

Sholom's Mindfulness Recovery Path

Posted by tiefster88 - 22 Feb 2018 17:19

Hi everybody,

I am posting on this website for the first time. I have tried a few different methods in the past to recover. The highest quality for me was the mindfulness app programs for addiction by Judson Brewer.

In the past I was sober using this program for months and didn't have to struggle with difficult cravings as much. However after so many weeks I lost the emotional push to keep up with the program. Other things came up in life and this got pushed to the side. Eventually a craving came along and knocked me over.

This time I am going through the program again in combination with a Taphsic neder. I hope that posting my insights of the program on here can help me with my program and staying sober. If anybody else reads it and gains something that can help them then that would be a great bonus.

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Substitution Strategies

Posted by tiefster88 - 01 Apr 2018 15:07

Gut Moed to all of you here in E"Y and good Yom Tov to those of you in CHU"L:wink:

Should we use substitution strategies (like overeating, or comedy videos, or movies) to fill the void when we don't give in to lust?

Your brain's going to get used to it and want more and more intense substitution as it gets habituated, and what if you don't have it available?

We can't fill the void, this pit of despair. By trying to fill it we are just feeding the habit loop. **But when we can see this void is just made up of thoughts and body sensations, we can step back, not feed the loop and let the rest take care of itself.**

If we just observed the elements that make up the concept of this big, awful, terrible void: the momentary thoughts, the body sensations, the tightness, the tension, the heat, the restlessness etc., What happens then? Does the void last forever? No. It will lessen and will even disappear on its own as the sensations come and go by our paying attention to them.

At some point we need to get to the place where we realize there is NO HOLE! That we are not broken and we don't need to be fixed. We won't die from these bad feelings- we can ride them out; acknowledge them and set them free; or get curious about them if only to better understand ourselves.

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Craving As Fire Moshol

Posted by tiefster88 - 02 Apr 2018 09:59

Another way to think of a lust craving is a bonfire. Each time you think about or watch shmutz or act out, it's like throwing a log on to the fire.

At the beginning you could just step on it and it would be gone. At this stage if you blow on it that will just fan the flames and if you try and stamp it out you might get burnt.

You let it go out by itself. Most importantly you make sure it doesn't get any more fuel. Each time you lust because you are bored, stressed or in a bad mood or whatever other reason, this is fuel for that fire.

You can make sure that you're not fueling the fire by paying attention to what you are doing. Paying attention means not being lost in thought and not resisting or trying to change your experience, no matter what your experience is in that moment. The stronger your mindfulness muscle becomes the easier it will be to ride out the cravings right when they arise.

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RAIN (Urge Surfing)

Posted by tiefster88 - 03 Apr 2018 11:51

OK Gentleman. This is the moment that everything in the program has been building up to. All the mindfulness training. The body scan we we learnt to identify feelings inside our body. Curiosity were we learnt how to put ourself into that state of open fascinated awareness. Learning how to identify our habit loops with 1st gear. Learning to see what all the rewards and results of our habits are, as well as the rewards and results of being curious in gear 2.

Now we are going to move into 3rd gear. How to ride curiosity into our urges to act out and completely step out of the habit loop.

Those triggers and cravings of lust or nasty little buggers. They sneak up on us and before we know it were completely sucked in, helpless and under their control. This is pretty similar to surfing. Waves come up and if we're not looking out for them and we don't know how to surf they knock us off balance and suck us into the undertow. they wash us out to sea. No matter how much we struggle against them.

But as we're beginning to learn we don't have to be slaves to our feelings. The more we see that they're just body Sensations taking us for a ride, the more we can learn to ride these out instead of habitually reacting. Mindfulness keep you from being sucked into these feelings of anxiety just like your surfboard keeps you afloat. Not to mix the metaphors but yes surfing is how you drive in 3rd gear. Instead of habitually reacting to these urges that say do something we can learn to get up on her surfboard and ride those out we can be with them instead of doing something about them. **Being** not doing. Think of this as being as the new doing.

Now we'll teach you how to surf.

You'll use an acronym **RAIN**, as your surfboard to help you ride the wave.

First you need to **Recognize** it is coming and **Relax**. You get thrown from your board if your legs are too stiff and believe it or not this can be fun so just relax into it.

Then remember that you have no control over the craving coming, so see if you can **Accept** or

Allow the wave to come as it is. Don't try to ignore it or distract yourself.

To catch the wave you have to study it carefully **Investigating** the wave as it builds, crests and then falls. Become **Interested** in the body sensations, the thoughts and emotions that come with this craving. Get really curious about them. Let your eyes open really wide as you explore them all.

