

Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used

Posted by yehuda2341 - 15 Sep 2022 19:35

Hi,

My name is Yehuda, and I might be able to help you.

You see, I also went through the struggle, the years-long fight against the Yetzer Hara and its nisyonos.

While working through that struggle I came across and worked on a number of ideas. These ideas were game-changers for me - powerful tools that I used, with HaShem's help, to turn the fight around and eventually move past it.

These ideas aren't mussar - I'm in no place to give you mussar, and I doubt you need it. They aren't either inspiration, encouragement or chizzuk. Those are great, but not my department. My ideas are just facts, perspectives. A deeper, clearer, truer understanding of how we work, how the Yetzer Hara operates, and what it means to be in- and to overcome- a nisayon.

Why does that help? For me, fighting the Yetzer Hara was like learning how to drive on the highway. I had no idea what was happening, why it was happening, or what I was supposed to do about it. And there were big consequences for a wrong turn. The ideas that I worked on became my 'Owner's Manual'; the what's-what and how-to for my nisyonos.

Confusion doesn't breed success, clarity does. These ideas gave me the clarity that I needed to:

- 1) see where and how the Yetzer Hara was distorting my perspective,
- 2) see what it means to have a nisayon, and
- 3) know what I could do about it, how to fight it.

And that saved my life.

I'd like to pass these ideas forward - to me they seem too good, too powerful, to keep to myself. I know this approach might not work for everyone, but it just might work for you. As it did, and still does, work for me.

I'd be very glad and grateful to hear your ideas and any feedback you have, on these ideas or beyond. I can be contacted at yehuda2341@gmail.com, or by phone 443 406 8543 (please leave a message).

Hatzlacha,

Yehuda

Note: Nearly all of the ideas that I hope to present are sourced in Chazal and/or Sifrei Mussar. In this format I don't bring these sources. Instead I try to bring them out through our experiences- to help you see it in yourself and your life, so you can feel it instead of just hearing it. If you are interested in the textual sources please let me know, it's all there and I'll be very happy to share.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 16 Dec 2022 16:49

Idea #11- Behind the Curtain

As we've said, we have our wants, our drives. We want to be good, to do the right thing. We also want to get pleasure, to pursue our taavos. Is it that simple?

Why do we want those things? Are there any other 'wants' hiding behind the curtain?

On the purest level, the want to do good is lishma, goodness for its own sake. We want to do the right thing because we are dedicated to Hashem and his will. Is that it? Is that all we hope to gain from toeing the line?

Of course not, we'd be in pretty big trouble if it was. A person could be considered a Yarei Shamayim if that makes it into his top 10 considerations. We also want to be rewarded (and not punished), to be happy (and not depressed), to be as good as everyone else (kavod), to not be embarrassed by being known as someone who struggles. We want happy marriages and productive hours, and healthy amounts of sleep.

On the most basic level, the want for taava is just that- a physical drive. But there's more than that, much more. In fact, as per idea #5, the physical is the smaller element of the pleasure. The greater part comes from the emotional satisfaction that we hope to come to through our taavos. The companionship (this takes some imagination, to see a real relationship in virtual encounters or casual affairs, but I think we all do that), the thrill and intrigue, the desire to have what everyone else is (ostensibly) enjoying, the simple need to be occupied, the will to get rid of the discomfort of taava (see idea #6). Many have anxiety-based drives that compel them towards these behaviors.

We need to understand what is happening inside of us to understand what our nisayon really is. Any nisayon can include any or all of these elements on either side. To really address the issues, we need to identify them. To really build up our strengths, our will to overcome, we need

to know *why* we have a will to overcome. To see that overcoming taava is better for us than succumbing to it, we need to see what we stand to gain and what we stand to lose.

Clarity breeds success, confusion plays right into the Yetzer Hara's hands.

I think it's extremely worthwhile to take some time and go through all of the factors that are driving us- in both directions. You can use my list, from above, and try to think of anything else you feel, anything that speaks to you. "yeah, that is something that I look to gain in holding back/succumbing." Imagine if there could be a way that that factor wouldn't be at play, would you still want to overcome/succumb?

This exercise lays the groundwork for fully engaging in overcoming the Yetzer Hara.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Teshuvahguy - 16 Dec 2022 18:57

This is one heck of an amazing post. So clear and beautifully articulated. Thank you so much for all the thought you put into it, because its impact is great. I'm going back to read it again, and then to the beginning to read the rest. Thank you, Yehuda2341!!

