, as do many like-minded from Yidden struggling with addiction, that the 12 steps are not a good fit and/or that you have given them a good try and you have found that they do not work then you will gain strength from being able to freely share your reservations and discuss alternatives with those who will not tell you in stereotypical, patronizing, judgemental and cult-like fashion, "The 12 steps always work, it's just you, you didn't do it right".

You will gain strength from those who can show you that the finer nuances and subtleties of the claims of the proponents of the 12 steps are not as well thought out and immutable as their proponents would have you believe. You will gain strength from reading that beneath all the dogma there is a small amount of sloppy, complacent and unthinking conformism.

In the non-Jewish world there are many who doubt and criticize the 12 steps for all the wrong reasons. They feel uncomfortable and don't want to acknowledge the role of Hashem. This makes it difficult for a religious person to doubt the effectiveness of the steps. Don't they believe in Hashem?

Secondly the Frum Jewish World is very conformist (generally a very good thing) and since the most well-known and public face of addiction therapy is Doctor Twersky and he is totally devoted to the 12 steps it is very difficult from a Frum Jew to explore and advocate another approach.

And yet there is a silent and very significant group of Frum Yidden who for many reasons, most legitimate, are deeply skeptical of the steps and their place in Yiddishkeit.

This thread is your place.

So as a way to validate our beliefs and feelings let's begin with a possible framework within which to see the 12 steps from a "non-12 step" Torah perspective that simultaneously acknowledges the contribution of the 12 steps and yet sees the steps for what they really are, just one approach.

Just as many Roshei Yeshiva, Chassidishe Rebbes and Gedolei Torah who were contemporaries of HoRav Shimshon Refoel Hirsch insisted that as important as Torah Im Derech Eretz was for the Jews of Germany it was not a mainstream approach and was only a "horo'as sho'oh", an important method for those times, so too, many feel that Rabbi Twersky's approach and the 12 steps are a "horo'as sho'oh", but should not be allowed to stifle more traditional approaches that are more mainstream (if this shocks you, you were warned, please refer back to the reasons above why you should not have been reading this post).

But most importantly, if you feel as I and many others do, that the 12 steps are unduly monopolizing the discussion, stifling discussion and shutting down dissent, and that the proponents of the 12 steps are fundamentally unable to acknowledge and accept your feelings then this place is for you.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by the.guard - 20 Jan 2009 21:46

Hi Baruch, you sound like a very intelligent guy. This was a very drawn out post and I'm not sure I followed the whole thing, but it seems to me you left out the most important part, which is - **what is your alternative?**

We had once someone who had a lot of questions and doubts about the 12 steps and he sent me all his questions and I passed them on to Rabbi Twerski who took the time out to answer them. Please see [this page](#), I am sure you will find it enlightening. See also Elya's answers to these very same questions [over here](#).

Also, Rabbi Twerski's book "Self Improvement? I'm Jewish!" would be an eye opener for you too I am sure (if you haven't read it yet), since it shows how the 12 Steps are really the same approach as Chaza"l.

But Rabbi Twerski doesn't only advocate the 12 Steps. In [this article](#) from Hamodia, I don't think he even mentions it. You see, it is not "the 12-Steps" per say that Rabbi Twerski holds so strongly by, but rather the following:

- 1) The tremendous group support garnered from working the program along with others. This is a vital and powerful tool for recovery.
- 2) The surrender to Hashem - and acknowledgement that only he can help us. This is not arguable, since anything other than this is Keffira anyway for a believing Jew (and if you should ask how "free will" fits in, see [this page](#) and [this page](#)).
- 3) The 12 Steps help one become a much better person, by learning rigerous honesty, Cheshbon hanefesh, asking forgiveness, etc.. etc..

Rabbi Twerski often stresses that it is **becoming a better person** that will help us the most in this struggle. Please see [this page](#) and [this page](#).

