

Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 07 Dec 2011 21:33

I attended an SA workshop with lots and lots of tools for recovery (about 100 or so). I hope, little by little, to share them here on this thread.

Some of them are very simple and might even seem silly (but may surprise you--and work if you try them), and some of them are very deep. Some of them you may have heard of before, and some of them not.

Take whatever you find helpful, and leave the rest--maybe someone else will find it helpful. I can't say that I have tested them all personally, either.

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I posted this on Jan 1, '12, but thought it would be appropriate to add it here at the beginning of this thread, too:

I could have easily cut and paste the whole list of recovery tools into a post all at once and left it at that. However, I thought that by posting only one each day, it would give people a better chance to digest them and implement them (and remember them) to some extent in their lives. Also, in posting one at a time, I see it is giving me a chance to reflect on each of these tools and appreciate them much more.

So, if you are joining this thread now that so many of these tools have already been posted (and more yet to come, BE"H), I suggest you will have the greatest benefit by reading this thread slowly, just one or two tools each day. There's no hurry.

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--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 09 Jan 2012 07:42

...I'll also add that heavy mussar, I have found for myself, is also unhealthy--likely to put me in a massive depression or to make me all paranoid or obsessive. Basically, throws me way off balance--which is a dangerous place to be.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 09 Jan 2012 12:22

31. Abstain from sugars and white flour. (Try it for 90 days and see the difference).

Interesting to realize that our addiction is not only fed by our state of mind, but also by our physical condition. The food we eat, and the care we take of ourselves physically, makes us more prone, or less prone, to act out.

Also, food and lust affect the same part of the brain. Men tend to gravitate towards the lust addiction (SA attendance is majority of men) whereas women tend to gravitate towards the food addiction (OA, as I understand, is majority of women).

So, when we're staying clean of lust, we might find ourselves substituting food for our original addiction. This is also unhealthy; it's an alternate pain killer. The goal of recovery is not just to stop lusting. The goal is to be free of the pain that drives us to lust; to live a happier and more content life. If we stop lusting, but we stay unhappy and discontent and then drown our misery in food, we have not recovered; we have merely switched addictions.

While I'm mentioning substitute addictions, I'll also add that our problem isn't just lust. Addicts are likely to display addictive behaviors in all their activities--spending lots of time in isolation doing activities that are imagined to be of the utmost importance (but at the expense of a real

productive and fulfilling activities, and of time with real people--including one's wife and children). For example, general internet surfing for hours on end out of some sudden curiosity for some trivial and useless information which is probably never going to prove to be of any real use in your personal or professional life.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 10 Jan 2012 12:57

32. Write a Pornography-free certificate.

Rid your house (and you computer) of pornography much the same way you would search ruthlessly for chometz and rid your house of it. Get rid of every trace of it, every hidden stash and every hidden file and every tiny lead (and all the E-mail addresses and phone numbers) you're holding onto "just in case you need it again some day for some good reason." Block every "innocent" website that you know you don't need but you're holding onto it just in case you need it some day for some reason (although it has caused you to slip and fall quite a few times--often we sense, deep down, THAT'S the real reason we can't let go).

Also, close up every loophole that you know of. We are smart enough to find these loopholes, don't think you can't find a way to block them, too.

Make sure that **SOMEONE ELSE** holds the passwords to your internet filter, etc. If you somehow discover them, admit to this immediately and have that other person change them.

Then, to make it all official, write a certificate "I certify that my house is a pornography-free zone," and give a copy to you sponsor.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 11 Jan 2012 13:17

33. Dump sexualized clothing.

This may include those outfits which are more revealing, or just fancier or flashier. It may be pants and shirts, finely-tailored jackets, or other articles of clothing.

I would say, also, this may include particular types of clothing that your spouse wears that enhances your lust more than they enhance your relationship. This may include intimate apparel, certain shabbos outfits, and even certain weekday outfits. Use finesse. But, our wives might be wearing certain clothes because of our approval, and even by our request. It might just be a matter of not putting in our requests.

On another point: I don't deal with this personally, but I can imagine that in a non-Jewish society, a wedding ring--particularly the lack of one, can also be included in this category. Although, there are lots of circles in Judaism in which the men do not wear wedding rings and such a practice would be met with opposition, if you are in such a circle and because of your lack of wedding ring the females you encounter all day long in the course of your job keep mistaking you as "available," it is probably advisable to wear a wedding ring and, I imagine that under such circumstances, the rabbis within such circles would even approve and even recommend wearing a wedding ring.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 12 Jan 2012 13:33

34. Know clearly: What is sex with self?

It is not just the obvious touching oneself. It includes anything arousing--whether it is something you look at, think about, listen to, read, write, or say. It also includes acting in any certain way that might be arousing.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 13 Jan 2012 07:57

35. Find yourself clean forms of entertainment.

Make a point of enjoying your life.

36. TV and Movie abstinence.

Lots of falls are caused by watching TV shows and movies.

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 15 Jan 2012 13:04

37. Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?"

