

starting my battle

Posted by hoping - 03 Jun 2009 03:02

I have just discovered this site two days ago and I think this is the first time in years that I really think that I can do Teshuva for my sins. I have been masturbating for 20 years and I have tried to stop countless times. Aside from my terrible addiction, I have been quite succesful in other areas of my life. I am what some people consideer a solid Kollel yungerman and I have a wonderful marriage. However, every step of my life has been tainted with my feeling that I am disgusting and that if anyone new the real me, they would run the other way. I have tried to stop in the past but I have always fallen down, often to a worse point than where I was initially. I one time made it all the way from Yom Kippur until Taanis Esther. That night I had a wet dream and woke up feeling so degraded that I instantly plunged deeply, falling to depths that I had not been to in years.

Because my addiction is not so strong, I have difficulty marking success with the passage of days. I would love some Chizuk from people who have dealt with similar situations and I think that I would benefit from some advice on hitting the bottom while still on top. I am ready to fight and I cannot be successful without the support of this forum. please help!

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by hoping - 04 Aug 2009 19:39

If you think you're generally good at resisting temptation, you're probably wrong, scientists now say.

"People are not good at anticipating the power of their urges, and those who are the most confident about their self-control are the most likely to give into temptation," said Loran Nordgren, senior lecturer of management and organizations at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, in Illinois.

The result: Many of us unwittingly expose ourselves to tempting chocolate or cigarettes, leading to a greater likelihood of indulging in addictive behaviors.

Nordgren reached the conclusion through a series of small, offbeat experiments done primarily with college students. The results may hold for the broader population, but that has not been studied.

In one experiment, more than twice as many smokers who thought they could resist temptation lit up a cigarette in a no-smoking test as those who realized they didn't have so much control.

Those who puff out their chests in the face of temptation have a deflated view of others. "They also demonize others," Nordgren told LiveScience. "They take a very dim view of other people who act impulsively, because they have this belief that they themselves wouldn't act this way."

The bottom line, Nordgren says: Avoid situations where such weaknesses thrive, and remember you're not that invincible.

I just saw this article on livescience.com. Sounds a lot like admitting powerlessness, no?

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by Kedusha - 04 Aug 2009 20:15

It's similiar to the concept of avoiding Nisyonos.

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by Dov - 04 Aug 2009 22:23

Yes. And I'd like to add that I believe with a perfect emunah that I can sit for a hour learning Sha'arei RMCH"L, gemorah, or Bnei Yisoschar (*after* asking my Best Eternal Friend to help me learn right so I get better and do His Will), daven a happy and tearful mincha, and still end up acting out worse than I ever did before within an hour or less, ruining my wonderful life - **if I choose to take a longer look** than He arranged for me to, at an inappropriate image I pass by. It doesn't *have* to happen - but it *can*. As RMB"N says in Kedoshim, the change that overtakes a person from lust is shocking. They'd **never** believe it themselves, because they *are* really good people. And he may not even be talking about addicts...ouch.

I also totally reject the idea that the very change in my priorities and perspective that happens as a result of *looking* proves that I wasn't really sincere in the first place. I believe many addicts do sincerely desire to stop but simply do not know *how*.

I also reject the idea that my insincerity is proven by the very fact that ***I took that extra look***. Some may disagree, but addicts are really very perplexing so I can't blame any of them for it.

I have no defence whatsoever from even the very **first** "drink", as an addict. I wish no schmar at all for any hisgabrus over lust, as I give the entire credit to Hashem. Oy vavoy for me when I start to take credit for "beating the YH". I speak only for myself here, friends. I have discovered that i really, actually, need Hashem's help for it. I do not need "encouragement" any more than I need encouragement to breathe or to eat (nu, I'll still take some chizzuk once in a while!). I ask for His help each day for staying sober that day only, and he gives it to me so far. I can't work

So yes, we generally avoid nisyonos as yidden, but for me, with lust, it is because I'm an *addict* and I know that the change lusting brings over me takes all my bechirah away. Very much like getting stoned. You really never know what you'll end up doing. That change makes me miserable, useless and pathetic and I do not want to go back *there*, cuz I'll die there.