As a matter of fact, please see **everything** that we have on our site from Rabbi Twerski. It can all be found on [this page](#).

After you have seen all the links above, and read them well, and you still feel the 12-Steps are not for every frum Jew, please feel free to:

- 1) tell us why
- 2) offer a viable alternative.

Thank you for your comments and may Hashem be with you!

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual support
Posted by Elya K - 20 Jan 2009 22:10

Amen, Guard. I was thinking the same thing as I read the post, before I saw Guard's reply.

What is your alternative, Boruch?

I just attended a convention with 650 12 steppers and 20 Frum Yidden. Some of these frum yidden have 4-10 years of sobriety. They have completely saved their marriages, and their lives working the steps. Anyone who has this much sobriety and has NOT worked the steps, please raise your mouse and let us know about it. PLEASE!

Do you want an alternative? Here's one.

Don't work the 12 steps. Do this....

#1: Admit that you have a problem - you do or you wouldn't be reading this.

#2: If you can't stop your problem on your own - why not and what are your alternatives?

#3: Find a friend on this forum and either call or meet with them to discuss.

#4: Explore the root of your disease. Why are you doing this and not drinking or gambling?

#5: Do a Chesbon Hanefesh: That's a Frumma Yidden thing to do, isn't it? Are you helping your fellow man? Are you holding grudges? Are you angry? The Torah says, anger is like worshipping Avodah Zorah. How do you get rid of the anger? How do fix your low self esteem? How do you get rid of fear? Discuss these issues with your friend or go to a counselor for \$150 an hour.

#6: Tell your friend everything you've done. Viduy! That's a frumma yidden thing to do.

#7: Learn mussar to perfect your character traits. Take a different trait and work it for a full week, recording your progress. Then do it over and over again. See the sefer Chesbon Hanefesh for details.

8. Admit when you're wrong and make amends to anyone you've hurt. We do this before Yom Kippur,

but you can do it anytime, I think.

9. Now that you've learned mussar, made amends and done a Chesbon Hanefesh everyday, you should

be a pretty sober person, healthy mentally and happy.

10. Repeat #1-#9.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by Ano Nymous - 20 Jan 2009 23:24

It didn't sound to me as if the original poster had any other ideas. It sounded more like the twelve steps hadn't worked for him and he is looking for another way. As for me, I am not using the twelve steps per se, but I am using this forum as a substitute for what I believe is THE key component in the twelve step programs: group support. I don't have to call myself an addict or attend meetings because I know I have an issue and I am working on myself and together with

a support group I am overcoming it. I can say that I also do not appreciate when people preach the twelve steps as a religion, but nobody on this forum does that with the exception of kookooreko or something like that. Everyone on this forum is unconditionally committed to helping us beat this addiction, whether or not we follow the twelve steps precisely. The goal is to fix yourself, not to 'be a follower of the twelve steps'.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by the.guard - 21 Jan 2009 10:49

Very well said, Ano!

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by boruch - 21 Jan 2009 11:13

[guardureyes wrote on 20 Jan 2009 21:46:](#)

Rabbi Twerski's book "Self Improvement? I'm Jewish!" would be an eye opener for you too I am sure (if you haven't read it yet), since it shows how the 12 Steps are really the same approach as Chaza"l.

[guardureyes wrote on 20 Jan 2009 21:46:](#)

After you have seen all the links above, and read them well, and you still feel the 12-Steps are not for every frum Jew, please feel free to:

1) tell us why.

Guard, if the meaning of the language of the steps were clear beyond any doubt to the modern reader then it would perhaps make sense to discuss their potential origin in Chazal or Sifrei Mussar. But the meaning of some of the steps is not at all self evident to readers unfamiliar with the history and context of the steps. So before we decide whether the steps fit Chazal we need to first determine what the steps mean.

As they say in AA, First Things First. How are people supposed to understand the steps today?

