

Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 13 Jul 2009 21:08

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I'm new to this forum, but not new to this struggle. I signed up to the weekly E-mail lists a few months ago. I often just glance at them, as I'm trying not to spend so much time reading E-mails. But, even with this, I have gotten chizuk through the themes that keep repeating themselves.

I grew up secular, but did Teshuva in college--I came to Yeshiva in Israel and never left. Now I'm married with five children (our oldest is eight and our youngest is a month old).

I was in the habit of staring at girls, I remember even in nursery school. I just liked the way they looked. Things got worse when I was 10 or 11. My sisters had a "facts of life" book with indecent pictures and crooked ideas, and I found it. It described Mast... as a fun thing to do, and so I followed the instructions. I've been stuck ever since.

I was a member of a shul youth group around the age of my bar-mitzvah. The youth group leader gained my trust very early on, and I could discuss anything with him. Luckily, I learned early on that mast... is wrong. I've been fighting it ever since, sometimes more successfully and sometimes less so. I think now I go two or three months clean, and then I tend to trip up a few times close together. I always feel that the yeitzer hara tricked me, and somehow it's strategy was different than last time. Also, I view it as tripping up for one "phase," instead of multiple times. So, I manage not to get too depressed about it, and can pick myself up again pretty quickly.

I would like to be able to stop altogether. But, I am more concerned with controlling my eyes. I feel that it is impossible to walk down the street without taking a look at every woman along the way. I think the trickiest part is that, in my neighborhood, everyone is dressed so tznius that it's hard to feel that I'm really doing anything wrong.

Besides that, I slip up every once in a while with the internet--probably a few times a year. But then, I feel that I was somehow outsmarted again by my Yeitzer. I wasn't looking for indecent pictures... I was just curious about such-and-such an actress... I wasn't expecting to find such indecent pictures...

I see the progress is still very slow on my own, and that's why I decided to become more involved in this forum.

But, I find this is also a challenge. I think my own situation is rather mild, and I find that by seeing other people's stories which are more involved than my own, I end up getting thoughts instead of getting rid of them. Any advice on this point would also be helpful. Thanks.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 08 Dec 2011 15:07

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...Part 2 happened 2 weeks ago. I went back to that office one morning, and managed to do what I was supposed to do there. I thought, "I'm not so close to the Old City so often, so I might as well go again."

Once I got there, I was feeling awful. Was this an immature and irresponsible whim? Shouldn't I be rushing back home to get back into my daily routine? I had been to the Kotel last week, and wasn't I just being indulgent now?

I actually tried to call a few people to double-check if my choice was reasonable or if it was based on my addictive mind, but I didn't have any luck.

So, then I realized, I tend to think of choices as RIGHT or WRONG; GOOD or BAD. But, life isn't necessarily like that. Sometimes, there are just DIFFERENT choices. And, when all was said and done, I think my little adventure got me home about an hour later than I normally would have, and I managed to fulfill all the responsibilities I had intended, too.

AND, I thought, EVEN if this was a WRONG choice, from THIS MOMENT and onwards I can choose to do the right thing. I am done at the kotel and I am heading back home; I am not wandering aimlessly around the Old City for the fun of it. I am getting on the next bus, getting back home, and getting back to whatever I had intended to do at home.

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Dov - 08 Dec 2011 20:42

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Sweet!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Hashem Yaasfeni - 09 Dec 2011 17:58

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[Eye.nonymous wrote on 08 Dec 2011 15:07:](#)

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Hi Elyah,

Interesting stuff...Theres a word for it I think, its call being impulsive. I have no doubt that many

of us work with our feelings rather than logic, or our logic rationalises what we feel like doing, so its a case of the behema leading the master. That would certainly be true with a davar shelo kadosh-- but going to the Kotel is hardly a bad thing. The question we ask ourselves and drive ourselves crazy with is-- what is motivating me to do this? Am i diverting form my goals set for the day?

I find myself also going nuts trying to figure out my next steps sometimes. being addicted and/or as myself ADD, I suppose we need to be mindful of priorities and goals and not be led astray...out of curiosity or whatever...

hope that makes sense...Good shabbos

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 10 Dec 2011 17:10

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I had a major insight about 2 years ago which made a personal revolution for me in recovery. I was trying to figure out, whenever I felt lust, WHAT LED ME TO THIS. Not just, "well, I saw this woman so of course now I'm thinking of her." But, "What was I feeling--what was wrong--that compelled me to look at this woman in the first place? What was causing me pain for which I was trying to take pain-killer?" (for example, the disagreement with my wife. Or waking up late for davening.) THAT'S NOT THE REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT, YET...

I was sitting one day in the Beis Midrash and I suddenly felt an attack of Lust. WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS WRONG? After a bit of thought, I realized--I was feeling under pressure. BUT, I was doing it to myself. Setting a certain amount to learn each day, and then feeling all nervous that I might not reach my goal.