Finally to ride it out **Note** your experience. Note to yourself mentally or out loud what's going on in your body from moment to moment. For some people cravings can start in their belly as a tightness or burning sensation. So they would note tightness or burning at the beginning. Then this sensation triggers an urge to do something to make it go away. Or it triggers a spiral into out of control thinking. You can note this as thinking. Other sensations could be contraction, heat restlessness and so on.

Keep noting what the sensations feel like as the craving builds, crests and then subsides. Keep the notes to single words that really describe what your body feels like in those moments. (i.e. anxiety, clenching, fear, rising, vibration, tingling, burning). The more you can note your actual experience from moment to moment the more likely you are to be able to ride the wave to its end. Using RAIN you can ride your cravings out all the way to the shore.

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More on Urge Surfing

Posted by tiefster88 - 04 Apr 2018 12:02

Our minds aren't used to doing this urge surfing. Usually as soon as the cravings come on it is uncomfortable so we feed it with lust or we try to push it away.

Here's the paradox. **The more we can actually turn toward the wave instead of pushing it away, the more likely that we'll be able to ride it.** So if you get distracted or your mind moves to something else, simply return to the investigation by repeating the investigation. Be curious what is going on in my body right now. See if you can ride it until it is completely gone. Ride it to shore.

Each time you ride one you can never go back because you rode it. So the next time one

comes it doesn't seem as scary. So **you will start to build trust in yourself that you can actually do this. The more you ride, the better you'll get and the easier it becomes.** And this can start to be fun. It's just like any game. We can see it as a challenge. Can I ride the next one?

The RAIN exercise Builds on the body scan in the Curiosity exercises. Can you see how this works? The body scan helps you get more in touch with your body sensations and curiosity helps you stay with them as they arise. RAIN will be your main tool for riding out those urges to do something about lust cravings by being with it and in the process it will help you change your relationship to lust. Of being with it, even surfing it instead of doing something about it or getting identified with it is.

How this change happens is that **each wave that you ride out helps break that habit loop so that feelings get easier to ride and don't come strongly or as often, over time.** They might not even trigger the usual reactive tsunami because you're not adding any fuel to that fire.

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Re: More on Urge Surfing

Posted by ieeyc - 05 Apr 2018 02:02

it sounds great,but when i get sensations i run away from them instead of analyzing them out of fear of acting out on them because of the pleasurable feeling what do you think tiefster 88 (sholom)?

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Re: More on Urge Surfing

Posted by tiefster88 - 05 Apr 2018 12:38

I understand ya ieeyc. I also often try to run away from them too. They are just SO uncomfortable. It feels like part of us is dieing inside if we don't give into them. It feels like "do something! This is sakonos nefashos if we don't watch something or at least think about shmutz soon! I am going to lose that chance to gain this pleasure and I am never going to be able to get it again! I am never going to know about that shmutz and I am going to be lacking something within myself forever if I don't do it NOW!

But running away from these is not the ideal road to recovery. It usually only helps us in the short term. There are at least 5 reasons for this:

1) We don't always have the distraction available and when we don't we end up giving in to our cravings by feeding them with lust. With focusing on the cravings; this is always available for us.

2) With shmutz addiction we can be doing something else to try and distract ourselves but still feeding the lust by thinking about shmutz in our minds.

3) Our brain is going to get used to whatever the distraction is and want more and more intense substitution as it gets habituated.

4) Sometimes the cravings will just get so big that we can't concentrate on the distraction anymore and just need to go an act out.

5) We wont gain the confidence that we can ride out cravings by just doing nothing and not trying to change anything and instead of just being with our cravings. When we do this we realize that the cravings are just made of body sensations and we don't need to be a slave to our urges. And then in the future we will know that we have been able to ride them out in the past and will be used to doing so.

Maybe also like a screaming child our cravings will start to scream less the next time because we were still giving them attention and never gave in to them, whereas if we just ignore a screaming child they don't know that we mean business. So to are cravings will still bother us just as much unless we show them that we are just not going to take them seriously while still paying attention to them.

Hatzlacha Raba ieeyc! And a wonderful Yom Tov and Shabbos!

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Noting

Posted by tiefster88 - 07 Apr 2018 21:24

Noting even when not having a craving can help you build skills so that you can ride out even the biggest cravings and be more fully present with your experience of life each moment.

Start with 5 senses and add thinking as a 6th and see which one is prominent at any moment. If hearing makes you happy then note feeling.

Each time you note it keeps you in the present moment rather than being lost in thought or on autopilot. When on autopilot it makes it so easy to be pulled along by life and thinking. One moment you are happily listening to a bird's song and the next you are angry with your neighbor.

