

90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey

Posted by jmyers99 - 20 Aug 2024 10:29

When I saw this forum, I was thrilled, as I want to make a big push for 90 days. I believe after 90 days of abstinence, while still difficult, it'll be much easier to heal from there, as the brain's neural pathways have begun to rewire healthy connections instead of unhealthy ones.

Of course, it's easier said than done... but I believe anything is possible, especially with lots of effort, prayer, and support from others.

I'd like to journal on a daily basis and check-in on a daily basis. I'll report on how I did the day before, how the day went, and what I want to work on today.

I'm going to commit to doing this every day here on this thread. I need to do this either way, so I figure doing it in "public" on this forum will help hold me accountable, hopefully bring me words of encouragement from others, and potentially inspire others as well.

It will also be interesting for me to read this in the future.

I don't have a format for these posts yet, but I'll probably reflect on:

- How'd I do with my abstinence, boundaries, and self-care from yesterday?
- What went well? What didn't go well? What can I thank Hashem for?
- How am I feeling today?
- What am I working on now?

Today is my second day of sobriety since my last fall. I figured out a loophole on the computer that I exploited before patching it up. BH that loophole is fixed, but there's always a way around the technological blocks. Quitting isn't as simple as find the best filter in the world. It takes lots of healing and inner work to do this, but technology filters are a big step. Having an unfiltered device is like being in yichud with a woman, something even great sages in the gemara knew was dangerous. All the more so should we, much lower than them and with access to so much more, take precautions.

I patched up the loophole in a solid way and I'm getting back on my feet.

To start this journey, I'm doing several things.

1. I'm focusing much more on self-care and self-love. Giving myself time to just "be".
Having a more balanced and healthy schedule. Focusing on my good points.
Connecting more with people. Both here and in-person
2. Going to therapy to work through some past traumas and uncover why I'm so hard on myself, so I can rewire my brain and form healthier outlets for the stress/fear instead of turning to this destructive behavior
3. Having more compassion for myself. [See my thank you and goodbye letter.](#)
4. Posting daily here to reflect on and monitor my progress, and get chizuk from all of you. (Thank you!)
5. Implement a pivot plan for moments of weakness to immediately pull myself out of the issue instead of falling.
6. Putting up guardrails around where and when I use my computer so it's harder to fall

Maybe I'm taking on more than I should at once... but I really want to grow!!

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by stopsurvivingstartliving - 20 Aug 2024 21:56

Wow! Good for you. I find the 90 day thread very helpful. Wishing you luck on getting to 90 clean and beyond!

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 21 Aug 2024 10:07

Day 2.

Thank you for the support! Still doing well BH although only 2 days in. I find I have the most challenge after 7 days, 14 days, 30 days, 60 days, etc. It comes in waves.

Hoping continuous reflection and journaling here will be helpful. I'm doing a lot to take care of myself now (exercise, journaling, diet, sauna, therapy etc.) so hoping the trend goes in the right direction.

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 22 Aug 2024 11:35

Day 3.

Yesterday was a good day. There were a few points in the day where I had intrusive thoughts of porn, from scenses I'd consumed a few days prior during my most recent fall.

The good news is, I pushed them out quickly and didn't act on them. I've also only been using my filtered device in public locations, except when I need to take a meeting. I go into a quiet room for the meeting, and then leave after, to minimize the time I spend alone with the device.

Lastly, I also have been taking care of myself with consistent daily learning, davening, exercise, journaling, time with friends, work, etc.

Last night I was planning to go to the schvitz (kosher sauna) with some friends. I find it super relaxing and a healthy way to blow off some steam. Last night it was closed though unexpectedly, so we pivoted and went to a billiards bar with mostly men there. It was a kosher chill, but I had a few drinks, and also puffed a cigarette or two. I don't smoke, so I feel pretty bad about doing that, as it's not good for me and I don't want to start. I used to smoke more often towards the end of high school, and haven't puffed a cigarette for 5 years until last purim when I had a bunch... but since then none. I'm not so worried about slipping back because I've been around cigarettes and vapes so many times over the years and said no, but I can see how consuming alcohol makes me chase cheap dopamine further and hurts my decision making power to say no.

