

My first Attempt at winning

Posted by musicman - 18 May 2011 16:12

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I fought last night, and I won.

It's a small victory, but it's a victory, and it's marks the first time I have meaningfully fought and emerged victorious. And now I have a place to show it off :D

I haven't really started doing any of the proscribed methods and procedures discussed here. I'm really just testing my own willpower and seeing how far I can push myself before something breaks. I don't have any high standards yet. Right now, every thought-battle victory is a life-changing one, and I'm just gonna take this as far as it will go. I don't expect to succeed indefinitely; I won't pretend that the reality of my situation is so simple, and that sheer willpower has a fighting chance in this battle. I'm measuring the enemy, so to speak.

On a side note, there is a show on TV that my wife is fond of (read: I have to watch) called The Biggest Loser. For those who aren't familiar, it's a competition/rehab program for morbidly obese people who are desperate to not only lose weight, but to change their entire self-destructive attitude and live a better life. Most of the show is nonsense, marketing and exploitation of a mental illness, but the season is coming to an end, and the results are nothing short of inspiring. In 5 months, people who were quite literally on the verge of death or serious illness, who couldn't stop their downward and destructive spiral of behavior, who finally decided to reach out for help, emerge as changed people. And the changes are not only physical. If it was just physical, the show would just be a temple hedonism and a typical western idolization of physicality and the "perfect body". The most impressive and compelling changes that take place are the mental and emotional shifts, from broken, depressed, helpless, self-pity cases, to confident, happy, optimistic, and full of excitement to begin their lives anew. It's inspiring to hear these people talk about the way they feel, and not hear the words "and I look great!" Instead, you hear "Thank you for showing me that I can face challenges and defeat my own unhealthy desires," "Thank you for giving me my life back", "Thank you for saving my life". You can see the pure joy of leaving behind a back-monkey and looking ahead.

I want that feeling of freedom, and I want it badly. Now, I have to prove it.

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Re: My first Attempt at winning

Posted by heuni memass - 18 May 2011 16:34

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Keep it up my friend. Your heading in the right direction.

Keep on posting...

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by alexeliezer - 18 May 2011 17:25

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Shteig on, brother. We're rooting for you!

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 18 May 2011 17:43

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beautiful!

as the saying goes: today is the first day of the rest of your life

please keep us in the loop

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 18 May 2011 17:47

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[musicman wrote on 18 May 2011 16:12:](#)

In 5 months, people who were quite literally on the verge of death or serious illness, who couldn't stop their downward and destructive spiral of behavior, who finally decided to reach out for help, emerge as changed people. And the changes are not only physical. If it was just physical, the show would just be a temple hedonism and a typical western idolization of physicality and the "perfect body". The most impressive and compelling changes that take place are the mental and emotional shifts, from broken, depressed, helpless, self-pity cases, to confident, happy, optimistic, and full of excitement to begin their lives anew. It's inspiring to hear these people talk about the way they feel, and not hear the words "and I look great!" Instead, you hear "Thank you for showing me that I can face challenges and defeat my own unhealthy desires," "Thank you for giving me my life back", "Thank you for saving my life". You can see the pure joy of leaving behind a back-monkey and looking ahead.

thanks for sharing that. such wise and true words. our society definitely worships the perfect body and that attitude seeps in to us to some extent as well.

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by TheJester - 19 May 2011 10:20

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[musicman wrote on 18 May 2011 16:12:](#)

I want that feeling of freedom, and I want it badly. Now, I have to prove it.

-Would you say that surrender and support were key to all of their successes?

-Trust in trainers/therapists/experts whom they trusted, and later on thanked?

-Did any of them boast that they did it themselves, and tried "*testing my own willpower and seeing how far I can push myself before something breaks*", perhaps in a staring competition with a cheeseburger and fries?

Just curious, since I have never watched it...

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Re: My first Attempt at winning

Posted by musicman - 19 May 2011 15:08

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[TheJester wrote on 19 May 2011 10:20:](#)

-Would you say that surrender and support were key to all of their successes?

-Trust in trainers/therapists/experts whom they trusted, and later on thanked?

-Did any of them boast that they did it themselves, and tried *"testing my own willpower and seeing how far I can push myself before something breaks"*, perhaps in a staring competition with a cheeseburger and fries?

Just curious, since I have never watched it...

1) no. That was a part of it, though.

2) Yes, definitely.

3) No, but I see where you're going with this. In no way did I ever say that willpower alone would fix anything. I'd like to know how strong I am, and what I'm capable of doing with a strong

community to back me up. In response to your "hamburger and fries" scenario, that indeed was one of the things they had to do on a fairly regular basis, though not specifically with a hamburger and fries. In a food situation, it is absolutely necessary to build up the ability to turn down items that are unhealthy when they are literally staring you in the face. There's only so many fences you can put up to guard from that specific Taavah. The same goes for material on the Internet, though to a lesser degree. No matter how many filters and gedarim you put up, you can never completely shield yourself (there's always living in a bubble, but that's not really an option for many). It's important to be able to control yourself even you don't have your gedarim, because they will not always be there to save you.

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by musicman - 19 May 2011 19:06

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3 days.

The last time I went 3 days without needing "a fix" was probably the last three-day yomtov (no internet access).

I'm trying not to let my confidence make me cocky. This was an unplanned and spontaneous jump into the fray, without any real gedarim or plans to mitigate risks. The only thing I'm going on is the fact that I have entire community of like-minded individuals wanting to see me succeed. I don't want to let those people down. Maybe that's all I needed this whole time. maybe I was just so alone in my struggle (or lack of struggle) that the only person who I needed to be better for was myself. My own Yiras H' isn't strong enough to overcome this particular brand of ruach shtus, I guess.