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Human being - 16 Dec 2022 20:16

[yehuda2341 wrote on 16 Dec 2022 16:49:](#)

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This is the best post ever written on the forum. To focus on what's causing behaviors, and not the behaviors themselves.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 23 Dec 2022 16:02

Idea #12- The Plan

We've talked about a lot of ideas, made some different points. Now it's time to pull it all together, make it practical. Bottom line- What do I do when it's hard? How can I withstand the overwhelming temptation?

So here's the basic plan, and we'll get more detailed in the next ideas.

We have a want, it's big and pressing. We want that thing and it won't leave us alone. What can go against that? Fight fire with fire- we need a want in the other direction.

Not a thought, thinking about it isn't enough. We're not just thinking about the taava, we're feeling it. And in a fight between what we think and what we want, we'll pretty much always do what we want.

We need to *feel* the want to hold back, to overcome. And it needs to be stronger than the want for the taava. If we **feel** such a want to hold back, we'll do it. Why wouldn't we? It's what we want.

So where do we get such a want from?

Let's go back to Idea #1. **We already have it.**

And we've felt it before- felt the inspiration, the drive to overcome. And we've done it, used that want and been successful. We've held back, pushed it away, for seconds, minutes, hours, days. That's that want. It's in there

So why do we fall? That's Idea #2 (talking about the standard nisayon for now). We lose our focus, take the bait, get distracted. That's it.

We have what we need. We have that stronger want. We just need to access it. The fight is to tap into it, hold on to it.

It's not easy, as we all know too well, but it is simple. Find that want, find what turns it on, get it clear, quick, fast access. Practice pulling up the feelings of inspiration, the feelings of desperation, whatever speaks to you. Feel it, live it, and get it ready to pull out when you need.

I have a specific routine for this, works great for me, and I'll share it next time. Maybe it'll work for you, maybe you'll need to do it a bit differently. But the bottom line is:

We need to want to hold back more than we want the taava. And we do already, we just need to tap- emotionally, feelingly- into that want.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used

Posted by yehuda2341 - 01 Jan 2023 15:27

Idea #13- Decisive Action

Ok, so here's what I do (still only talking about the standard nisayon – idea #2). It's based on all of the above posts, so it'll make a lot more sense if you've read those, I think.

As I described in the last post, the goal is to 'turn on' the want to resist the urge of the Yetzer Hara. So when the urge comes, or whenever you're ready to fight it, take a break, go someplace quiet for 5 minutes (taking a coffee break is a great cover, or whatever works), and feel things through. You should have a set routine of ideas that work for you, so you can pull them out quickly, and not forget the main points (we do seem to 'conveniently' forget the strong arguments in the moment, don't we?).

I do that in six steps:

1) **Recognize that this is an aveira.** This thing that the taava wants me to do- thinking, looking, or whatever- is the **wrong** thing to do. I don't drive on Shabbos, I don't eat treif (or even chalav stam), and I don't do this.

2) **There is no excuse for doing an aveira.** Nothing makes it ok to go ahead and follow the taava. It's not impossible to overcome (idea #8), and "it's just once, everybody does it" etc. types of rationales are not valid (idea #2). This a nisayon, plain and simple. There's a right thing and a wrong thing and that's it.

3) This is the big one. **Weighing the wants.** List everything I feel I would gain from the aveira, and everything I would gain from holding back from the aveira. See which list is more compelling, which is the bigger benefit (idea #11). Feel the wants on both sides and allow myself to **feel** that the want to do avoid the aveira is stronger (idea #1). This is very powerful, if you can really bring up those feelings.

4) Now that I know- really know and feel- what I want to do, I decide. **Make an active decision**, say (out loud is best), "I am deciding to not do this aveira." Believe that you have the ability to control your actions, feel like you're in charge, and exercise that power. At this point- if there is a true bechira, a sincere decision- you have overcome the nisayon. The taava may still be there, but you have decided to not follow it.

5) **Call out the Yetzer Hara**, recognize how worthless the taava is- there's nothing real there. (This works much better once we decide that we don't want the taava. While we're still drawn to the taava it's hard to feel it as worthless). This is where things like ideas #4-#6 come in, or any other ideas that you find powerful and motivating. Now that you have the upper hand, push your advantage and chase the taava away. Once you've resisted it you can see it for what it really is. This is very helpful in preventing the taava from flaring up again.

6) **Go do something else**. You won, but the taava is still there, it can push you again, start the nisayon over. The best thing to avoid that is to keep your mind occupied. With work, learning, chores. Not entertainment, that's probably going to backfire. Something that requires focus and attention.

And here's a handy acronym, to help remember the steps: REWIND (wRong, **E**xcuse, **W**ants, decIde, **N**othing, **D**o – those are the underlined words above), as in “let's take a moment to rewind and see what we should do”.