Noting helps you from adding fuel to that fire, whether it's a craving, anger or something else. You can note anger. This is how you rewire your brain to change old habits into new ones.

Notice the difference between noting and being lost in thought or carried away by an emotion. Just noticing gives that little mindfulness pause, that space that allows us not to get sucked in to the emotion or craving.

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Staying on Track

Posted by tiefster88 - 09 Apr 2018 11:26

There are lots of things that can pull us off track and sticking with the program can be difficult especially if you don't think you are making the progress that you "should be".

When you have an urge to lust, instead of it pulling you off course, you can stop remember you destination (long term goals) is. A happy healthy life.

It takes a lot of strength to change your relationship to sex but the funny thing is your already spending a lot of energy keeping your old habits going. How much good does it do when you watch shmutz and masturbate, just to crash right after? And what about all the negative emotion afterwards? How much effort does it take to beat yourself up when you acted out? And, do you become a better person when you do this? You've got plenty of gas in the tank, you're just driving in the wrong direction.

We can stay on track with awareness. Any time you are lost you have to stop to get your bearings so you know where you are headed. If a strong craving comes on to take you off course at that moment stop and notice what this feels like in your body. Notice what it really feels like. Is a craving really that fun? And what about when you end up watching that clip? Does that really feel so good afterwards? Seeing what you really get from doing this helps you pull your foot off the gas so that you stop moving in the wrong direction.

After you stop moving in the wrong direction, next you have to orient yourself back in the right direction. Simply remind yourself of your goals and any progress you've already made. This points you back in the right direction and now that your pointed back in the right direction you've got to step on the gas and get moving again. Just start using the mindfulness tools again and build the momentum of mindfulness. Notice the Joy of riding in the right direction, towards a healthier, happier life.

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Can Our Mind Fix Itself?

Posted by tiefster88 - 10 Apr 2018 09:24

Often we will start feeling lust urges in our bodies and our mind will think "Oh I am feeling lust urges. What am I lustful about?" and then it will try and work out the lust thought that is causing us to be lustful.

No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.

If we get caught up in thinking, we can't think our way to the solution because this just gets us caught up in more thinking.

The very process of trying to think our way out of lust in the future, may make us actually lust more. Especially since we don't have much control over the future.

We have to see the difference between "thinking" and "knowing" or "doing" and "being". In thinking mode we are stuck in our heads. It has a restless "do something, I have to fix this quality".

In knowing or being mode we are simply being aware. Knowing if we are stuck in a habit loop and simply accepting that this is what is happening right now. We are with the thought and body sensations yet not reactively doing something to change them. We are moving out of review and regret mode to one that we are more likely to look and learn. We see our habits clearly and learn how our minds work.

We stop feeding our habit loops and they die down on their own.

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(Un)Resistance

Posted by tiefster88 - 11 Apr 2018 12:00

What does it mean to accept/allow? In sports we have resistance training. **In mindfulness we let our thoughts and emotions come and go without trying to do anything about them.** We can't fight them because eventually we get tired and washed downstream.

We have built our lives around our eating habits even falling in love with them. In mindfulness instead of resisting our urges we might accept that the boulder wants to roll downhill. That's how gravity works. All we have to do is stop resisting. In other words step out of the way.

This is different than just being passive and letting our cravings have their way with us. Un-resistance helps us relax so that we can mindfully get up on that wave and ride it without being swept away. Allowing it to be there. Mindfulness is active. We use awareness to get up on that wave. It's active yet not forced. Can you see the difference between these two?

What does it feel like when you are trying to resist a craving or an urge to lust? **Notice how the act of resisting takes up energy and doesn't feel very good.** With mindfulness we can notice the urge, relax into it allow it to be there and then let go.

You can't control your cravings but you can control whether you resist them or not. People think if they don't resist their cravings they will surely give in. The truth is that they haven't looked close enough to see that they can have an urge but then they can choose to insert that wedge of mindfulness so that you don't automatically act on it.

Notice when you are resisting an urge. Just note, whether "clenching, tightness, fear. Clamminess" and notice what they feel like inside your body. As you get the hang of it you can even note "resisting". This will help you not resist while you allow these sensation to be there as they are. Be sure to note the joy as you let go.

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Do I have an addiction or am I an addict?

