

Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by cordnoy - 18 May 2014 21:25

[I would like the Rabbinat to eventually read the followin' letter; however, I would like all on this site to chime in. What did I miss? What should be added? what should be subtracted? Have I missed the boat? How should this be sent out? Let me know please; thank you.]

Dear Rav, Rabbi, Rebbe (R,R & R.....all types....whether one is Modern Orhtodox, Reform, Chassidish, Yeshivish, Right wing or Left),

I am a member of your Shul, Synagogue, Sanctuary (S,S & S). I could be the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, First Gabbai, Second Gabbai, Board Member, Ordinary Member or Guest. I am writing this to you, for I feel that the Rabbinat in general is not addressing the following issue in the proper manner. The issue I am referring to is people who have a lust or sexual addiction. For this letter, it is not important to define the word 'addiction.' I simply mean: people who have an extremely difficult time guarding their eyes. We cannot walk or drive down the street without our eyes wandering and noticing all that we shouldn't. Every woman, her dress, heels, posture and everything else are scrutinized. No billboard is overlooked. We look again, turn around and gawk if we can. These images remain with us throughout the day/night. They/We/I begin to act out. We masturbate without control. We cannot stop ourselves. We view pornography on the internet. These images and videos remain embedded in our heads. They become a part of us. They invade during tefillah, learning, work and play. We develop relationships with women on the internet. We frequent clubs where naked women dance before us. Some of us are into phone sex. Others are into prostitutes. We are addicted to all types of sex. Some of us fantasize about other men; many of us fantasize about women. There are no restrictions; no limitations. Anything you have ever heard of, we have done or thought about. I can go on and on about all our particular fetishes, but I think you get the message.

Now, as a member of the Rabbinat, I am sure you are well aware of some of this. The way you address this is probably one of the following: You dedicate one speech, sermon, drashah to this topic. You warn your congregants how vigilant they must be to guard their eyes and minds. You tell them that it is dangerous to their souls. Some might even state how the aveirah/sin of Hz"l is a ticket to Hell/Gehinnom. Perhaps Avraham Avinu/our forefather Abraham will stand by the entrance of the Gan Eden and kindly/sternly tell us that we do not belong here. Some of you might discuss the chillul Hashem/desecration of God's Name that is involved. Can you imagine getting caught? Picture the damage it will do to your community, your family, your job, etc. Some might mention that we can become physically sick. We can catch diseases by close contact with multiple partners. This might even be contagious, and we will pass it on further to our spouses or our children God forbid!

Many of you, however, will choose a different route, one that is considerably 'safer.' You will talk about computers, internet and the need for filters and monitors. You will hang posters all around the S,S & S, announcing and informing us of the possible filters, protections and monitors that exist for computers, phones, I-pods and nooks. There are phone numbers to call to assist you in the installation of K-9, Web-chaver, V'shinantem, Net-nanny, Open Dns and Covenant Eyes. You will tell us about the dangers for our families and our innocent children. Some of you may volunteer to be our partner. You will receive in an email all the websites that we visit. There will even be those who set up classes/shiurim to learn from a mussar sefer/book that deals with this important issue.

Some of you will choose to make this into your lifelong battle. You will bring this up every other Shabbos. You will announce special speakers and events that will deal with this. You will try to convince your peers to make a convention about the topic. Let us duplicate Citi Field in our community. Another Asifah; another gathering. Let us create a group of those who can tell others that our house is now protected.

Now, perhaps I missed a method or two, but the above would be the general outlines of what has been happening for the past ten or fifteen years. There probably has been many success stories. You saved many marriages and protected many children. People have come back and reported that they are now clean. I/We commend you for this and we wish you continued success.

What I am here to tell you is that be'mechilas kevod torasam/I apologize to you great scholar there is a vital point that you are missing, and it is one that is crucial for us addicts. We are in hiding. This has become a stigma like no other before it. If we would walk to the bimah in the center of the S,S & S and announce that we are steeped into porn, we would be immediately banned and ostracized from the community. We are alone in the closet. Some of us feel that we are the only person in the world with this problem. We do not dare to tell our spouse, parent, Mashgiach or mentor. We hide our guilt and our filth. The danger of getting caught just adds to the thrill of the chase. We listen intently when you are hollering from the pulpit. We try not to squirm in our seats. We wonder if there's anyone else in this room that you are talking to. But ultimately, it doesn't help; we are not affected by your words. If we could, we would masturbate right there, right then; perhaps under our tallis or even with our tefillin on. We know and we heard many times that God has rejected us. We have been banned from His Presence a long time ago. We might feel a tinge of guilt; perhaps a lot of it, but it just leads to a vicious cycle. Within minutes, hours or days, we are back kneeling on the bathroom floor.