Nevertheless, I still will, by my own power and w/my very best thinking. Thank G-d for sobriety today! He must love us so much! Now I think I'll sit down and learn...

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by hoping - 09 Aug 2009 05:35

I have B"H had 71 clean days. I do not have much time to post so I just wanted to update. for sobriety tomorrow any more than I can eat or go to the restroom for tomorrow.

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by jerusalemsexaddict - 09 Aug 2009 13:15

Me too.Minus the 70.And the 1.

Uri

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by Dov - 09 Aug 2009 17:50

[Uri \(JA\) wrote on 09 Aug 2009 13:15:](#)

Me too.Minus the 70.And the 1.

Uri

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by hoping - 14 Aug 2009 05:35

I must say that I have not spent much time over the past days thinking actively about my addiction. I find that I am much better off focusing on improving myself slowly with baby steps with the goal of becoming a different person; one for whom lust is not overwhelming. As Dov has written, lusting is essentially a self-centered activity. I have begun to make a concerted effort to do things solely for the sake of others. Some of these things are things that I had been doing in the past, like helping my wife, but I have tried to shift the focus from being something that I do to make my wife happier so that *my* life should be easier, to something that I do specifically for *her* sake. Once I started focusing on this, I was shocked to realize how little I do that is not self-centered. I am truly embarassed with myself.

On a more positive note, this approach of taking baby steps alleviates the pressure of any large scale goal and allows me to make myself a better person, one deed at a time. I do not say to myself "I will not be self-centered today", I just try to focus on others one moment at a time. This has been a really refreshing activity.
Very, very funny. Really. I think we are both seriously ill.... :

The one thing that I grapple with is the contention that I should not Daven for myself. I understand that it promotes a self-centered attitude, but I really do need Hashem and I feel the need to ask Him for my needs. How do I rely on Hashem without asking for His help? If someone can explain this I would be truly grateful.

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 14 Aug 2009 07:31

I must say that I have not spent much time over the past days thinking actively about my addiction. I find that I am much better off focusing on improving myself slowly with baby steps with the goal of becoming a different person; one for whom lust is not overwhelming

Thanks for sharing hoping. I have had a similar experience. try to do "small things" that make a "big difference".

By the way there is a great book that helps with self improvement by zelig pleskin. It is called gateway to self knowledge. If you are really interesting in getting to know yourselves and effecting a change, that is the place to go.

On a more positive note, this approach of taking baby steps alleviates the pressure of any large scale goal and allows me to make myself a better person, one deed at a time. I do not say to myself "I will not be self-centered today", I just try to focus on others one moment at a time. This has been a really refreshing activity.

Something that helped me was not to make an all day avodah (most people are not around their wives all day, anyways). Rather, I would try to go out of my way once or twice a day to do something selfless that shows my true concern. Also, I would find those moments of truth to help me grow. For example. My wife calls me on the phone to ask me to pick up groceries on

the way home from shul. I reach into my pocket and notice that I left my wallet at home. I could just tell her, "sorry, I can't. I do not have my wallet on me". But that would be selfish. I could tell her, "no problem. I just do not have my wallet with me. When I get home I will get my wallet and then run out again". But this creates two problems. One, being that my wife cares for me the same way I care for her, she will tell me to forget about it. And now she will end of shlepping out herself. Two, I get to feed my selfishness as I become the hero. (apply this principle with care. I can explain another time if you want) So, I opted for plan C, which is simply to say, "no problem". period. Then, after shul I get my wallet and go back out again. All with a big smile of course.

These are the simple every day examples that we can use to help us grow to become selfless.

The one thing that I grapple with is the conention that I should not Daven for myself. I understand that it promotes a self-centered attitude, but I really do need Hashem and I feel the need to ask Him for my needs. How do I rely on Hashem without asking for His help? If someone can explain this I would be truly grateful.