No problem, in the secular world they interpret it in whatever contemporary New Age/Spiritualist manner that they feel like and leHavdil in the case of Rabbi Twersky and others in the Frum World they interpret it to fit loosely with maamorim from sifrei mussar.

That certainly fits today's "anything means whatever you want it to" culture but it is hardly a serious attempt to understand what was really meant by the original language of the steps which AA has carefully and exactly preserved to this day.

So where did the 12 steps come from?

The 12 steps were printed in the 1939 Big Book. The author AA co-founder Bill W had previously attended, with his wife, sobriety meetings run by The Oxford Group, a Missionary Protestant Born-Again movement. And in his "Language of the Heart" quoted in AA's Grapevine, Bill W stated clearly where the 12 steps came from:

"The early AA got its ideas of self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done, and working with others straight from the Oxford Group and directly from Sam Shoemaker, their former leader in America, and from nowhere else."

The Protestant Missionary Oxford Group had a total of 4 spiritual practices that may sound familiar:

1) Sharing Sins with other Born Again members.

2) A Surrender/Conversion/Rebirth ceremony of submitting oneself to G-d and giving over one's will to G-d.

3) Restitution to all those who were wronged directly or indirectly.

4) Listening in Quiet Time for direct guidance from G-d.

Each of those 4 spiritual practices had very specific meanings (remember it was back in the 1930s when words still had a definite meaning) and that was the sum total of spiritual practice of their group. So assuming that neither Rabbi Twersky nor Elya attended those sobriety meetings back in the 1930s I find it a little difficult to take their contemporary re-interpretations to fit sifrei mussar too seriously (surprise, surprise after you re-interpret the language to fit Chazal and sifrei mussar, the 12 steps amazingly turn out to be maamorei Chazal and sifrei mussar!!!).

Even more significantly, on a number of levels I am very uncomfortable with tenets and language that are directly taken word for word, concept for concept, from a Born-Again Missionary movement.

Anyone interested in joining the Oxford Group? Well, you don't need to bother, because if you are doing the 12 steps, you already did.

Ultimately of course there is certainly ample dispensation for anyone who needs to use the steps because they were adopted by a non-sectarian organization but they won't work for me, because long before I checked out their origin I could tell that it was all very Christian and personally that's a massive turn-off. (In fact studies show that at least until 1965 AA was much more successful and prevalent in Protestant countries than Catholic countries due to the common Protestant heritage of the 12 steps, personally I don't feel I want to share much with Protestants).

[guardureyes wrote on 20 Jan 2009 21:46:](#)

2) offer a viable alternative.

This thread is intended to do exactly that and is a work in progress. Elya has already posted the first contribution and so BE"H will others. What could be better than a grass roots effort to come up with our own Frum steps? Bill W's sole qualification was that he was a recovering addict and so he was no more qualified than us. As for the Oxford Group they got it from their understanding of their Bible. Are we any less capable?

And BE"H and BS"D I certainly will be contributing and I have a significant number of ideas, but as much as I am posting here as if I have been here for years, if you are looking for viable alternatives, I am now at day 1, which at least in my book is not yet viable enough to qualify. So give me a chance to work on the viability and then I'll post some alternatives of my own.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by the.guard - 21 Jan 2009 11:24

If you have cancer, you take the medicine, and whether it was invented by a Christian or a Hindu doesn't matter.

As far as our developing own Torah steps, what do you think of [this page](#) (by Tzvi Fishman of www.jewishsexuality.com) ?

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by boruch - 21 Jan 2009 16:47

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 11:24:](#)

If you have cancer, you take the medicine, and whether it was invented by a Christian or a Hindu doesn't matter.

Now that's not an analogy that I would have chosen.

1) It's not at all that the inventor of the 12 steps was a Christian it's that the steps themselves originated as Christian religious practices. That's very very different.

2) Unlike medicine, which one way or another one can just ingest, to follow the 12 steps you cannot just swallow them, you have to implement them and if you feel that they are very Christian it's not going to work.