So, what you ask, are you missing? What more can you do? You have told us all how harmful

and detrimental this is to us, our lives, our families, our community and our souls. The answer, the solution, at least partly, or as a positive step forward, would be for a bit of empathy, some compassion, some concern, and most of all, some knowledge. Spend some time on the Guard your Eyes website. Learn about all the hundreds and thousands of frum/orthodox/modern orthodox, chassidish, yeshivish, bochurim, teenagers, students, yungerleit, Roshei Kollel, doctors, lawyers and professionals that are experiencing this problem. Learn what makes them tick. Study the causes. Speak to the therapists. Find out why this is becoming more widespread than ever before. Determine if filters or monitors would help these people. Let these people open up to you and listen to their concerns, worries, troubles, guilt, shame and anxiety. Investigate who are the therapists that are available for the different type of addictions. Do you even know what an SA group is? Do you know if they are accessible to your community members? Become experts in the field. Perhaps not all of you have the time and the wherewithal to obtain the status and the level of expertise as Rabbi Dr. Twerski and Duvid Chaim and Dov; but some of you can. Perhaps appoint one of your colleagues to become that expert. Learn about us. And most of all, speak to your congregants; not as a group, but in a private setting. Ask them about life (might be a good idea in general). And then tell them that you would like to ask some personal questions, and that you are asking everyone in the S,S & S the same questions; for this way, they will not be worried that they are under suspicion. Ask them if they have issues with guarding their eyes. They will answer: Who doesn't? Ask further. Tell them that there is help out there. In each S,S & S, there is probably 5 or 10 % of the members that suffer some type of sexual addiction. If my numbers are too high, then put it at 3 %, but you can help. One who suffers alone will suffer forever. That is what all the books and all the studies and all the experts have determined. Ask further. Be a bit of a nudge. Explain that although this particular person sitting before you might not appreciate this line of questioning, but it is worth it to you (and it should be worth it for him), to save or to assist one fellow in this community. R,R & R, I am afraid that you will be surprised, or perhaps even shocked about the amount of people that will "come out of the closet." And maybe, you say, I am saying that, for I would like to be part of a larger group....that might be true, but that is what many people are saying. And again, even if it isn't, can you imagine the relief of that one guilt-ridden, full of shame person will have when he finally is able to reveal his suffering and his grief that he has silently and shamefully endured all by himself for so many years.

R, R & R: either tell me why I am wrong, or please, I beg of you, take heed to some of what I wrote. You will be saving so many suffering souls.

Thank you so much

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)

Posted by cordnoy - 18 May 2014 23:01

Thank you for your feedback

[9494 wrote:](#)

There is also a problem of making something into a bigger problem than it actually is. Maybe maybe one guy per congregation has some sort of degree of addiction? And even then what are the chances that such a person would be open with the Rabbi if approached? I know that I probably wouldn't and the average addict by nature probably wouldn't as well. The chance of any success coming out of this, I do not believe is worth the ruffling of feathers that will take place.

I think there are more than that; you, however, might be right. Regardless, it can be beneficial for that person. I think more people will open up when approached in such a manner. Even if not immediately, but they know there is an open ear, and they can come back to him at a later date.

[9494 wrote:](#)

I believe that the main thing is that the Rabbi understands that this problem is deeper than merely a "sin". He should know how to direct the congregant appropriately if approached and should be understanding of such a person. He should speak about issue of sexual problems on a few occasions throughout the year so that people understand. I do agree that it is important for the Rabbi to understand addiction.

This itself will be a huge benefit.

[9494 wrote:](#)

It is a problem that addicts are in hiding but it is unlikely that they will come out just because they are approached. Besides maybe the Rabbi should approach each women in the congregation asking if her husband is abusing her? Maybe he should ask each member if they are secretly a closet coifer and feel no real connection to yiddishkeit?

Abuse in some way is connected to what I am sayin'...at least partly. Koifer....do we have an issue nowadays with closet apikorsim?

Thanks again for the feedback.

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by TehillimZugger - 18 May 2014 23:18

hmmm... [I'm responding because Cordnoy asked me to]

Perhaps the format can be changed somewhat, more along the lines of a suggestion:

Dear Rabbi,

We are sure you are aware of the issue of Internet/pornography addiction. We are sure you're attempting your best to take care of it. So far the methods I've seen Rabbanim employ have all been public. Drashos, posters about filters, etc. The trouble is that the nature of addiction is hiding. Any addict naturally develops a double life. How much more so when a frum yid [and one who is considered a Talmid Chacham by his peers like me] is addicted to SCHMUTZ. The shame is unbearable.

When trying to coax someone out of hiding, the only effective way would be to approach him in private and speak with him directly.