And that's it. This is my system for overcoming a nisayon. Shouldn't take more than five minutes, at least after you've worked through the ideas and have done it once or twice.

You may need to do this more than once- take a break now and go through the steps, and then in an hour or so (if the taava is still bothering you) do it again. Remember, we're not getting rid of the taava, we're just overcoming it (idea #7).

I use this all the time, and I've found it to be extraordinarily effective. The hard part is rallying the focus to concentrate on these ideas while being assaulted by the Yetzer Hara. But if you can, if you're able to concentrate and **feel** through this list, I think you'll see great results.

Or maybe change it up a bit, see what works, what speaks to you. The main idea is to **feel** the stronger want for avoiding the taava, and to use that to make an active decision- steps 3 and 4. The rest is just to make that happen, so whatever works works.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Eerie - 01 Jan 2023 19:58

Beautiful. The problem is, like you wrote, that when the YH strikes it is very hard to remain focused and concentrate on the things that we should. ??? ?? ?? ???? ?? ??? ?????. You have written amazing stuff, my friend!

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 03 Jan 2023 13:33

[Eerie wrote on 01 Jan 2023 19:58:](#)

Beautiful. The problem is, like you wrote, that when the YH strikes it is very hard to remain focused and concentrate on the things that we should. ??? ?? ?? ????? ?? ??? ?????. You have written amazing stuff, my friend!

100% true. I can't make it easy, can't make any guarantees- I don't think anyone can. And of course this isn't going to work every time. But for those times when you have that "I don't want to do this" moment, this is how to take that and capitalize on it. When you are resisting, just you think, "But how can I do it? How do I push back?" -Knowing that the way out is to want out and **decide**, having the information and steps ready to go- that gives a structure, a plan, so that when you're ready to fight you'll have the tools to do it. And if it happens one in ten nisyonos, that's huge.(As an aside, I find the acronym to be surprisingly important. Having a reference point to make sure that I follow through all of the steps is critical. I find that if I don;t speak out the steps through the acronym I'll always 'forget' an important part, and lose its benefit. And that's after doing this for almost ten years. But the simple organization of following through the letters of a word assures that I cover all of the effective points.Also, taking a break, going somewhere else to think for a few minutes, is very useful, for me at least. It breaks up the thought pattern, allows for a new train of thought, more focus, etc)

And after you do it once, you feel empowered, you know you can do it. And that makes it much easier the next time. The nisayon becomes less scary, because you know- you feel- that you have the power to stop it. And then it will happen more and more.I think that the '??? ?????' of the Gemara is our ability to act based on rationalizations that we actively know are untrue (as described in idea #2). But we still have the ability to choose whatever we want (just it's very hard)

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by DavidT - 03 Jan 2023 15:02

[Eerie wrote on 01 Jan 2023 19:58:](#)

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focused and concentrate on the things that we should. ??? ?? ?? ????? ?? ??? ?????. You have written amazing stuff, my friend!

The Lubavitcher Rebbi once explained...

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No person commits a sin unless a spirit of foolishness enters him, since a Yid on his own part does not want and cannot be separated from Hashem, and only from the animalistic part in him, he can do animalistic actions.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 08 Jan 2023 14:37

Idea #14- When Push Comes To Shove

Until now we've been talking about facing down the Yetzer Hara in the 'standard nisayon'- the last idea (#13) was my approach for doing that. Which brings us to dealing with the 'overwhelming nisayon' (idea #3)- when it's not just rationalization pushing us to do it, it's out-and-out torture. When we know we don't want to do it, but it's painful to resist.

So what do we do with that? It's not enough to decide not to do it, because that leaves us with the pressure, the pain. It's possible to resist, but resisting is a huge effort- and it has to be done over and over again constantly, because the nisayon doesn't go away by deciding not to do it. Not very sustainable.

What can we do? We have to push back, fight it, get rid of it.

What I'm going to describe is a very difficult avoda. Not a five-minute thing, not a question of focusing on the right ideas like we said for the standard nisayon (and that's certainly not easy either). This is really heavy stuff, requires lots of time, lots of emotional muscle-flexing. And it's (probably) not going to work every time, or most times. I only managed it a handful of times in a

full-blown overwhelming nisayon. But even trying for it and missing is a huge and meaningful experience. And if you get there even once it can change your whole experience with the nisayon.

