

Taking Notes on my Journey

Posted by TheNextStep - 13 Mar 2022 05:01

Hello, I am TheNextStep. I have been a member here for a month and a half. I have tracked my 90 days progress (and falls) and listened to some audios, but have been nervous about posting on the forum. I haven't been able to get a streak longer than 8 days, and more recently, I've been struggling to get past 3 or 4, and so I decided now is the time to stop going in alone, and post. Well today, I am fighting those nerves, and am making this thread. As the saying goes, "The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, it's connection."

My main goal is to post here every day or every second day, and give an update. I think a couple sentences or more should be fine, so that it isn't too daunting. I will also try to surf and post on the forum more often when I have time. Anyone interested can read my perhaps too-lengthy backstory below. If you skip it that's fine! Glad to finally join the forum and write this.

---[Lengthy Backstory]---

I found this website over a year ago, but didn't consider wasting seed to be a big issue back then, so I never joined. More recently I started thinking seriously about the sin of wasting seed, and also about marriage and started dating, and learned that in many ways the habit can harm a future marriage, since it does not just go away. Having a good future marriage, shalom bayis, etc, is my major motivation.

I joined the site near the end of January, and started using the 90 day counter. I thought, now that I'm serious, this counter should be enough and I should be able to just quit...with maybe one or two falls. Well, the first 3 days were easy, but shortly after 5 I found an excuse and had a fall. Then, 8 days (my best yet!), but again another fall. I had an idea that, if I continued falling, I would add more and more to my fight against it.

So I got into the audios, since I can listen at my job. I decided to save all of Rabbi Shafier's "The Fight" audios from this site, and pledged to listen to one a day at work. These were very helpful, but on weekends I didn't listen to any, and tended to have falls then.

Once I finished them, things started to get worse again. Now my streaks were down to 2-4 days. I decided something had to change, I can't just be passive listening to audio (or watching

videos) about the issue. That is why I'm here looking to the forum for help. I changed my username to "TheNextStep" to sort of mark the change.

I think I've identified a major underlying issue for me, which is I am very good at rationalizing. For example, you'll notice in my story that I've focused on wasting seed. That was my only original goal, but for the first month or so I had convinced myself that I could still look at explicit material. Please don't make fun of me for this, I know the name of this website...haha. (I also found out today that "Intentionally viewing improper sites" counts as a fall, so I've been doing it wrong.) There was a second issue with...I'll try to put it vaguely...improper touching but not finishing. This is playing with fire for one, but it also undermines the purpose of the 90 day challenge, since I was still partially maintaining a bad habit. If you read all that, thank you.

---[End of Lengthy Backstory]---

Rationalizing that, since wasting seed was my only mission, therefore things adjacent to it (like seeking improper material) were acceptable as long as I didn't cross the line, was the major cause of my unfortunately short streaks. I will be entering this next step without holding those as acceptable, and properly counting seeking illicit sites as falls. Finally, I made a pledge with a friend not to do it for a week, and that I will reward myself with ice cream if I can reach that mark.

Tonight marks the first day clean with the new pledge. I will be back tomorrow and for the next few months to log updates. I am open to suggestions.

Thanks, TheNextStep.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 22 May 2022 16:38

Reply to Hashem Help Me:

I count it either way. Wet dreams is something else. I know one rabbi who gets really zealous about nocturnal emissions but that I am not interested in worrying about during this 90 days

count. But waking up, yes. I don't think I usually have that issue, and I've been getting over morning urges easier more recently so I think it's alright.

Day 2

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 23 May 2022 16:01

Day 3

Still going. I'm going to read some more of The Battle of the Generation and report next time
Still going. Some struggles before and after bed. I did re-arrange my room, I hope it will help. At the very least it feels more spacious now. I think something small did change though. I still struggle at night, but I found it's easier to stop if I start. Not that I'm less tempted, just that maybe I have a little more fighting power...? I am reminded of an article from this site written by Dov. I tried to find it again, but I couldn't, so here's what I remember.

Doc writes, it's no use trying to convince yourself that the addiction (whatever it is) isn't enjoyable. You are not quitting and struggling because you don't enjoy it. You struggle because you're tempted but you don't want to do it anymore for whatever reason.

That always struck me. When the yetzer tries to appeal to my desire, sometimes I remember that. Yes, I am tempted. Yes, a part of me does want to slip or fall. But also, it's not about enjoyment alone anymore.

I did read and get insight (inspiration, even!) from The Battle of the Generation, but I'll leave it

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by Vehkam - 23 May 2022 17:29

reading the book every day or often will definitely help with your fighting power...

glad to hear that you are seeing some changes

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 25 May 2022 05:32

Yes, I agree. Starting today, I will officially read or listen to something related to the fight for the full 90 days and probably beyond. It's one thing I've noticed makes a big effect.

Plus the writing us nice to read, and inspiring.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 27 May 2022 03:31

Back to day 1.

I'm not worried, but I am unhappy, in a constructive sort of way. The last few weeks of the 90 day journey have been rocky. I think it'll start to level out once I figure out a good system. The beginning of that is the vow to listen or read about quitting once per day.

So, today was a victory in that aspect. I re-listened to the end of the introduction and the entire first episode of The Fight. I feel like I only really internalize 10-20% of what he teaches anyway, so even though this is my third run through, it's still very engaging.

I think starting next week or the week after, I will add some optional extras to do as well, like posting elsewhere on the forum. For now, I'll take it slow and focus on the daily task I've set before me.