Posted by tiefster88 - 12 Apr 2018 12:08

Am I

1. Somebody who has an addiction to shmutz, or
2. A shmutz addict?

1. I have an addiction to shmutz. My brain learnt that using shmutz takes away negative emotions and keeps positive emotions going better than anything else. If I can just use mindfulness to teach myself to really know in my bones

- how to recognize triggers to anticipate cravings,
- that feeding lust cravings is not worth it for me in that moment,
- That I can just sit with lust cravings and they will always die down on their own.

Eventually the fire of lust will die down and the cravings will come less and I will be able to use mindfulness to ride them out every time. I won't have a problem anymore!

2. **I am an addict.** I am a very spiritually sensitive person who cannot live without a conscious connection to Hashem or else I become unsettled to the core. **Living in my ego and not connecting to Hashem makes me miserable and sick. Shmutz in the short term is for me the best thing that simulates the release and relief from my bondage to self that can really be had only through spiritual consciousness.** This is because shmutz temporarily takes me out of my self-consciousness better than anything else by identifying with the women who are also coming out of their self-consciousness in whichever picture I am concentrating on. However paradoxically, in the end this just leaves me even more ego-conscious than I was before because by feeding my selfish drives I have gone further into myself and closed myself off from G-d even more than I was previously.

If I can just use mindfulness to teach myself how to

- **be in the moment connecting with Hashem because each moment Hashem is recreating the world and this moment is our only chance of connecting with Him**
- **not think about the past or the future which is really living in my ego, shutting me off from connecting to Hashem in this moment and making me sick with regrets and worries.**

Then I will no longer feel unsettled to the core and the need to run to lust to relieve myself. I won't get those cravings for shmutz anymore because I won't have the miserable pain from living in my self-conscious ego anymore and closed off from Hashem. I will be in love with Hashem and run to carry out all the mitzvos and learn His Torah and not want to do any aveiros that may jeopardize that strong connection.

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Dropping the Hot Coal

Posted by tiefster88 - 13 Apr 2018 10:23

Some days we see our habit patterns clearly. Other days our minds are not so convinced and we become swept away in a strong urge. Our narrator says this is what you have to do and you are making things worse by waiting.

We need to have a wise voice in our brain who doesn't try to convince us of anything but just to take a really good look at our old habit patterns to help remind us how this played out last time.

Just helps us look at the data.

Imagine your in freezing cold. Someone hands you hot coal. Finally warm. Someone walks by and says “your hands on fire!” But you don’t listen because you are getting warm and you think this coal is the way to go and in the short term it seems to be working. You only realize what’s going on when you have been burned.

When we really see what is going on with the hot coal we don’t need to think what to do. We will naturally see we are being burned and let go.

The key is to be curious and see really clearly what we get from our actions. **How much is lusting and acting out actually helping us? If we don’t see this really clearly we wont know how to drop it.**

What’s it like to practice mindfulness is it a hot coal or diamond? To practice the body scan, eat something healthy, to stop when full, curious, ride something out using rain. The more we see this the more we will naturally drop the coal.

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Re: Do I have an addiction or am I an addict?
Posted by Ihavestrength - 17 Apr 2018 04:48

In my arrogant unsolicited opinion, your post, while consisting of some decent writing, comes off as a bit fantastical in your predictions of the future.

PeAcE

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Re: Do I have an addiction or am I an addict?

Posted by tiefster88 - 18 Apr 2018 10:22

Thank you lhavestrength for your reply. While you may be right that I like the second option more I am also very cautious about it because the mindfulness program that I'm doing is clinical as opposed to spiritual and is based on the first approach.

The second approach would be trying to use mindfulness to experience Hashem and to attain and maintain the spiritual experience that they talk about in the 12 step programs. This is something which seems to have been working for me in the last couple of weeks. I have been feeling connected to Hashem like never before and haven't even been faced with any serious cravings. **It has been so wonderful to be free for the last couple of weeks!**

According to the 12 steps **the idea of having a spiritual experiences and not having any more cravings at all is very much attainable.** If you listen to the shares of people in AA who have long term sobriety they very often state they have not even THOUGHT about drinking since they got sober with the 12 step program.

I haven't heard this so much with SA success stories for some reason. They seem to still be often faced with even very difficult cravings for lust but are able to surrender them in order to stay sober.

According to my mindfulness program you are not even supposed to aim not to have cravings anymore. The only way would be if you became so disenchanted with your drug of choice that you had no emotional attachment to it whatsoever. And that is not even something to aim for. Instead we just weaken the attachment enough that when the craving comes you will make the decision just to be mindful of the craving and ride it out until it dies out.

According to the 12 step program in the big book p84 "we have ceased fighting anything or anyone— even alcohol. **For by this time sanity will have re- turned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.**

We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition."

Sounds fantastic to me!

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