Part of me is happy that I've been able to pull off 3 days, and part of me is terrified that the Yetzer is just letting me think I've won, albeit temporarily. That part of me is usually right, and this is no exception.

I guess we'll just see how it goes.

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by alexeliezer - 19 May 2011 19:25

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Way to go!

You're right. The YH will try to catch you off guard. He's a master tactician.

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by Kedusha - 19 May 2011 21:25

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Great work!

If the y"h wants to interfere, you can make a couple of ground rules:

- 1.) You're only willing to hear him out regarding tomorrow (if at all). Today is off limits.
  
- 2.) Any suggestions to derail your plan to stay clean must be submitted in writing, with a \$10,000 deposit, refundable to the y"h only if you feel no guilt, pain, or regret after giving into him. (The y"h is known for trying to talk people out of the deposit requirement. Don't fall for it!).

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by TheJester - 20 May 2011 09:23

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[musicman wrote on 19 May 2011 15:08:](#)

No matter how many filters and gedarim you put up, you can never completely shield yourself (there's always living in a bubble, but that's not really an option for many). It's important to be able to control yourself even you don't have your gedarim, because they will not always be there to save you.

I tend to agree with you on this - my *parnosos*, like yours, involves full internet access. However, if I thought I were incapable of control, I would probably start driving cabs. Baruch Hashem I've learned *some* control... But having a third-party really helps (my wife, in my case).

Another thing that helps me is respecting my wife properly. I used to be a dreadful husband - not so much visibly (to her and others), but in my mind. I even thought that I was a relatively *good* husband, because many of my feelings and actions were correct. To be able to survive "on my own", I needed to relearn to respect both myself and my wife. I've still had some Internet-related "bad patches" when I'm feeling quite alone and bored/depressed, but have B"H

Congratulations on 3 days - 3 days is actually a milestone. If you can do 3 days, you can do another 3. That makes 6. If you can do 6, you can do another six. That makes 12. If you can do 12, you can do another 12. That makes 24. That's practically a month! If you can do one month, you can do another. And if you just do one more, that's 3 months! I found the first 24 hours the hardest... And also "danger" periods - travel/late nights alone. Make sure you have a plan of attack for those.

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by musicman - 20 May 2011 18:18

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This Shabbos is going to be a great one for me. It's only been 4 days, but I look at it as (almost) a whole workweek.

There's something very special about greeting Shabbos Malkusa with a newfound sense of honest sincerity and a will to fight. During Lechah Dodi, I will welcome Shabbos with my back dragged myself out of these (so far) straight and my arms open wide. I'll be able to say "I can look you in the face with confidence,

because I've decided to fight, and I know that's what you want from me."

I once heard from R' Soloveitchik that the definition of simcha is not happiness. Simcha is an understanding an acceptance that H' is in charge of everything, and that you are safe under His wing. It makes every mention of simcha in the Torah a lot more meaningful, and I guess that's how I'm feeling now. I don't know exactly how I've managed to survive the past few days, but I have, and I'm 100% certain it's because I've made the decision to really improve. It wasn't a decision I made to myself, in the dark confines of the mind. It was a decision I made publicly, to a group of amazing strangers who have my back, and with the knowledge that my will alone isn't enough to defeat the demon inside me.

I hope everyone has as good of a Shabbos as mine!

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by alexeliezer - 20 May 2011 18:55

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Awesome! Good Shabbos!

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by musicman - 23 May 2011 15:37

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Tomorrow will be my first full week of cleanliness in I don't even know how long. It's a good feeling.

However, I'm starting to feel the tremors of the inevitable and oncoming YH train. This past week, I've made a clear and honest attempt as stopping. I showed a clear will and determination to fight this animal of a disease, and H' responded in kind. I think the honeymoon period may be ending though. It's the feeling you get when you're on a plane coming back from a wonderful vacation. You're not back to your daily routine yet, but you already feel the pull an struggle of the life stresses that you successfully distracted yourself from for a week. That's sort of how I feel right now. It's been a wonderful week of clarity, confidence, and success, but I feel the old pulls and desires creeping back to their familiar spot again.



It's not a mental pull. I have no intellectual desire to give in whatsoever. There have been times where a stray thought of "It's not so bad" has entered my mind, and I have managed to fight those off (it's easier when you've internalized some of the many chizzukim on this forum). However, there's a physical urge as well. I'm sure many of you are aware of this one. It's a physical sensation, not quite like hunger, but more like the need to use the restroom, that \*needs\* to be dealt with. Intellectually, I'm aware that this sensation is quite possibly psychosomatic, and that the longer I ignore it, the less needy it gets, but that doesn't make it easier (and I'm quite obviously preaching to the choir here).

Aside from basic ignoring, what are some methods you all have come up with to combat this specific manifestation of our good friend and sparring partner, the YH?

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Re: My first Attempt at winning  
Posted by TheJester - 23 May 2011 16:14

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[musicman wrote on 23 May 2011 15:37:](#)

Aside from basic ignoring, what are some methods you all have come up with to combat this specific manifestation of our good friend and sparring partner, the YH?

Do you just ignore it, or do you ignore it and replace it with something else?

Well done - by the way. You have the YH kicking and struggling. One of the most inspirational chapters for me in Tanya is [Chapter 28](#): *And you are well aware of the way warfare goes—and hand-to-hand combat as well: When one side starts taking control, the other side starts fighting harder as well, mustering up all its forces.*

I.e. you are winning in your first attempt at winning. Beat **that**, Charlie Sheen!

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