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 11:24:](#)

As far as our developing own Torah steps, what do you think of [this page](#) (by Tzvi Fishman of www.jewishsexuality.com) ?

I suppose that those who are addicted to 12 steps (did you know that Bill W the author was very happy that the 12 steps correspond to twelve apostles? --- that's a fact) need their 12 step fix in one form or other. Tzvi's list is just a slightly modified 12 steps with all the same steps with the exception of inventory and replacement with two Jewish sounding steps. It's like making a "Torah novel" by taking the text of a non-Jewish pulp novel and replacing all the secular sounding names with Jewish sounding names.

OK 12 steps has a certain brand awareness that will appeal to some Frum Yidden who have a more secular background. Granted.

But why do we have to be stuck to 12 steps? (please don't tell me it's for 12 shvotim)

Let's just look at a very basic program we should expect to create for Teshuva and Tikkun for Sex addiction that in my mind would be far superior and much more practical and will have superior results than all this 12 steps stuff. Arguably the most effective aspect of the 12 steps is the group and that could be done with this program:

Step 1) Azivas Hachet --- Leaving Sin. STOP and DO NOT THINK. Suspend all guilt, introspection, post-mortems etc. for 3 full days. You can brood later, you cannot afford to think now, you have an emergency intrusion and full-scale invasion on your hands and it has to be stopped right now. Im lo achshov eimosai? So for 3 days focus 100% on the following 2 steps:

a) Interrupt the behavior. Ceasefire. Detox. --- For 3 days focus totally on stopping the behavior. First make sure that at all costs we have 3 days of clean. If possible do not go near any computer. Otherwise have tightest possible monitoring and filtering for 3 day minimum to create a minimum temporary safe zone of no recurrence.

b) Asu seyog laTorah --- During those 3 days at same time as implementing temporary stop get busy creating Strong fences. Create short and medium term safeguards effective immediately to take the temporary ceasefire and turn it into a permanent one. Make serious and deep commitments to fundamentally limit exposure and vulnerability. It is going to be painful but it's better than the recurring failures and guilt. If there is no sacrifice there will be no achievement. Limit hours of exposure to Internet and all electronic medium to a minimum. Limit nature of exposure to electronic media to work and essential personal business only. Move ALL leisure and pleasurable activities off electronic platforms and find healthier alternatives that do not use devices at all. Stop all Mobile Internet access --- Call Service Providers for all Mobile devices and put an Internet block on all Ipods, smartphones, PDAs etc. Stop all texting, when you need to communicate with people where possible visit them in person or at least call them. Same for all unnecessary emails.

2) Charoto -- Regret. After 3 days feel the guilt. Recognize the damage not only of addiction but of repeated cycles of failures. Recognize the peril of an endless cycle of stop and go dependence. Feel the pain of having only gone half way and of having refused to accept the extent of the problem. Take ourselves to task for having been initially unwilling to make far-reaching enough sacrifices that would have better prevented our relapses. Beat up on ourselves

for having taken risks that led to the relapse. Feel deep personal disappointment with the dishonesty that allowed us to lie to ourselves just prior to the relapse by telling ourselves that the relapse was inevitable and that the situation was beyond our control. Agonize over the way we lied to ourselves and convinced ourselves that we could afford to relapse without in the process turning into the person that we don't ever want to be.

3) Viduy -- Admit to Hashem that once again we have not only sinned but have done even worse by yet again reinforcing our patterns of relapse.