I don't want this incident of cheap dopamine to fuel my cravings further and hurt my decision making ability to say no to PMO now or in the future.

I also want to complete Jordan Peterson's future authoring program, to really nail down what my ideal future looks like. This will give me an "ideal future" to strive for. I'm excited to have this written down, so I have more of a reason to say no when I'm in the battle.

IYH I'll have another clean day today.

Thanks folks.

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by chosemyshem - 22 Aug 2024 15:08

[jmyers99 wrote on 22 Aug 2024 11:35:](#)

Day 3.

Yesterday was a good day. There were a few points in the day where I had intrusive thoughts of porn, from scenses I'd consumed a few days prior during my most recent fall.

The good news is, I pushed them out quickly and didn't act on them.

Sounds like you are doing great!

Those intrusive memories of porn suck. The good news is, those generally fade away pretty fast. For most people, after just a couple weeks being clean those will largely stop popping in to your head.

When they do pop in, the key is to not focus on them at all. The F2F has some good techniques for that. Sometimes "pushing them out" is tough and instead focusing on something else is smoother. But do what works for you.

KOTAS!

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 22 Aug 2024 15:46

Agreed, I want to work on letting thoughts go vs fighting. Appreciate the support here though!

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by BenHashemBH - 22 Aug 2024 15:58

Agreed, I want to work on letting thoughts go vs fighting. Appreciate the support here though!

Beautiful post from Amevakesh on unwanted thoughts

guardyoureyes.com/forum/2-What-Works-for-Me/411978-Navigating-the-ocean-of-my-life?limit=15&start=75#416861

Summarized hadracha from Rav Greenwald and the Steipler Gaon on unwaned thoughts (from his sefer Guiding with Wisdom):

(Copying the post, since it's from the baalei batim's forum and I don't know who goes where.)

Sometimes thoughts are brought out by the environment, like something you read. Other times they arise suddenly and without apparent triggers. Either way the result is usually sorrow and despair.

So how do we deal with them?

There is only one solution: to take one's mind off them completely. It is entirely counterproductive to wage war against them or try to push them away by force. All this does is strengthen them and cause them to linger.

Rav Yisrael Salanter says that it is human nature that the more you try to push it away the stronger the opposition in his soul becomes. Fighting them is the surest way to increase them. The way to fight unwanted thoughts is to immediately turn one's attention to a different subject.

Chazal say that two voices cannot be heard at once. The mind cannot concentrate on two things at the same time, so replacement is the best way to banish unwanted thoughts.

The Bnei Yissachar writes that unwanted thoughts that are involuntary are not a chet, as long as the person does not then dwell on them.

If a person feels bad about the particular timing of an unwanted thought, he should not take it as a sign that he is not doing something improper in his behavior. The Baal HaTanya writes that we possess both a nefesh elokis as well as a nefesh habehamis with compete for your attention. The latter is responsible for the unwanted thoughts. Imagine you encountered a crazy person. The best strategy is not to engage with them, rather to try and ignore them. The same approach works.

No matter when the thoughts occur, do not be alarmed or fuss over them at all. Focus back on the current avodah and the thought will vanish on their own. [This may be tricky, given the subject, but the idea would be to have ready the appropriate mindset and thoughts for intimacy and summon them to the front of your mind immediately and repeat as needed to banish the unwanted thoughts and b'ezras Hashem, in time to make it so the thoughts stop invading your mind].

The Steipler writes that a person who is nervous about the unwanted thoughts creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Steipler found this to be true in every case he counseled. Any special attention only leads to more confusion. Do not dwell on them.

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 22 Aug 2024 16:06

Thank you for this resource. Any practical advice on "redirecting thoughts" vs trying to fight?
What's the difference?

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by BenHashemBH - 22 Aug 2024 16:16

[jmyers99 wrote on 22 Aug 2024 16:06:](#)

Thank you for this resource. Any practical advice on "redirecting thoughts" vs trying to fight?
What's the difference?