Firstly, don't forget there is a halacha called chayecha kodmin. You can ask your Rav or any mentor for guidance (or speak to berdichev). But, as far as I know there is nothing wrong for davening for your own needs. It is important to strive to be completely selfless, but care should be taken not to pretend to be selfless when one is still holding by selfish, where most people are. To think only of others, when one is not ready for this, can run a person down in the long run. Parenting books talk about this a lot. If we are always thinking about our children, and never turn our attention to ourselves, one can get resentful and worn down. So , be truthful for yourself.

idealism is necessary for growth. Just do not forget about realism.

However, you do not need to go the other extreme. You can still daven for others. And go out of your way whenever davening for yourself, to find someone that has the same issue as you and daven for him as well. This is what chazal tell us. When I daven for protection from p**n, I ask Hashem all the time to help all the yidden on GYE and the world with this. For three months I went to the Kosel once a week to daven for our Heillige Chaburah. I brought a list the usernames from GYE with me and recited each username. There were times, I was zoche to real tears as I pictured the yidden drowning for help.

And besides that, if there is a close friend or family member that needs your davening, daven for them. I try not to overwhelm myself with too many "obligations", it just simply does not last. But, I always take a few people that I know could really use that help and daven. Whether that person is looking for a shiduch, parnassa, just general depression or confusion. I will even daven for a particular person on GYE when they need help.

This also helps me be in tune to other people's needs.

So, bottom line; there is no reason to stop thinking and davening for yourself (unless a proper moreh derech has told you otherwise.) But don't become selfish either by only thinking of yourself. Always think of others as you think of yourself. Always look at the world, both within and without and ask where you can help.

And don't forget to daven for me. I could really use siyata d'shmaya now in some inyanim (don't worry, not related to p**n).

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by Noorah BAmram - 14 Aug 2009 17:27

So, I opted for plan C, which is simply to say, "no problem". period. Then, after shul I get my wallet and go back out again. All with a big smile of course. These are the simple every day examples that we can use to help us grow to become selfless

This is greatness!!

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Noorah

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Thank you very very much my brother

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by Dov - 16 Aug 2009 17:26

[hoping wrote on 14 Aug 2009 05:35:](#)

I must say that I have not spent much time over the past days thinking actively about my addiction....Once I started focusing on this, I was shocked to realize how little I do that is not self-centered. I am truly embarassed with myself.

Three points of feedback that may make this climb easier for you, Hoping:

First, let's all recognize that what you are doing is so beyond tremendous. This is Torah **in action**. This is what they mean when they say "lo hamedrash ha'ikkar, ella hama'aseh". Addicts, in particular, can learn tons of Torah (and what seems like real mussar) about chesed (means *mashpiya*), ratzon Hashem (rather than *mine*), and shiflus (my will, kovod, comfort, just isn't as *important* as my gut *tells* me it is) and still we can be amazed at the awareness we get about ourselves and the change we see in ourselves over time from simply putting it into *action*. This is making it *real* to us and a good thing to be mechavein when we say "ki heim *chayeynu* ve'orech yameinu".

Second, these changes take lots of time, cause they are **real** changes. And that makes them

Finally, the initial self-recognition I have when doing this kind of "work", can be negative, as you describe. But it seems you were not fooled. You recognized "how little you do that is not self-centered", **not** that you a truly selfish *person*. It's natural to be self-centered, especially after years of pleasing ourselves with lust and mas++ - but now *you* are going *up* the ladder. Your *direction* is toward giving. *That makes all the difference, really*. When chazal say that it was as though klal yisroel brought the korban pesach on the *10th* when they just went to *collect* the animals(Rashi there), they mean just this, I think. **In this respect, the *direction you take* defines you much more than where you are coming from does.** So, again, for me to worry at all about how selfish and self-centered I am is just another way to comfortably slip back into my selfish and sel-centered thinking. Yow! How tricky. But this is what makes real life so

a really refreshing activity
oh, yezz!