Perhaps you can set aside a time of the year, maybe Shovavim and pull aside congregants after davening every day and gently speak about this issue and ask him directly if he's struggling. You will save lives!!

Cordnoy, I wrote this off hand, didn't spend too much time thinking... but generally, brevity is the way to go. Short and to the point. The rabbi is not sitting around interested in every detail of your life, he doesn't have time to dedicate to saving your sick friends. When the matter is presented as above it is different. The rabbi needs to hear, there is a problem, there is a solution, how can I implement the solution. That's all.

Thank you Cordnoy.

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)

Posted by nitzotzeloki - 19 May 2014 17:19

cordnoy its not fair, you asking me to use my brain to do the whole thinking thing. but here goes,

no letter is gonna be perfect. there is no quick fix. that being said i dont think feather ruffling is a bad thing. the frum world is waking up (with some snooze button intervals) to the whole addiction thing and quardyoureyes has played no small part. i think a lot of Rabbi's are looking for better ways to help and i think suggestions coming from the strugglers themselves could have a powerful impact. sure some rabbi's are too busy/think they know it all/just dont get it but in my opinion if even one Rabbi takes this type of thing to heart it's worth it (whatever 'it' is)

and im agree with TZ's suggestion about wording things as suggestions

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)

Posted by Machshovo Tova - 19 May 2014 18:39

We need to keep in mind that some R, R & R's may also be suffering from this issue (they're human after all - and some of them are already GYE members). So should we suggest that if that's the case, they should first help themselves before helping others?

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by gibbor120 - 19 May 2014 20:29

Should the cabin lose pressure....

If you are travelling with a child or someone who requires assistance, secure your mask on first, and then assist the other person.

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by gibbor120 - 19 May 2014 20:31

I have more to say on a more serious note, but don't have time right now. To be continued...

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 19 May 2014 22:52

take a look here for a somewhat related post:

guardyoureyes.com/forum/20-Important-Threads/52464-Conversation-with-World-Renowned-Talmid-Chacham-and-Posek#52548

thank you cordnoy, imho its a good idea to have rabbonim be more familiar with the reality of addicts and what they face and the options open to them.

It seems that there is widespread ignorance and misconceptions about all 12-Step groups among many rabbonim and lay people. How to counter the misinformation is a subject that

needs to be addressed. once that is resolved, and the rabbonim feel more comfortable recommending a 12-Step program, then they can make anyone who needs such assistance aware of the option. There is less opposition to GYE among the rank and file. GYE itself is not the answer for every addict but it can be a gateway to more intense and comprehensive recovery.

Thank you Corndoy for this initiative.

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by kilochalu - 20 May 2014 03:48

thanks cordnoy

also personally think some of tz's nuschaos could be helpful

many rrr's are too busy or it is too uncomfortable for them to approach each congregant so directly and many congregants who need it won't necessarily open up, they have to be holding at exactly the right stage to do that, as so many of us here can attest to (myself included) regarding opening up to others or attending meetings

it's true kol hamatzil nefesh achas...

but lemaaseh if you ask too much tafasta meruba...

maybe it is more practical to suggest at least that the rrr's should make it known that there is help to be had and that he is available for anyone who would like to discuss these issues with him so that when they are ready for it at least they will know that he is there for them and will understand them and not pasul them as so many of us are afraid of

thanks again and Hashem should help you to actually carry this out in the most effective way, v'kol hamezakeh es harabim...

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by shivisi - 20 May 2014 11:27

[TehillimZugger wrote:](#)

The trouble is that the nature of addiction is **hiding**. Any addict naturally develops a double life. How much more so when a frum yid [and one who is considered a Talmid Chacham by his peers like me] is addicted to SCHMUTZ. **The shame is unbearable.**

When trying to coax someone out of hiding, the only effective way would be to approach him in private and speak with him directly.

Perhaps you can ...pull aside congregants ...and **ask him directly if he's struggling.**

I'm speaking from experience:

I have been, and to a great extent still am, living the "double life".

I can speak for myself and from what I've gathered from speaking to others, If a Rav "pulled me aside" and asked me if I was struggling in this field, the most I could see myself saying [if not outright denying it completely], is a very general "well everyone has nisyonos of shmiras haeinayim and shmiras hamachshovo etc."

And even if he "gently speaks about this issue" I don't see myself jumping at the opportunity to open up and reveal my true colors to him.

As you wrote "The shame is unbearable", as it will forever change the relationship between the Rav and that congregant.

I find it very hard to believe that, unless the person is suffering so much that he has already hit rock bottom and simply feels that he can't continue living the double life anymore, the chances of opening up through the initiation of someone else, rather than of his own accord, are very slim almost nill.