I was able to let go; to still keep on learing, but to enjoy it--one line at a time. In the end, I still learned the same amount--but I felt a lot better about it.

So I noticed, more and more, when I was subconsciously pressuring myself in lots of situations, and then I was able to let go (often). Intead of falling every 7 days, my last few falls were 7 months apart. I have not felt that I am white-knuckling it; I feel that my life has overall improved,

and I have been facing life's challenges with a greater sense of maturity, and a greater sense of calm. (I always tried to figure out what was the reason I fell, and try to change accordingly. My last fall, 6 months and 1 day ago, I realized that I needed face-to-face contact with other addicts--I was still too much in isolation with my addiction. I joined SA and started going to live meetings, and I am trying to make some effort every day to work the program. I now have a sponsor who I speak to daily, and he is guiding me through the steps, and helping me see how to apply the steps in all my affairs. It was the live fellowship, and the personal guidance, which I felt I was lacking the last time I fell.)

I think it was 2 weeks ago I was feeling that I wasn't in such a good place. I stopped and took an inventory of myself (step 4) and shared it with another fellow (step 5). Along with that, and a couple of writing assignments my sponsor has given to me on some other issues, something else clicked:

A central problem for me, a root character defect, is indecision. I did not pick up the tools to make a mature, calm, and responsible decision as a child (neither my mother or father were healthy role-models). When faced with a problem, I want to RUN AWAY or RUSH through to a quick and easy answer. I have very little patience for long, drawn-out discussions about difficult decisions. And, I realized that a normal day in life is made up of LOTS OF DECISIONS, some small, and some large. But, this is a deeper cause, a subtler cause, of underlying irritability. It branches out to all sorts of other defects--impatience, anger, intolerance, self-righteousness (my opinion is right because I am not equipped to consider your opinion), etc, etc.

Now, being aware of this, I am able to stop myself and say, "HERE I AM FACING A DECISION AGAIN; I NEED TO SLOW DOWN AND GIVE IT THOUGHT AND PATIENCE, AND EVEN PUT OTHER PLANNED ACTIVITIES ASIDE FOR NOW BECAUSE I'M NEW AT THIS AND NEED TO GIVE IT SOME TIME; I HAVEN'T BEEN MATURE IN MY APPROACH TO DECISION-MAKING UNTIL JUST NOW"

It has pulled the plug on lots of other character defects (and also on the imagined character defects of others, especially "why does my wife make such a big deal out of everything!)", and has given me yet another revolutionary level of serenity and maturity in my life.

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Dov - 11 Dec 2011 01:40

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Sweet!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 11 Dec 2011 14:28

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[dov wrote on 11 Dec 2011 01:40:](#)

Sweet!

I think I have a special privilege, as one of the few people who are zoche to get short replies from Dov.

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by gibbor120 - 11 Dec 2011 15:22

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Thanks Elyah, I can relate to a lot of what you wrote. In the beis medrash, I was always pressuring myself. I didn't learn enough. This one knows more than me, is a bigger masmid etc. I realized that over bain hazemanim I was much calmer because I wasn't pressuring myself to be like x, y, z. I was enjoying time off with my family. I noticed that back in yeshiva I became tense again.

As far as indecision goes, I have been listening to a lot of Dr Sorotzkin lately. (His website is [drsorotzkin.com/](http://drsorotzkin.com/) ) He says (as does Rabbi Twerski) that most character defects have their root in low self esteem. Difficulty making decisions can be rooted in fear of making the wrong decision which is part of perfectionism. Essentially, trying not to get it wrong, rather than trying to get it right.

I know that's how it is for me. I don't want to make decisions because I might be wrong, and being wrong is hard to bear for a perfectionist. I'd rather someone else decide. That way, even if it's wrong, I didn't make the wrong decision, so my self esteem doesn't get damaged.

The other thing he talks about is children who's feelings aren't given proper attention or respect. They don't develop a sense of self and therefore can't make a decision. I may not be quoting exactly right, but if you listen to his stuff, I'm pretty sure he explains exactly what you are talking about.

Anyway, the idea of getting right sized and being happy where I am right now has helped me to let go and not pressure myself so much.

I'm glad to see you are making progress. Progress not perfection. I need to remember that.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 12 Dec 2011 08:56

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[gibbor120 wrote on 11 Dec 2011 15:22:](#)

Difficulty making decisions can be rooted in fear of making the wrong decision which is part of perfectionism.

Thanks Gibbor! This really rings a bell.

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 12 Dec 2011 09:03

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I woke up late, and then, one thing after another, I ended up getting a 2-hour late start on my day.