Finally, I think these posts will begin to focus more on what I'm learning and the work I'm doing rather than simply the fight. It'll give me a more positive approach I think. Something like that anyway.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by Vehkam - 27 May 2022 03:39

getting right back up! i would suggest that if you are only internalizing 10-20% perhaps you should listen to a short segment and then try to write down what you learned. i believe writing is the strongest way to internalize a concept. if that is too hard, perhaps you can use the book and underline/highlight etc...

hatzlocha!

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 31 May 2022 01:43

Thanks for the idea. Usually, I find some takeaway that I can start working with right away. I mostly said "20%" as a complement to how much material the rabbi gives over haha. But, I think either way you're onto something.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 03 Jun 2022 06:13

Well, I still live. Despite what it says, I am not at a two streak, I just haven't updated. For now, assume 2 means somewhere between zero and two.

I've wondered why it is that, especially these past few weeks, I've been doing far poorer than when I started. In fact, it seems to have gotten progressively worse. From over a week per attempt, to just at a week, to five or so days on average. For now, I am not counting.

I am simply on the floor, in contemplation.

I have come to the grand conclusion that my own mindset needs to change to some extent before I can properly continue, so I'm taking a week or two to just process. Not a break from fighting, of course, just counting (and having that particular motivation).

Processing as I read The Battle(...), processing what I listen to at work from The Fight, and the secular sources that work with this issue. Processing, as in integrating. Integrating, including trying things out, and seeing if it helps change the target behaviour. And, of course, regardless whether or not this brief retreat works, I will return to counting in a week or two at the latest. That's June 17 as a far deadline, though I think I'll be back much sooner.

Both the neuroscientist and Rabbi Shafier stress that without a plan, you're set up for relapse. Now, I'm working towards a sort of plan. Something I can start with and build onto as I return to counting. I'll try to continue posting elsewhere, if not here during this time. I've been meaning to be helpful elsewhere on the forum.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 05 Jun 2022 05:27

I'll be back to the count next week. And with a plan this time.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 07 Jun 2022 05:48

Today I researched how to make a good plan to quit. As rabbi Shafier said, it's essential, so now I'm working on one.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 09 Jun 2022 22:39

Alright, enough fussing around.

I'm back on the path. I think Hashem pushed me a little roughly based on an incident that recently happened in my life. I don't have a plan yet, but I'll make one as I go. Here's an initial attempt:

Habits: I have a habit, tied to sleep. And also, weekends are a weak point.

Disrupt the habit: I need to find something else to do instead around bed time. Maybe a list of options. I'll figure something out soon, for now I just know that I need something.

Defensive plan:

1. Both Rabbi Shafier and Dr. Leigh see eye to eye. The real test is not doing it, and the biggest hurdle of temptation is the first 3 seconds (or the "gel capsule" analogy Rabbi Shafier uses). You have...I have 3 seconds to pivot away from temptation. And the first 3+ pivots are huge tests.

2. Dopamine withdrawal: P/M are huge stimuli and coming down off them doesn't mean your brain isn't still craving. Need to find something meaningful in life to feed that craving. I have a few options, again I will update.

Offensive plan: changing perspective on desires...more coming soon, I need to research this section more.

Wish me well...whew.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 10 Jun 2022 11:30

[TheNextStep wrote on 09 Jun 2022 22:39:](#)

2. Dopamine withdrawal: P/M are huge stimuli and coming down off them doesn't mean your brain isn't still craving. Need to find something meaningful in life to feed that craving. I have a few options, again I will update.

Exercise is a great replacement. When one sweats and the heart rate is elevated, the brain secretes loads of dopamine.... When i strated out here, i joined a gym and religiously worked 3 to 4 times a week, plus i looked for other opportunities to walk (quickly), dance at simchos, etc. It BH helped a lot.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 10 Jun 2022 23:07

[Hashem Help Me wrote on 10 Jun 2022 11:30:](#)

[TheNextStep wrote on 09 Jun 2022 22:39:](#)

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I've heard that about exercise too! Hmm. Maybe I'll start sprinting, or get a bicycle. I used to love cycling, but ever since my bike got stolen I haven't been...hmm.

Update.

Finally paying attention to mornings and nights, I paid attention, felt the urges, and did nothing. I think last night I just turned on my stomach as an additional measure. I also lay on my bed before work and got another urge, much stronger. I noticed it was while I was frustrated, so likely there's some connection there.

I think it was Rabbi Shafier who talked about documenting temptations to increase awareness. I won't be specific on the forum, but I might as well start paying more attention and writing about that process here.

To another day! And, hmm the weekend is coming. I'll think of something, try it, and get back to you later...maybe I'll research about it a little. Or take a run :0

Edit: I will definitely take a short run on the weekend.

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Re: Taking Notes on my Journey
Posted by TheNextStep - 14 Jun 2022 17:19

Okay Tuesday.

I have an offensive plan, more like motivation. I decided to make a point system, where I get 1 for every sore spot overcome (morning, night) and every additional fight won at other times. I realized I eat a lot junk food so, I decided to gate them. I have to "spend" points if I want to buy something, that's the plan. Further, since weekends are a sore spot, each weekend day survived is an extra point.

Okay, so why? Well I realized (and you can read documented here) that I tended to fail the day or two after a reward. At first I thought it was the weekend, or that a week was some hard point, but when I first started my streaks were often much longer than one week.

This meant it was the reward. I got what I wanted, and then my brain was like, okay. Back to the habit. So here, I created a continuous system. Completing a week grants a bonus non-point reward as well for good measure.

Eh, it might be too complicated right now but I'll refine it. And I wrote it down, which is important I think.

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