Recovery is about discovering our feelings. (We start out like a head on a stick). Once we put lust down (our "drug of choice" which is covering up our true emotions), then we discover them. At first we'll have withdrawal symptoms--all the hidden pain, fear, and resentments will come to the surface. After a while, things settle. After we pass through the withdrawal, then we start to discover the positive feelings which were also buried (when we hide the negative feelings, the positive ones automatically go into hiding with them).

Remember: All feelings are REAL, but not all feelings are VALID. We need to grow in our emotional intelligence; in our maturity. This happens when we identify our feelings, admit and acknowledge them, and share them. They'll move on if we let them. (Part of our sickness, I think, is feeling ashamed of our negative feelings rather than accepting them as a normal part of being human, and moving on. We are emotion perfectionists, which is unrealistic).

On the phone calls, Duvid Chaim says that our main goal in recovery is to "increase our awareness of our thoughts and motives." Lust is not really our problem; it is our solution--we use it to cover up emotional pain, fears, and resentments. As we grow in our awareness, we realize that it's not a big surprise when we feel trapped by lust. The journey to those particular web sites or to those particular activities started first when we were bored, searching the internet out of boredom, and one thing led to another.

But then, as our awareness grows even more, we realize that the problem wasn't really the boredom and searching the internet out of boredom. It was really fear and resentments from which we were trying to escape; emotional pain for which we sought pain-killer. We had a fight with our parents or with our wife, or we woke up late and our daily schedule was messed up, or we had a hard time on the job or in the beis medrish. We were feeling Restless Irritable, and Discontent, and those feelings festered for a while, dragging us down. Maybe it was hours, maybe it was days, and sometimes it was weeks. But, however long it lasts, it pulls us ever further down until we end up acting out.

But, as we increase our awareness of this process, we catch it earlier and earlier. We gain tools in recovery to recognize these feelings specifically, and to surrender them to other people and to G-d as soon as we notice them. Our struggle, in time, becomes more of a struggle with our fears and resentments than a struggle with lust (though lust stays with us, too).

I had a particularly stormy last few months, trying to stay even-keel, and getting thrown off-balance, after which I used the tools of the program to regain my equilibrium, after which I was thrown off-balance again etc. Though this, I noticed a more subtle level of this struggle--the struggle to be calm and happy and content with life on life's terms. The struggle to be happy with all the things in life for which I have to be happy for, and to look forward to life's challenges (instead of dreading life's problems). It's not enough to be neutral, that's also a sign of sickness. There's so much to be grateful for and to look forward to, and an attitude like that is much healthier. It's preventative recovery. This is a new realization, and on days when I am thinking more clearly I manage to remember this and try to live up to it.

And, this is the story of my recovery in a nutshell.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 16 Jan 2012 12:42

38. Early to bed, early to rise...

Most falls happen late at night. Go to bed early and avoid them!

My filter (K9) is set to block all internet access after midnight or something like that. My wife says, "If you're using the computer later than that, you're usually doing something you're not supposed to be doing." And, she's right.

Now it's time for the famous Acronym:

H.A.L.T.

Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired.

These are four things which often lead to a fall. Sometimes our feelings of Restlessness, Irritability, and Discontent, those negative emotions which drive us to act out, are caused by fears and resentments (and these are fueled by EGO--to be brief, we resent people and situations because they didn't go our way, and we fear the future because we're afraid it won't go our way). But sometimes we're feeling not so good simply because we have neglected to take care of our basic health. The solution then is much simpler if you remember this--sometimes we just need to go to sleep earlier or eat better.

If you have trouble falling asleep one remedy is to drink warm milk--it acts as a sedative.

Meditative deep-breathing exercises and muscle relaxation techniques can also be helpful.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by gibbor120 - 16 Jan 2012 15:41

[Eye.nonymous wrote on 15 Jan 2012 13:04:](#)

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Remember: All feelings are REAL, but not all feelings are VALID. We need to grow in our emotional intelligence; in our maturity. This happens when we identify our feelings, admit and acknowledge them, and share them. They'll move on if we let them. (Part of our sickness, I think, is feeling ashamed of our negative feelings rather than accepting them as a normal part of being human, and moving on. We are emotion perfectionists, which is unrealistic).

Ever sit in a drasha and feel like the Rav is talking directly to you. Well Elyah, that's how I feel

about your post. Right on target. Thanks!

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 17 Jan 2012 21:12

39. Keep phone beside bed.

...so if you suddenly need to call someone from the program (to avoid a fall) and you're feeling too lazy to get out of bed, you won't have any excuse.

40. International phone numbers.

Have some phone numbers of people in different time zones so that if you happen to have a heart attack at 2am, you won't have any excuse not to call someone.

Through the Duvid Chaim phone calls, I got some numbers of people in different parts of the world. Also, you can exchange numbers with people in the forum. I think you can also get international phone numbers through SAICO@SA.ORG, the SA main office, but I'm not sure.