Ok, enough with all the preamble. Here it is:

The way to fight this kind of Yetzer Hara is to outweigh its power with positive drive. You have a ten-ton pounding overwhelming desire to do it? So have an eleven-ton pounding-er overwhelming-er desire to **not** do it. And then the Yetzer Hara goes away. Vanishes. You won't have the slightest desire to do it anymore.

A moshul is in order: Imagine you're in that overwhelming nisayon- let's say you're by a computer with an alarm-5 nisayon pushing you to search for XYZ. And then in walks your wife/rebbi/rav/mother/father- someone you respect and want to have a relationship with and who doesn't know about your nisyonos. What do you do? You close the computer as fast as you can, jump up and try to keep your cover. Look at that- you're resisting the overwhelming Yetzer Hara! And is it hard? No. You forgot all about it. You're in crisis mode covering your tracks, XYZ is the last thing on your mind.

Or a simpler moshul: You're having an overwhelming nisayon, and someone comes and puts a gun to your head and says "If you hit search I'm gonna shoot." Do you do it? No. Is it hard to resist? Not anymore.

Why? Because you have something more important that you want. You want to stay alive. Desperately. You feel that desperate want when your life is threatened, and it overshadows the nisayon to the point that there's no challenge. You want to not be embarrassed (or divorced etc.). When that's threatened it's an overwhelming drive, and it also blocks out even the strongest nisayon effortlessly.

So the want to stay alive, the want to not be embarrassed, can outweigh the nisayon. What about our other wants? We have many wants pushing us away from aveiros (see idea #11). But they aren't naturally as strong (yet) as the want to stay alive- or else we would never have a nisayon.

But we can build them up. Not permanently, that's a life's work and more. But in the moment. Build up that want, fuel it, feel it. Make it bigger, stronger.

How?

The first step is the REWIND process from the standard nisayon (idea #13). Go through the steps to recognize that you do want to resist it, decide on that as your course of action- i.e that you **want** to resist the temptation.

Then feel it. You *know* how great it is to overcome the nisayon. That it's a tremendous mitzva, a huge accomplishment and will make your life much more pleasant in the future. You know it, but you don't *feel* it. Not all the way.

So focus on it. Imagine how great you can become if you overcome this. Imagine going before Hashem in olam haba and being recognized as one of the few who stood down the nisayon hador. Imagine the life you can live without the havoc of taavos. Really imagine it, make it real, tangible. **Feel** that resisting is the greatest thing in the world, that it's your life. That you **need** it, you're desperate for it, like the desperation of the greatest passion.

You *know* how much damage the aveiros do. So *feel* it. Imagine, feel, the pain that comes on the low days. The loneliness, the sadness. Imagine, feel, the shame of discovery, feel the shame of standing before Hashem and having to own up to all this. Make it real. **Feel** the pain, the damage, of doing what the nisayon is pushing you to do, to the point that you shake from the fear of it. Like it's a fire that's chasing you.

You *know* that you're better than this. This is garbage, it's so low. *Feel* it. Imagine how you would look at someone who was publicly involved in this, who has no shame. A lowlife. [You're not a low-life, you know it's wrong and you're trying to stop. That's a tzaddik.] This stuff is low, it drags us down. **Feel** the disgust, cringe at it. Scrunch your nose like it's the kind of port-a-

potty that doesn't flush (if you've never been in one, you can imagine that as well

[I have a Lashon Kodesh formulation for this, which I find very useful. I say these words a few times, feeling them through, and that gets me towards this point. In case anyone else would find this helpful: ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????, ??? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?? ??????, ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? ???.]

And that's it. Go somewhere where no one can see you, and work to feel all that. Sing, cry, daven, punch a tree. Whatever helps you bring out these emotions.

It's not easy, not even on a good day, to pull up the right emotions. Least of all when we're under serious attack from the taavos. But give it a try, do what you can- it's not all or nothing. And when you're at rock bottom, you've got to do what it takes. This is what it takes.

And if you can pull it off, there's no better feeling in the world. You go straight from the torture of the overwhelming nisayon to full release from all that tension- and you feel amazing about it, because you just did the greatest thing you could do. It's like you've never felt before (at least I haven't), physical relief and emotional high- real authentic happiness high, not cheap thrill high- all at once.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by yehuda2341 - 13 Jan 2023 15:18

Some Context

The past two 'ideas' I posted were really the main object of my approach to the struggle- how to confront a nisayon directly. I do have a few more ideas that I have found very useful and would like to share. But I first wanted to give some context to my approach, kind of the bigger picture of a life that's invested in overcoming the challenge.