4) Kabbolo Lehabo -- Make a real commitment to do everything within our power, short-term, medium-term, long-term and permanent with no reservations whatsoever, one step at a time, as needed, to do everything that we can to finally take the temporary break we have created and transform it into a life-time process to guarantee that THIS time and once and for all, we go clean for LIFE by implementing the following short-term, medium-term, long-term and permanent steps:

a) Dibbuk Chaveirim --- Get a very strong support system in place. Post on the Wall of Honor and commit to post on guardureyes at least once daily for the rest of your life. Make a commitment to join the ranks of the "Iron Men of Clean" on guardureyes.com so that you can redeem yourself and by your inspiration and example redeem everyone else. If you can, schedule a therapist or group therapy for LIFE, or at least one year.

b) Go mainstream --- Aseh lecho Rav ---- You should break your subconscious image of yourself as being a metzora, leper or pariah who is michutz lamachaneh and whose life revolves mainly around his addiction. Move to a community (yes that's right, if necessary, be prepared to move to a different city or even country) to find a Rav who gives powerful and effective mussar that pulls no punches and who has a good track record of inculcating both growth in Torah study and growth in Avodas Hashem in a significant percentage of his mispallelim. Make every effort to impress this Rav and the community with your behavior by among other things attending every Shiur that he gives that you can possibly go to. Put your best foot forward to both the Rav and the community and under no circumstances whatsoever allow anyone in the community to discover your addiction. If you need a Rav for addiction issues find yourself a different Rav whom you can call over the telephone anonymously. The less Rabbonim that know about your addiction the greater the self image you will have to live up to and the more you will rejoin the mainstream.

c) Go mainstream --- Keneh Lecho Chaver --- Get yourself at least one friend who will be an ally in increasing Avodas Hashem (not just learning) with whom you will not share your addiction

under any circumstances. You need at least one mainstream relationship in Avodas Hashem that goes beyond being an addict.

d) Go mainstream --- Learn non-addiction related mussar --- Most importantly learn mussar on a DAILY basis that is not directly related to your addiction in any way and is focused on general Avodas Hashem. Make sure that you learn this mainstream mussar on a fixed schedule every day with no exceptions. That means you learn mussar on Tisha Be'av (permitted), Purim, Yom Kippur, Vacation, day you get married or marry off your children and make absolutely no exceptions.

e) Get treatment --- don't pull any punches on this one. Do whatever it takes to seriously and fully address your addiction from a medical standpoint.

f) Pray to Hashem to turn your resolve into Iron and pray to Hashem to get you to 120 without another relapse.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by the.guard - 21 Jan 2009 18:14

Wow Baruch! Now you're talking. I was waiting to hear your "alternatives" :D

Look, I don't know how you know all this stuff about where the 12 Steps came from, but I think it would be better not to publicize it here, because for some people, the 12-Steps is their only hope. (And, No, it doesn't help to warn people in the beginning not to read further if the 12 Steps helps them, because that will only make them WANT to read further).

I want you to read through all the posts of this guy (calls himself "kookoorikoo") on the forum. He is a Chassidic guy, and without the 12 steps he would be long lost. You can [click here](#) to see all his posts (notice that there are two pages of his posts. Click on the "1" to go to the next page). He lives and BREATHEs the 12-Steps today, and he claims that it has brought Hashem into his life in a very tangible way. That is an amazing claim.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual support
Posted by boruch - 21 Jan 2009 18:34

[Elya wrote on 20 Jan 2009 22:10:](#)

Amen, Guard. I was thinking the same thing as I read the post, before I saw Guard's reply.

What is your alternative, Boruch?

OK Elya, my very early first draft of an alternative is above. But the goal goes beyond what I described above. The goal is to turn ourselves into shock troops of Hashem's army. People who will stop at absolutely nothing in our determination to recover. People who are able to build the courage and azus dikdusha to be able to attend in-person monthly Teshuva meetings in every Frum metropolitan area Worldwide that begin with powerful and tearful amiras Tehillim, and continue with short sessions of silent and deeply emotional and searing vidduyim that are done silently betzibbur, that should out-rival our best vidduyim on Yom Kippur, followed by group sessions (if possible break up into smaller groups) devoted to going round the group and discussing how we are reinforcing each of the 4 parts of teshuva from a totally practical standpoint.