There were so many outrageous things happened all this morning. There was a leak from the roof of our building and I checked it out (the Vaad bayit asked if we could because we have the best access to the roof), our washing machine started to short-circuit our electricity, we are expecting an important call from a certain doctor which we just missed (because I was climbing around on the roof) and we called the number back and the secretary said, "no, we weren't trying to call you," although somebody DID just call us.

Each challenge by itself, I think I could handle. It wasn't until the very end that I felt my heart drop. I was feeling really awful and, left to fester, I could end up acting out. I certainly wouldn't have any resistance to little triggers, such as the women on the street.

My wife was ready to leave for the day, and asked if I would go with her. I had to say, "no, I'm not ready to leave now."

She left, and I had to go make some program calls (I thought I'd drop a post, too).

I think I'm in a much healthier place now, ready to get on with the day and to be happy about it, too.



--Elyah.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by Blind Beggar - 12 Dec 2011 10:54

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What you need is a good kumzits. Bring all your friends.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by yehoshua - 12 Dec 2011 13:35

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[Eye.nonymous wrote on 12 Dec 2011 09:03:](#)

I think I'm in a much healthier place now...

I hate it when things don't go as planned and something keeps coming up, where is then my daily progress? My rutin goes down the toilet. I just get so upset and the one who has to pay for my distress is usually the one I love (it's vice versa also). However to master ones emotional distress is to be a true master, wait a Tzaddik.

What did you say to yourself, what did you do, to keep your sanity?

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by yehoshua - 13 Dec 2011 07:26

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Oh, I found the new thread - Additional tools for recovery. Thank you and all the best to you!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Eye.nonymous - 16 Dec 2011 08:00

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I am in the throes of a major lust attack which started some time around Tuesday and has continued through today (Friday). I have spent lots of time making calls, I have spoken to my sponsor, I attended a GYE kumzitz, I have been posting on the GYE forum, and in the course of my daily interactions with people I think I inspired a new fellow to start attending SA meetings, I attended a live SA meeting, I have been praying repeatedly for G-d to remove this lust from me, and I have done an inventory of my character defects and shared them with another person. Still, I feel I am merely keeping lust at bay but not having much of a victory over it. I have had some dangerous slips and came very close to falling and re-setting my sobriety date which is now more than six months (for the third time in the past 2 years).

Whew.

At first, I thought maybe I'm just thinking about recovery and about this lust problem too much. Perhaps I should put it out of my mind for a little while and get on with life. On second thought, I felt that something is festering inside me right now and if I ignore it, it's only going to get worse.

I saw that my efforts, my attempts to work the program, weren't making much of a difference. So, before I gave up, I thought I would review each step—starting from step 1, and see if I am lacking something.

**Step 1. Admitted I am powerless over lust and that my life has become unmanageable.**

Especially in light of a definition I heard from the "Sandy B" recordings (available for free download from Silkworth.net): The problem isn't that once we start we can't stop. The problem is really when we're sober; we feel so miserable that we can't help but take that first drink.

Yes, I have reached that point. The reminder is helpful. But, I think my weak point right now is with something else. So I continued...

**Step 2. Came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to my sanity.**

Here I had a problem. I was thinking now—isn't it my Higher Power that is causing all these problems in my life which is causing me to get all stressed out and which is compelling me to act out? HE broke my washing machine, HE broke the hot-water system in our building which knocked out our hot water since 2 days ago, HE cause my children to get sick which is keeping our children and us up late at night (which is putting a damper on the marital intimacy department), HE is the one who isn't coming through with the miracles to provide me with an easy livelihood so I can just keep on sitting in kollel and learning for the rest of my life (instead, I am now about to quit kollel and look for full-time employment), etc, etc.

YES, this was my weak point. My step 2 was faulty. All the moral inventories etc (step 4 and onward) only work upon a firm foundation of steps 1-3. Otherwise, they merely are empty, superficial, self-help and self-improvement tricks.

How can I rely on a higher power for help which was responsible for all my problems?

This was a tough question to answer. Then, also borrowing an idea from the "Sandy B" AA recordings: Here I am, about to look at p\*rn and about to m\*sturbate. I am convinced, 100%, that if I do this, I will feel better—all my problems will go away (at least temporarily).

Despite my hard feelings towards G-d right now, shouldn't I be able to have at least as much confidence in Him as I do in pictures of scantily-clad women? And, perhaps my problems are a result of my failing to truly put my trust in Him all along. I was willing to give this another try.

With that I was able to move along to step 3 etc., and I feel I have now gained a full reprieve from lust, just for today.

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count  
Posted by an honest mouse - 16 Dec 2011 10:06

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wow Elyah, thanks for that share. It's really inspiring to see the program at work in you. Wishing you a continued connection with the RS'O, a menuchas hanefesh and a gut shabbos!

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