

Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey

Posted by Hakolhevel - 01 Feb 2021 15:37

I wanted to dedicate a thread where people can post how Rabbi Twerski is a part of their journey.

I'll start with me.

This is a real simple story, but it points to the great influence Rabbi Twerski had on the Jewish world.

Long before I joined GYE, I had a very negative opinion about addicts. My opinion was it only existed by lowlifes and people who are not Frum. I had never heard of Sex addicts at that point, in taking strictly alcohol/drugs...

I had downloaded on my iPod all kinds of lectures/shiurim someone once gave me, and one of them was by Rabbi Twerski.

So one day I decide to listen to it. It must have been a talk from a while ago, but in it , he was trying to bring attention to the frum community that the issues of alcohol/drugs/gambling addiction existed in the frum community. And he said story after story.

To me it was a eye opening experience that Addicts exist in the frum community, and even in people who are not lowlifes. Even successful learned people.

It wasn't until a couple years later when I got into GYE I saw that there are sex addicts as well. But he paved the way for me to realize regular frum people can have problems, and that 12 steps is not a program for lowlifes, but for people who want to better their life.

I look forward to hearing your stories

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey

Posted by mggsbms - 01 Feb 2021 16:05

Thanks for starting this thread, it's a beautiful idea. Yesterday when I heard that Rabbi Twersky z"l had passed away it felt like I had lost a close relative, it was painful, to the point where I found myself crying. I have never met Rabbi Twersky and I am trying to understand what has touched me so profoundly. I think that to me he was the epitome of acceptance and understanding of our struggle and hardships, a grandfatherly saintly figure steeped in Yiras Shamayim, yet in tune with all that drives a person to rock bottom, and with hope and tools to make things better. Yhi zichro baruch.

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey

Posted by wilnevergiveup - 01 Feb 2021 18:41

I owe all happiness in my life to Rabbi Twerski, if not for his books, I would have no concept of self worth and self esteem.

In addition to this is the most important impact he had on me and that is by introducing GYE to me. Without GYE, I would be in deep trouble and I therefore am forever indebted to him for that. This is in addition to his fabulous book on the 12 steps and how they fit with the Torah called "Teshuvah Through Recovery" which has changed the way I view this whole parsha and significantly impacted my journey. He helped me understand myself in a way that no one else was able to and I can honestly say that I would not be anything close to where I am today if not for Rabbi Twerski.

Thank you Rabbi Twerski. I am a changed person because of you. You took me meiafeilah l'orah and mishibud ligeulah.

May your light shine on the whole entire world.

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by Hakolhevel - 03 Feb 2021 20:42

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 01 Feb 2021 18:41:](#)

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I love his books on self concept. It's important especially if you come from Chabad background where Bittul can be misunderstood as having no self concept.

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by Hakolhevel - 03 Feb 2021 20:43

Currently I'm reading his book from pulpit to couch, if you want to read a little more about his life that's a good one too read.

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by doingtshuva - 03 Feb 2021 23:27

About 6 years ago I reached out to Rabbi Twerski and he replied to my Email.

This was his reply;

These conditions may lie low for a while, but tend to recur. The best way to avoid recurrences is to be in touch with the support group of GYE, with others who share the same problem and who have been successful in the struggle.

We each have our struggles with which we must battle for a lifetime

twerski

In his Zchus I joined GYE.

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by Hakolhevel - 04 Feb 2021 00:07

[doingtshuva wrote on 03 Feb 2021 23:27:](#)

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Interesting take. (Possibly) Even if one is not an addict, seems like it can still be something we struggle with for a lifetime.

And here I thought one day I'll be free...

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by mggsbms - 04 Feb 2021 02:11

[Hakolhevel wrote on 04 Feb 2021 00:07:](#)

[doingtshuva wrote on 03 Feb 2021 23:27:](#)

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Interesting take. (Possibly) Even if one is not an addict, seems like it can still be something we struggle with for a lifetime.

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In one of his shiurim he says that one can become an addict with one look at P. So its one look and a battle of a lifetime.

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by the.guard - 04 Feb 2021 13:00

Thank you chevra for starting this wonderful thread. I was very close to the Rav and visited him many times in the past 8 years or so that he lived in Israel. He did everything he could to help our organization, to the point of messiras nefesh. We are hoping to put out a book with his articles and correspondence with GYE. This thread is great, and the stories here may make it into the book! If you have any correspondence from him, please post it here...

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by striving2bclean - 04 Feb 2021 14:09

I reached out to R' Twerski in 2009 and he directed me to GYE. I am forever grateful and iyH all of our successes should be a zechus for his neshama

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by Dov - 19 Feb 2021 15:55

Thank G-d I've been clean each day for 24 years since I started attending Sexaholics Anonymous meetings in Adar of 1997. But five years before that (in 1992), I called Rabbi Twerski (from a payphone - anyone here remember those?) for help. Of course, the reason I 'bit the bullet' and made the call that *particular* day was because I had **just** made yet another round of self-destructive sexual choices (though they certainly didn't feel like 'choices', at the time!) that shocked myself, just a few minutes before...so I felt needed to make another frantic, spur-of-the-moment scream for help. The pain was terrible. And my call was filled with hope.