[Elya wrote on 20 Jan 2009 22:10:](#)

I just attended a convention with 650 12 steppers and 20 Frum Yidden. Some of these frum yidden have 4-10 years of sobriety. They have completely saved their marriages, and their lives working the steps. Anyone who has this much sobriety and has NOT worked the steps, please raise your mouse and let us know about it. PLEASE!

OK Elya, 20 Frum Yidden. So you are throwing down the gauntlet and here's my response.

Hashem should give me the strength and inspiration to personally enable and empower more Frum Yidden including myself to recover through traditional Teshuva as it ought to be applied to sex addiction than have ever and will ever recover from Sex addiction using 12 step systems.

[Elya wrote on 20 Jan 2009 22:10:](#)

Do you want an alternative? Here's one.

Don't work the 12 steps. Do this....

#6: Tell your friend everything you've done. Viduy! That's a frumma yidden thing to do.

No. Not only is it not a Frum thing at all, it's not even Jewish. Your comment serves as a striking warning of the dangers of how on occasion Frum Yiddish hashkofos that should be obvious even to Cheder children are subversively and silently compromised by non-Torah ideologies such as the Christian Born Again 12 steps that have been dressed up in pseudo-Torah form by Rabbis with beards so that the person himself does not realize how off-base what he is saying is. Yidden are not Catholic and we do not believe in Confession to Priests, Rabbis or whomever. Viduy is to Hashem only. As a rule, it is forbidden to disclose our private sins to others, unless there is a compelling reason. Hashem should help me inspire myself and others to follow a path to Teshuvah based on a practical application of genuine Jewish sources.

[Elya wrote on 20 Jan 2009 22:10:](#)

#7: Learn mussar to perfect your character traits. Take a different trait and work it for a full week, recording your progress. Then do it over and over again. See the sefer Chesbon Hanefesh for details.

True, R' Yisroel Salanter in his time published the sefer Chesbon Hanefesh and pushed its acceptance but the method of the sefer, (written by a very secularly educated author who based it entirely on the system Benjamin Franklin invented and described in his short autobiography) convincing as it initially seems, has a very limited successful track record nowadays. The last widespread successful use of the sefer was in the pre-War Novardiker Yeshivos. (Even Franklin himself was only able to keep his system for a year). Elya, if you are/were able to make it work for you, I am impressed.

So in general that's not a very practical recommendation. Rav Chaim Volozhin was quoted by the Chofetz Chayim as saying that in general different people need different mussar seforim but Sefer Shaarei Teshuva of Rabbeinu Yonah is shoveh lechol nefesh -- ideal for every Yid. Additionally for people who have learned in yeshivos Mesilas Yeshorim is a must. And anyone aspiring to grow in his Avodas Hashem should learn Chovos Halevovos as soon as possible.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by boruch - 21 Jan 2009 18:55

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 18:14:](#)

Look, I don't know how you know all this stuff about where the 12 Steps came from

It's all out there online for anyone who takes an interest and is as determined as I am to get to the bottom of it.

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 18:14:](#)

but I think it would be better not to publicize it here, because for some people, the 12-Steps is their only hope.

Yes Guard. The 12 steps is currently their only hope. So let me be 100% clear. On a practical level none of the issues I have with the 12 steps are issues that rise to any justification for someone who is currently actively using them to have any second thoughts. None of them are justification for anyone considering them for whom they are currently the best option.

Everything I have written here is on 2 levels. Firstly, on a totally personal level I am deeply allergic to them and could never use them. Secondly I am animated by my knowledge that Rabbi Twersky has totally overlooked the potential of a clamoring and rousing Jewish movement for Teshuva that is neither dependent nor addicted to the methods that were the conventional wisdom when he was qualifying all those decades ago. My goal is to inspire myself and others to create Group Teshuva meetings with an emotional intensity greater and a Yiddishe emotional intensity that beats the best of the best of the 12 steps. We are looking for the fire and rock-solid resolve of Kotzk and Novardok, the devotion of prayer of Karlin-Stolin and the ruthless self-examination of Kelm.