The one thing that I grapple with is the contention that I should not Daven for myself. I understand that it promotes a self-centered attitude, but I really do need Hashem and I feel the need to ask Him for my needs. How do I rely on Hashem without asking for His help? If someone can explain this I would be truly grateful.
This is a langeh arichus (my middle name, perhaps!). But here goes, be"H:

It's not that the etzem *davening for myself* is bad for me, but that it is an exercise of the wrong muscle. it is still a good thing, just not what I really need most. I need to be outward focused. As Reb Yaakov wrote, it needs to be tempered in a realistic way. Practically speaking, this attitude explains a chazal that is, I believe, addressing the basic outward tefillah attitude, but of course, for *average* people (I tweak these things for an addict like me and need a lot of syata dishmaya to do that!): We all know "One who davens for his friend (first), will be answered *first*." What does Hashem want from us? To daven for our friends first so that we are answered earlier? To "use" our friends' tzores for quicker service? That can't be what is going on here. It seems to me that they are just telling us like it is. People, even really great people, tend to be rather selfishly motivated. It is even OK sometimes, as was said above: "Chayecha kodmin". For an addict, though, this is *not* so simple. Per all tikkun hamiddos hadracha in the seforim, we need to go a bit toward the self-*less* extreme in order to get better. I feel this is obvious, though admit it's difficult to apply. Chazal are showing us that Hashem wants us to *use our very selfishness to work on our selfishness*! It's actually genius. It's the way to start. The next "stage" is truly being focused on my fellows' needs, and "if I'm answered first, so be it, that's *Hashem's* business, not mine".

As far as *not* asking Hashem for my needs at all, well, I admit it's rather extreme. I ask Hashem for my needs all the time, but I ask Him for them so I can be a better father, husband, yid for him, to help others, not make a chillul Shemo c"v, etc. But the key is to really try and be honest about it. If we can't ask for our needs for these *reasons*, the honest thing to do (which is really just as good, *I* think) is to ask for our needs and ask hashem to help us **want** to ask for them for a *giving* goal, one day. Nu. It's the direction you are going that matters most, not where you are nor where you are coming from....

And you are obviously going UP!

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Re: starting my battle
Posted by hoping - 16 Aug 2009 20:21

Thank you Yakov and Dov for your responses. They were very insightful.

What has been particularly enlightening for me is the different ways I can approach 'selfless' acts. I have always been considered (by others and by myself) to be a caring person. I would never have been called selfish by others. That is why it was such a shock to me when I realized (thank you,Dov!) that acting out is essentially a selfish activity. I could not understand my own underlying nature. I decided to try a proactive approach to focusing on others. Instead of offering help to someone when I felt it was needed (which is reactive), I consciously decide to think about one individual and find something that I can do solely for that individual's benefit. It is through this activity that I realized that all of my reactive selflessness is ultimately geared towards fulfilling **my personal feeling** that I should care about others. While I do not think that it is bad to do this, it ultimately turns all of my outward activity inward. My new proactive approach is less selfish on a much more honest level. This is what I meant when i wrote that I had been doing hardly anything for completely selfless reasons.

The reactive nature leaves me feeling resentful when I force myself to do too much for others, whereas the proactive approach has been much more refreshing. I am only at the tip of the iceberg and none of this activity comes to me naturally, but I hope that eventually my mind will follow my actions.

With regard to Tefilla, I can't afford to take away any motivation that I have for Davening at this time. Tefilla is one area where I am particularly inconsistent and my personal needs are a big motivator. I think that for the time being I will just add a Tefeilla that I should be Zoche to reach a point when others' needs are more important to me than my own.

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by hoping - 17 Aug 2009 20:21

I feel that I must say how excited I am about the explosion of activity on the forum. Brov Am Hadrass Melech. For the past few months I have been hoping that more people would hear about this wonderful Makom Kadosh and I am truly thrilled to be joined by so many others.

Now if only we could get the message out in public.....

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by Dov - 17 Aug 2009 23:10

...now if that isn't thinking about others, I don't know what *is*!

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Re: starting my battle

Posted by 7yipol - 18 Aug 2009 10:11

How about some of the silent eavesdroppers hiding in the corners coming forward and joining us in honor of Elul?

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