I have at times been spared a fall by sending a Private Message SOS to a bunch of people who showed up as ON-LINE on the forum; at least some of them responded quickly. (Not everyone who shows up as ON-LINE actually is; some people just didn't log off before shutting down their computer).

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 18 Jan 2012 14:07

41. Healthy food

42. Moderate exercise

Again, sometimes we don't feel so good and are driven to act out simply because we have neglected to take care of our basic physical needs. Also, the GYE handbook has a whole section about physical activities which also describes the helpful hormones that are released through exercise.

On these and the other tools dealing with health and diet, where we might not reach perfection (I certainly don't), we should still value progress. If we can do with one less piece of cake, one less cup of coffee, a little more exercise, a little more rest, every bit makes a difference in our overall well-being.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 19 Jan 2012 13:13

43. Accountability or filtration software.

Actually, both are recommended.

Now, a lot of people say, "If I'm in recovery, I'm supposed to be just fine even without any computer filters," quoting nothing less than the Big Book as a support. Another part of the program, however, is rigorous honesty. Do you REALLY need completely open internet access? Are you REALLY in such a strong place in recovery that you won't fall to temptation on, say, a bad day.

It took me a while to take that step and install a filter. I felt like I was losing part of myself--that ability to freely satisfy my curiosity on so many subjects that AREN'T p*rn related. I started off with a lower level of security. As time went on, I recognized that all my aimless searching the web for useless but interesting information was yet another manifestation of my addiction. I added more key-words to block on my filter, and more limitations.

Today I have it set to block all search engines, and my internet access shuts off at about midnight. If I REALLY need the internet to search for something (which, to be honest, I very rarely do) my wife has the password to the filter and she will open the filter for whatever time necessary.

The filter isn't a cure; it's just a safety net. I think after I installed my filter Guard wrote on my thread, "THAT'S THE FIRST STEP!" The MAIN battle is with the sex-obsession in my head (but this doesn't excuse me from taking precautions). That doesn't go away just because I put a filter on my computer. AND, in the heat of a major lust attack, the filter doesn't stop an addict from acting out; it just slows us down.

So, I have to regard my computer ALWAYS as if it is unfiltered, even though it is. Otherwise, with an addict's mind, if something slips past the filter I'm likely to say, "Oh, that must be okay because the filter didn't block it." I've had some serious slips based on that crazy idea.

--Elyah

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 19 Jan 2012 13:15

That concludes yet another section of this list. Time for another summary:

IMPROVE RELATION WITH SELF

EMERGENCY TOOLS

1. Short prayer, "I'm powerless, please G-d help me!"
2. Move somewhere else. (Get away from the trigger!)
3. Pick up litter.
4. Sing (or hum) a favorite tune. Or listen to music.
5. Call someone from the program or the forum NOW. (Or post)
5. Get to a meeting AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. (Get to the forum)
6. When you're angry: Ask yourself, "What am I ashamed of right now?"

HAVING A PROGRAM

7. Participate in the fellowship of the program.
8. Take the Step Zero questionnaire.
9. Admit complete defeat.
10. Answer the 20 Questions found in the White Book (pg 8).
11. Get a sponsor.
12. Treat your sponsor's suggestions as orders.
13. Work the steps (all 12 of them!).
14. Have a daily program (but not one's own).
15. Read the "Just for Today" card every morning.
16. Live in the solution (and not in the problem).

MEETINGS

17. Don't lust, and go to meetings.

18. Home group.
19. 90 meetings in 90 days (temporary measure).
20. Start a meeting.
21. Take on a commitment.
22. 5 meetings a week (regular program).
23. Telephone meetings.
24. SA Net.
25. Step 1 meetings.
26. Check meetings.

BASIC SELF CARE

27. Zero tolerance for lust.
28. Avoid all known triggers--people, places, and things.
29. Abstain from all mood-altering chemicals.
30. Avoid emotion-rocking activities.
31. Abstain from sugars and white flour.
32. Write a Pornography-free certificate.
33. Dump sexualized clothing.
34. Know clearly: What is sex with self?
35. Find yourself clean forms of entertainment.
36. TV and Movie abstinence.
37. Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?"
38. Early to bed, early to rise...

H.A.L.T. (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)

39. Keep phone beside bed.

40. International phone numbers.

41. Healthy food

42. Moderate exercise

43. Accountability or filtration software

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Re: Additional tools for recovery

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 20 Jan 2012 07:43

IMPROVE RELATION WITH SELF

INTENSE EGO DEFLATION

44. Get out of self.

This is difficult, but worthwhile. Take unselfish actions towards another person. For example, the next time you attend a bar mitzvah or some other function, look for the guy who is sitting there looking the most miserable and go sit down right next to him and say, "Hi, how are you!"

For me, I have found that an ability to be flexible and the ability to get out of self go together. I have to be able to put my plans and expectations and personal aspirations aside and be able to make room for other people and other people's needs in my life. I have to focus less on WHAT AM I GOING TO ACCOMPLISH and focus more on HOW CAN I BE OF SERVICE.

--Elyah

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