By that time ('92), I had been acting out with pornography, masturbation and other ways to get

erotically high, for about 16 years, 6 of them, as a married guy learning, giving shiurim, and in school for a trade. By '92, I had opened up about (at least part of) my problem to 3 Rabbonim and 2 psychologists...all while succeeding at keeping nearly all my behaviors secret from my wife. Well, *getting married* obviously didn't help me because my behaviors only got **worse** over the last 4 or 5 years; the well-meaning Rabbonim and decent psychologists surely tried their best but I was still getting worse, not better. I was beginning to perceive that there really was nothing my wife, my Rabbonim, or therapists could possibly do to save me from myself and my terrible, secret problem. But I had remembered my Ace-in-the-hole, Rabbi Twerski!

By that time, I had already read a couple of his great books (Let Us Make Man, being my favorite) and was very impressed. I had also been listening to a "Daily Reflection on Recovery" phone line he had. I discovered the number scribbled on the wall in a yeshiva somewhere. So I called! Everyday he had another great, 1-minute message about addiction and recovery. Sometimes, I played his message over again because it was very meaningful. And at end of every message, his secretary Kim gave a plug for his latest book, given book. Her voice was very-sounding to me and even though I would occasionally play *his* messages over again, it was Kim's messages that I would play over, and over, sometimes even while in bed with my wife sleeping nearby...

And 20 years later, when I spent a couple of hours with Rabbi Twerski in his house in Teaneck, I told him all about Kim's part of his message! He laughed hard, and so did I! Addicts in recovery can **laugh** about our old behaviors because we are now revealed to be "guilty but mostly stupid" in our efforts. I was never trying to be bad and we both knew it. I was just totally clueless at how to get by in life, and porn, sex, and schmitz were all I really trusted! It's not about whether it was right or wrong, good or bad...it was just a fact. My behavior proved without any doubt what my beliefs were. I wanted with my whole heart and neshoma to be good, but I obviously trusted erratic excitement more than anything else. I sacrificed so much for it, took so many risks, felt so bad and kept doing it anyway for so many years...**that's** devotion, that's trust. The Rabbi and I could laugh because we're "no longer afraid of the past and we don't shut the door on it" - and we can even laugh about it, at times. We know that we were just doing the best we could, at the time, with our (very) addled minds. Recovery involves lots of behavioral changes (no more lying, no more hiding, etc), but it also involves giving up seeing ourselves as the center of the universe, the narcissistic frum drama of it all...we can laugh again, even at our mistakes. And we can surrender Lust and Fantasy in a fellowship of other imperfect people doing the same.

By the way, the reason I was at Rabbi Twerski's house in Teaneck a couple of years ago was because we were discussing his book, "Teshuvah Through Recovery," that had about 20 pages of my posts on GYE.)

The way I got in touch with Rabbi Twerski in the first place, was only because this same Kim would always mention that Dr Twerski worked out of the "Gateway Rehabilitation Venter in Aliquippa PA". I called 'information' from that payphone and asked for Aliquippa in Pennsylvania, eventually asking for the Gateway Rehabilitation center there, and then for Dr Twerski's office. And presto, there he was on the phone! I couldn't believe it. The cavalry was coming in, finally.

Well, I described a great deal of my behaviors to him, there on the street, whispering from fear of the passersby. He told me I'd never get better on my own. At the time, he didn't really know much about Sexaholics Anonymous. It seems to me that at that time he still had not made up his mind whether lust addiction exists at all, or not. But he obviously heard the cyclical and progressive story I told about my behaviors he heard what I went through for 10 years, then for 6 years of marriage, and he understood why it didn't get better, only worse. He heard the same story all the alcoholics and drug addicts tell. And he told me that I had no real chance of success unless I registered myself into a rehab center for intensive therapy, or joined with a group of other people getting better from the same problem. (Later, he became a great friend of Sexaholics Anonymous and I was present in the crowd hearing him speak at Sexaholics Anonymous conferences, as a guest...but he didn't really know what address to send me to back in 1992.)

Well, I got off the phone after thanking him profusely...and went back to struggling with my phone sex, pornography, and masturbation for the next 5 years. Nothing had changed, at all.

I was caught by my wife in late 1995...that didn't stop me, either. I spent about a year with my fourth try with a therapist and even medication, but continued choosing lust and erotic adventure over real life; got worse, not better. I hit bottom in early 1997 and finally went to a bona fide sex addiction therapist. I told her my entire story without holding back anything and she knew how to get even more honesty out of me. And then she broke the bad news to me: she said she couldn't really help me because she can't really save *any* addicts. She told me that what I needed more than self-control, was self honesty. And that the only place I could learn self honesty was in a fellowship of other sober people getting better from the very same problem I had, myself.

Rabbi Twerski's advice from 5 years earlier was finally acceptable to me. My own bankruptcy and behavior had convinced me to surrender. To finally give up trying to control this thing...because an addict like me is too ill to successfully use and control their drug. But we definitely can be free of it!

And even if using schmitz were somehow a great mitzvah, I would not be able to control it successfully and would be 100% patur from it. The point is that - unlike normal yidden (or gentiles) - I am just too ill to successfully control it. And Hashem knows that. For me it's **not** about kedusha, **not** about Teshuvah...it's about survival and being in life, for **real...just like it is for alcoholics regarding alcohol**. And when I said this to Rabbi Twerski, he responded, "Of course! What else could it be?!"

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by the.guard - 20 Feb 2021 22:00

Beautiful. Just beautiful.

This will definitely make it into the book, and I am sure it will inspire many people who may not know they are addicts until they read this and a light bulb suddenly goes off in their heads!

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Re: Rabbi Twerski - How he was/is part of your journey
Posted by doingtshuva - 05 May 2023 01:53

[Dov wrote on 19 Feb 2021 15:55:](#)

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R' Dov, I miss your beautiful posts, once you were more active with your writing and giving advice.

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