1) The most basic thing is avoiding nisyonos. The less challenges the less chances of failure, less burnout from the effort. This means paying attention to what brings nisyonos and trying to find a way to avoid it. Obvious things are avoiding open internet, people who are involved in these things, places where stuff is accessible etc. But it can also be certain activities, times of day, interactions with people. More subtle things like that are hard, and sometimes impossible, to avoid, so it takes creativity to find a way to reduce the impact as much as possible. [An example, we could find Sunday morning challenging because there's free time and the stress built up from the past week etc. We can't avoid Sunday mornings, but we could come up with a plan to keep busy/relaxed or whatever would help reduce the nisayon.]

2) Introspection and Davening. That could be counted as two, but I see them as going together. There's no better way to Daven than by understanding yourself and asking Hashem to help with your specific challenge. And there's no better way to understand yourself than to- sincerely- present yourself to Hashem. If you can feel that you are speaking to Hashem, you can't lie or make excuses. It is what it is, you're not going to fool Hashem. And if you lay it out to Him honestly, then you see it honestly for yourself. May work better not during Shemonah Esrei or any part of Tefillah Bitzibur, try finding a quiet time and place for an honest introspective Tefillah. (I try for once a week, when I was really struggling I was very consistent with that and it was a tremendous lifeline.)

3) Accountability. Whether it's having someone to report to (mentor, rebbe, rav, therapist, etc) or keeping track of yourself (having a calendar to mark of successes and failures) is big. It creates an immediate feedback for whatever happens- positive feedback for success and (tasteful and productive) negative feedback for failures. This creates a sense of reality- what I do is real, it has a tangible result. It also gives a sense of focus and purpose, especially if you have (challenging but realistic) immediate goals that you are working on.

This is what worked for me, just an idea of the picture of the life around the nisayon. Lots of people have different approaches on this, and for sure it's not one size fits all, so if this works for you- greta. If not, keep looking, keep experimenting. The context that comes from any approach like this makes it much more doable to overcome the nisyonos directly when they do come around.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used
Posted by Gotta B pure - 16 Jan 2023 00:11

Just want to share 2 tips that really helped me deal with fantasies in general.

I buy a lottery ticket for 2 dollars every once in a while, and when I feel the pull of letting myself sink into inappropriate thoughts and fantasies, I switch over to imagining what I would do with the money, planning which car I would buy and the like. The point is that this thought is very interesting and attractive to me and I really get all caught up in it, and it helps stop focusing on the unwanted ones, obviously without having to battle them directly.

In general it is not good to fantasize about this, because when you come out of the daydream without 500 million dollars you always feel down. But for this I find it quite helpful.

The second, is sort of transferring the thought to my wife and thinking explicit thoughts about her specifically. This satisfies that part of me partially and makes it much easier to drift off these thoughts entirely to a other, more wholesome topic. In addition I struggle with lack of attraction to my wife, a sad byproduct of seeing arousing materiel and being free in the street, and this helps with that too.

Actually I did this a few times and then felt guilty because I thought it would be assur, at least when she is a niddah, but I asked a Rav to be sure and he said it was permitted.

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Re: Game-Changer Ideas & powerful tools that I used

Posted by yehuda2341 - 22 Jan 2023 14:50

Idea #15- Early Check-In

Sometimes when the Yetzer Hara comes there's a big fight. We know we don't want to, we resist. And maybe it works, maybe we fall. But sometimes there's no fight at all. It seems to happen by itself- the opportunity presents itself, we go do it, like there's a magnetic draw that just brings us to it. No thought, no struggle- seemingly no choice. Familiar?

What's that about? And how do we resist it?

So here's my theory on this. When that happens, when there doesn't seem to be a struggle or a choice, ***it's because the choice was made already.***

If I think to myself, "If XYZ becomes available, I'm gonna go for it." And I really mean it, I have my heart set on that. Then when it comes along, I don't *need* to decide if I should do it. I already did. So it just happens.

And it doesn't need to be as blatant as that. Even a more subtle decision, can have this 'early check-in' effect.

If I walk through a store looking down each aisle, just in case there's something 'interesting' to see there, I'm telling myself that if there's something there I want to see it. If I check that device to see if it's open and unprotected, I'm telling myself that if it *is* open and unprotected there's something I want to do with it.

These are decisions. I decide that I want to see, want to search, want to whatever. Being on the lookout for it, checking out this, trying that- seemingly innocent actions, hey I didn't do anything- this is what sets us up for that magnetic pull.

It's an early check in for the aveira.

Just knowing this can be very helpful. Watch out for those types of things. Don't think it's innocent and harmless to keep your eyes open for opportunities. When you notice it happening, tell yourself, "***This*** is the nisayon. Not later when it actually comes up. This is when the decision is being made.

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