Fighting a thought is very difficult. It's the 'don't think about a pink elephant' problem. Usually, you just end up focusing more on the thing you are trying so hard not to think about.

Redirecting is training your brain to move on from it to other thoughts. For me, it helps to have prepared images and topics to skip to. I think about the fire atop the mizbeach, I think about my wife, my children, and my Rebbi. I say aloud (quietly) shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid and v'hiyisem kdoshim leilokeichem. Think about exercising later. Think about a dvar torah you heard. Think about what you want to eat for dinner.

Don't panic. Unwanted thoughts are normal and at the onset, they are pretty much out of our control. Stay calm and think about something else, and don't dwell or beat yourself up about it. They'll usually become less regular the longer you practice letting them flow by and be gone.

To borrow the analogy from Hopefulposek, don't dam them up and try to hold them at bay - that can cause a lot of pressure. Let the water flow under the bridge and away.

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 22 Aug 2024 16:41

Awesome great tips thank you! I'll give this a shot next time and report back on how it goes

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 23 Aug 2024 13:47

Day 4. Had a great day today. no falls. Last night when I was going to bed I started having thoughts, but I immediately identified them as the yezter hara and I moved on. I slept on my side and that was that. i also had a sexual dream but I woke myself up from it, and I didn't allow it to continue. I went back to bed.

Today I went hiking and swimming in a spring with some friends. Had a nice active day. Now I'm

reading the parsha prepping for shabbos, expecting to have a good shabbos.

I'm planning to go out motzi shabbos to the schvitz so probably won't have time to post an update. I'll be back on Sunday iyH.

Good shabbos when you arrive there!

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by 138eagle - 23 Aug 2024 14:04

Great Going!!!

Keep Flying!

And Good Shabbos (and probably a Good Voch by the time you see this)

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 25 Aug 2024 08:38

Thank you 138eagle! Flying high right now. Day 6, still going strong. I usually fall after 7, 14, 28 days... not sure why, but those days I will have a sexual dream or something that stays in my head, or I'm facing the start of a new week and feeling low, etc.

This time I'm feeling more optimistic than usual for a few reasons.

1. Self-care. I'm doing more to take care of myself with exercise, social time, self-love, etc.

2. Journaling. I've been journaling about this daily, to reinforce my way and remain aware of my feelings, struggles, etc. It's been helping a lot
3. Support from this forum has been incredibly helpful. bli neder I'd like to be active here for the long-haul
4. Public, filtered computer use - I have a flip phone so I don't have easy access to P in private places, and while I could use my laptop in a private area, I leave it in public spaces, and only go to quiet areas for meetings, and leave when the meeting ends. This helps a lot. This is a guardrail I'm going to implement as a rule for the rest of my life, bli neder. An alcoholic having alcohol in their fridge, especially in an apartment by themselves, is a horrible idea... but if they're out at an event and people around them who know he can't drink are there, having a beer or two, he'll be much less likely to fall in front of them. i think the same concept applies here
5. Therapy - I've been going more often and working through the underlying causes of the problem, rather than just trying to "white knuckle" my way out of this
6. Positive thinking - Historically I'd get angry at myself when thoughts come up. "How could I be thinking this right now?! What's wrong with me? Look where I am? Will I ever heal from this?" Meanwhile, as I'm beating myself up, the feelings of isolation, sadness, etc. which cause these cravings are only strengthened, and then I start fantasizing about P to make the thoughts go away, until I eventually fall. This time around, I shut the bad thoughts down almost immediately. I do this by accepting them as good for me instead of bad. This actually started after learning in Tanya that the yetzer hara is just a test from Hashem that he so desperately wants us to pass. Like a king who loves his son, and sends him out and tests him with a harlot tempting him, but he so desperately wants him to pass the test, and when he does pass, he loves the son even more. But if we think about the cause of the increased love, it was really the harlot, as that harlot was the catalyst for his growth and is what enabled him to overcome his desire and come even closer to the king. So now, instead of getting mad at myself, when I catch myself in a bad thought pattern, I stop, accept that it's a test, and smile/find comfort in the fact that I have another opportunity to grow from it and come closer to Hashem. So far this has helped me... even at night when I'm most likely to fall in bed, and even after waking up from a sexual dream. I woke myself up on purpose and stopped the dream.

iyH I'll find continued strength to grow in this area.