Yes I agree that if even one person does open up and is led onto the path of recovery through this it may be worth it, but I wouldn't give too much to expecting this to be a "working" method.

P.S. Don't try to prove that people are looking to open up, from the fact that they are just dying

to "spill their guts", [and exclaim how "relieved they feel"] here on GYE - This is ONLY, [as I have pointed out at length in another thread], ONLY because the GYE forum is a safe "hiding place" from where they can "get the best of both worlds" by relieving themselves of the pressures of their "secrets" while **still being able to hide** behind an alias and behind the safety of their computers.* (I repeat, this includes myself, and all others who are true enough to themselves to admit this. (credit for the "revelation" of this truth to myself, goes to DOV)).

*I'm not disparaging the great *toeles* which can be taken from GYE, and I owe GYE tremendous hakaras hatov, for being the wagon on which I am presently riding along the recovery road, I was just making a point in context.

May we all be Zoche to see the kiyum of the possuk

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2. I definitely do agree with **Zemiros Shabbos**" that:

Its a good idea to have rabbonim be more familiar with the reality of addicts and what they face and the options open to them.

It seems that there is widespread ignorance and misconceptions... among rabonim, madrichim, and mashgichim etc. (especially in the frum/yeshivish/chasidish sectors concerning these issues.

I have experienced this myself, the only time I ever approached a rebbee of mine, way back in my late teens, after feeling that "I need help desperately!", and the response I got was "You need to learn what the seforim say about the the seriousness of this aveira and also the seforim which give "eitzos" on how to work on shmiras haeinayim etc. and you will get chizuk from them". I think it's pretty obvious how lacking this advice was to someone in my situation.

May we all be Zoche to ????? ???? ???? ?? ?' ???? ??? ??????

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by cordnoy - 20 May 2014 17:24

I appreciate everyone's comments on this.

I have heard questions regardin' my statistics...nobody really knows.

Others have said that it will ruin the relationship with the Rav...I am not convinced (if done properly).

The biggest argument has been that it would not work, and that my friends, is precisely the point.

We are all livin' in that hidin' world, and we cannot fathom such an outright approach workin', but perhaps, this proactiveness from the rabbinate can remove some of the stigma and slowly inch people out of the closet.

And to the last point, yes, there are many on this site who are still in hidin' and usin' this forum as a ventin' place, and one where they can be helped somewhat and one where they can help others, BUT...again thanks to Dov and others, there are MANY on this site who now are completely open to each other. Many of us know each other's names, our places of residence, our families, our private email addresses and texts, our work day, our kallah's names (ahem). We dance, rejoice and participate at each others simchos and happy occasions and we genuinely share their sorrow and anguish when they are goin' thru a tough time. Ask any of us if we would have opened up the first time to someone else and the answer would be a resoundin' "no!" But slowly but surely (and the Rabbi would have a somewhat difficult task at first, cuz' he doesn't have the "get to know you" factor first thru an anonymous forum, but the ice could be broken.

Let's face it: I'm no navi and my father isn't one either, but the sexual revolution aint gettin' any better, and we better do somethin' to make this recovery process more open, less stigmatized and easier to access.

Once again, thank to ya' all for all that ya' do for others and for myself. I know since openin' up, I am a changed person...I have ways to go mind you...I'm far away from ultimate recovery (I'd like nothin' better than to finish this post and go to a site where celebrities are displayed in all their grandeur), but like I and others have said many times over....who gives a @#\$% about ultimate recovery? I only care about right now, and with God's help, I will be recovered for this exact moment.

b'hatzlachah

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)

Posted by TehillimZugger - 20 May 2014 19:15

ahem, Cordnoy? Chani Friedstein, ahem, thanks for askin'

Shivisi:

You're ri(g)ht. Still the point is removin' the sti(g)ma. If the rabbi gives a warm drasha, open inviting. And then calls you aside and says he's always available and asks directly and says that you don't have to be afraid to chan(g)e your mind thou(g)h he's not chas veshalom choished you. It mi(g)ht work

Warning: Spoiler!

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by Machshovo Tova - 20 May 2014 19:57

If this letter is to be sent to all RRR's, then English is not enough. Yiddish and Hebrew versions are also necessary.

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by TehillimZugger - 20 May 2014 20:17

[Machshovo Tova wrote:](#)

If this letter is to be sent to all RRR's, then English is not enough. Yiddish and Hebrew versions are also necessary.

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Re: Dear R,R & R (Rabbi, Rav & Rebbe)
Posted by cordnoy - 20 May 2014 23:06

[TehillimZugger wrote:](#)

it's cordnoy's thread g'otta g'o easy on the g's

This is Klal Yisroel's thread.

Warning: Spoiler!

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