See what I wrote to Elya. Hashem should help me even play just a small part in creating a better, more powerful alternative that is more practical more lasting and more Jewish than the 12 steps.

But in the meantime absolutely no-one who can use the 12 steps should hold their breaths waiting for this thing to get going.

So guys, recess is over, stop slouching and looking for excuses and get back to the 12 steps, on the double, until we are ready for you.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by the.guard - 21 Jan 2009 19:31

Wow, **a monumental undertaking has been born!** It sound like an amazing plan. I wish you much luck.

Two questions.

1) Why are/were you indeed so "determined to get the bottom of it"? People tend to try to get to the bottom of something that they find is a problem.... Which leads me to my next question.

2) Regardless of WHERE the 12-Steps came from, what is WRONG with it in your opinion that makes you so determined to "get to the bottom of it" and "find an alternative"? If it works, why not use it - albeit in a more Torah'dik form - as Tzvi Fishman tried to do - and maybe you could do an even better job?

I disagree with your assertion that Vidui should only be done to Hashem. In many Chassidic Sefarim (Noam Elimelech and others), and perhaps non-Chassidic Sefarim as well, it is brought down that one should confess his every sin and every thought to a close friend, and work together with such a freind to reach perfection. And I hear that you yourself do this with your friend. And I am indeed very impressed. Halevai we should all have such a good friend to work together with in this insidious addiction.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by boruch - 21 Jan 2009 20:33

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 19:31:](#)

Wow, **a monumental undertaking has been born!** It sound like an amazing plan. I wish you much luck.

People typically say in response, Im Yirtzeh Hashem. That Hashem wants, in this case, I don't doubt. The million dollar question is whether I want enough. Hashem should give me the resolve to fully follow up on my tall rhetoric with equally tall and even taller action.

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 19:31:](#)

Two questions.

1) Why are/were you indeed so "determined to get the bottom of it"? People tend to try to get to the bottom of something that they find is a problem....

As I mentioned above long before I knew anything about the origins of the 12 steps and for many years on a personal level the 12 steps really rubbed me the wrong way and I was intuitively convinced that they were very Christian. That was fine for me, I had no intention of pursuing them and nothing further was relevant. At least not until you and Elya challenged me. Then I was absolutely determined not to let either of you off the hook and to respond with full force. So instead of getting into fruitless revolving door arguments about what the 12 steps mean and whether they are really Torahdik, I decided to research it 1000% to prove that my instinct was right.

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 19:31:](#)

Which leads me to my next question.

2) Regardless of WHERE the 12-Steps came from, what is WRONG with it in your opinion that makes you so determined to "get to the bottom of it" and "find an alternative"? If it works, why not use it - albeit in a more Torah'dik form - as Tzvi Fishman tried to do - and maybe you could do an even better job?

The single step that rubs me the worst is the one that everyone complains about. The Surrender step. Yes, you can try and fool yourself that it's just ilulei HaKodosh Boruch Hu Ozro but whether you take it from me or not (and I am not trying to convince you here I am just answering your question about my feelings) I am telling you that putting all pro-12 step apologetics aside,

on a very subtle level the Surrender step undermines and all so undetectably subverts the message of the Mishna in Ovos, "Im ain Ani Li Mi Li".

The Mesilas Yeshorim explains that piece of the Mishna beautifully at the end of his Perek Beis. As much as you cannot succeed without Hakodosh Boruch Hu if you don't look out for yourself then no-one will look out for you. So, true there is no direct contradiction to "Im ain Ani Li Mi Li" in the 12 steps (obviously surrender does not mean let Hashem do the 12 steps!!!) but the message of "Im ain Ani Li Mi Li" and as the original sexual addict Reb Elozor ben Dodyo said when finally confronting his sexual addiction --- Chazal say there was no prostitute in the World that he had not slept with (surprising that Rabbi Twersky omitted that example) "Ain hadovor toluy elo bi". So while in Ovos Chazal say in the very same Mishna it says "Uchse'ani le'atzmi mo ani?" that comes second. If I were writing the 12 steps and not a Protestant Alcoholic I would begin with the first two steps as being clear and uncompromisingly about personal responsibility:

1) Im ain Ani Li Mi Li -- If I am not taking responsibility for myself who will look out for me?