Gut vuch everyone

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 26 Aug 2024 10:54

Day 7. Still clean, still going strong.

My therapist and I had a good session today. We talked about my progress over the last week, focusing primarily on my reframing and acceptance of the issue. I was viewing it as something so negative and gross, horrible, something that had to be cut out of my life entirely... but I realized, through learning tanya, reflection, davening, therapy, etc that it's really a way for me to grow and connect with Hashem. This challenge was something I used to cope with my pain as a child, and now I have an opportunity to dig deep into the pain and heal it from the inside out instead of the outside in, with real, healthy solutions and connection as opposed to artificial substitutes. I specifically started looking at it as a challenge Hashem gave me to overcome and grow from vs something that makes me so evil, worth nothing, destined to fail in marriage, etc. which really reframed it for me in a positive way. Now when a thought pops up, I'm much more quickly able to accept the thought, acknowledge what it's doing for me, reframe it into an opportunity for growth and move on. I'm only 8 days into sobriety right now, after months of 1-2 week streaks, but this time it feels different. I'm not saying I'll be perfect despite wanting to be... but I feel like my day-to-day between the falls is different. The way I'm feeling, the way I'm viewing myself, how I'm dealing with urges, etc. is totally different now. I'm also working a lot more on self-love, and being happy and loving towards myself without needing other things to make me feel good, like work, or learning, etc. Although I enjoy those things, I need to love myself without those external inputs.

My homework from therapy:

1. Self-love

1. Inner child work for five minutes a day where I'm loving and feeling proud of the little boy for all he's gone through and overcome. Going from a young boy with no Jews on the order of West Virginia to becoming frum, healing from so many things and growing, etc. is something to be proud of.
 2. Situations where I felt bad about myself and messed up but I'm still there for myself and compassionate towards myself anyway
2. Continue to accept and reframe the issue
 3. Put in effort and achieve my goals without using them as a measure of my self-worth

These are assigned to me because I'm a high energy, highly motivated/driven person, but when I push myself too hard I burn out and use P to soothe myself... so we're working on reducing the pressure I put on myself and trying to take it easy on myself.

Meaning, the P is a symptom of the problem of overworking myself, getting burned out and needing to self-soothe.

Overworking and burning out is a symptom of not loving myself enough to take time off, feeling like I always need to succeed, and if I don't, I'm not good enough, etc.

So really, to solve the P issue, I'm focusing a lot on self-love, the deeper issue here. I knew all along this addiction was a symptom of a deeper, emotional problem beneath the surface but I wasn't sure what that was, until now... it feels great to identify it so I can begin healing that part of myself.

Continued hatzlacha to all of you

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Re: 90 Days of Teshuva: My Recovery Journey
Posted by jmyers99 - 27 Aug 2024 15:24

Day 8 (yesterday) was ok. I didn't fall BH. I did have some thoughts pop in though. I didn't do as good a job as normal letting them go. I entertained them for too long, but eventually did get up, walk around, and call someone. However, I did also start looking into ways to disable my filter. Historically I've been able to find ways to do it. This time, BH, I actually locked myself out of the admin account of my computer and gave the PW to a friend. I use a regular user account with permissions to modify settings, so I couldn't do it BH. I'm sad with myself for doing this and I like to think I would've blocked the loophole had I found one, but I didn't. The good news is, I genuinely think I've locked myself out on this device, and my phones are flip phones without internet access. I'm feeling good today and still going strong.

I count this as a small setback considering I even went down that path, but BH my safety net caught me. G-d willing I'll have continued hatzlacha.

I want to make more time for meditation and inner child work each day, but I've been too caught up in work for this. I need to make a priority.

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