2) Ain hadovor toluy elo bi -- Repenting this sin depends exclusively on me (hakol bidei shomayim chutz miyiras shomayim -- Teshuva depends on willpower and the will to do good is 100% my responsibility)

3) Uchse'ani le'atzmi mo ani -- If I choose to rely on my own efforts what chance do I have of succeeding (I can only choose my willpower I cannot guarantee that actions will follow --- without Hashem's help I will never get the results I want to achieve)

So bottom line, the deafening silence of the 12 steps on Im ain Ani Li Mi Li, personal responsibility and Ain hadovor toluy elo bi, our total responsibility for our desires which both deserve and require a lot of focus and the focus instead on point 3 which is the more passive allowing oneself to become an instrument of G-d's will is in my opinion crime of omission. Of course I don't expect to convince either you or Elya on such a subtle point when you have been using the system so successfully, but that's my answer to you.

[guardureyes wrote on 21 Jan 2009 19:31:](#)

I disagree with your assertion that Vidui should only be done to Hashem. In many Chassidic Sefarim (Noam Elimelech and others), and perhaps non-Chassidic Sefarim as well, it is brought down that one should confess his every sin and every thought to a close friend, and work together with such a friend to reach perfection. And I hear that you yourself do this with your friend. And I am indeed very impressed. Halevai we should all have such a good friend to work together with in this insidious addiction.

It's not my assertion it's halocho pessuko in Rambam that as a general rule it is forbidden to publicize sins. Now certainly the practice you mention of sharing with a close friend in order to improve is not the same and yes, I myself do just that. But I would never refer to that as Viduy and as a Frumme Yid thing to do. So again, it boils down to a nuance and I was probably too harsh on Elya. That said I am convinced that there too I was on to something.

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual sup
Posted by the.guard - 21 Jan 2009 20:52

"The million dollar question is whether I want enough."

This is the real truth. Not even as far as starting this movement, but as far as quitting yourself. When you have used your own plan to quit, and with much hard work and determination you have succeeded, **that** will be the single most important "spark" to ignite the fire of your new plan. But I'm not saying you have to wait until you are fully healed. Working on the plan while working on yourself can actually help you in your recovery.

The single step that rubs me the worst is the one that everyone complains about. The Surrender step.

You might find Chizuk e-mail #339 on [this page](#) an eye opener. it's from the Ba'al Hasulam. I also gave you two other links before on this issue, see [here](#) and [here](#).

So although it seems surrender goes against the concept of free will and hishtadlus, it is not. They work hand in hand. A frum Yid has to live with Emunah that goes beyond logic. In so many areas of Hashkafa, we are forced to reconcile with seemingly contradictory ideas. (For example, Hishtadlus vrs. believing everything is from Hashem). We have to live every minute as if BOTH are true. And somehow, they ARE.

Now certainly the practice you mention of sharing with a close friend in order to improve is not the same

So if this is permitted, and even recommended, what is wrong with practicing it with a "group" of very close friends, all committed to beating a specific hurdle? If the Sefarim recommend it with a friend, then it IS a frum thing to do...

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Re: IF the 12 steps have not worked for you... let's get together for mutual support
Posted by strugglingwoman - 22 Jan 2009 01:31

Interesting thread. The 12 steps have always seemed too public and too Christian to me. I am very ashamed of my addiction - I think there is an added level of shame because I am a woman. I could never stand up in front of an offline group of people and say, "Hi, I am strugglingwoman, and I am a sex addict."

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