

Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

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

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 - 14 Jan 2013 18:02

Today I am sober for 5 months.

On my thread, Big Book Study Thread, as we are going through the Big Book, we reached the end of the readings that deal with Step One. I encouraged people here to write out their first step, and to post it in their own threads (see the Big Book Study Thread, in IMPORTANT THREADS, for details).

This what I wrote as my Step One (in 5 minutes or less):

I've felt like an outsider my whole life. In nursery school I was teased by the other boys. I remember staring at the girls, thinking there was something "nicer" about them. I thought girls had some sort of secret society of their own, and I'd never be a part of it. But I wanted to be, so badly.

At home, I also felt out of place. My mother, nagged, worried, and complained all the time—she was usually in a state of hysteria. My dad was full of insults and criticism. I wanted to run away or die. I was abused verbally and emotionally; I hated myself—no matter what I did, I was never good enough. I could never win my parent's approval, no matter what I did. I felt confused, rejected, crushed and terrified; I got no love, affection, encouragement, trust, or respect. I

desperately wanted to fill this hole, but I had no way to do it—I never learned how to give love and respect to anyone.

So I went inside my head. I spent all of elementary school, high school, and college staring at the girls and wanting to connect with them. But I COULDN'T IN REAL LIFE—SO I CONNECTED WITH THEM IN FANTASY.

I remember in high school working in the supermarket just staring at the cashiers, practically drooling, wondering how to become a part of their life. The thought never occurred to me to ask them, "What do you like to do?" Instead, I sent anonymous love letters and anonymous flowers. I remember that these ideas used to enter my head AND I COULDN'T GET RID OF THEM UNTIL I FOLLOWED THROUGH.

From early on I thought the missing connection was sex—it was so glorified, I figured THAT must be the solution. One time, a girl I knew was supposed to come over to my parents' house for a date while nobody was home. I assumed we would have sex. I felt empty about it—I was about to achieve the ultimate goal in life and then be left with no further meaning and purpose. (Thank G-d, I was stood up in the end).

I started masturbating when I was eight years old, or younger. I had to stop because I got chapped and sore, but as soon as I healed I started again. When I hit bar-mitzvah I met a very influential youth-group leader. I could trust him and talk openly with him, and we discussed girls, sex, and masturbation. I tried for the next twenty years after that to quit, but only managed to slow down.

Also when I was eight, I learned about nudist colonies where people could live free and be uninhibited. Oh! That's why I was afraid to talk to people! I was too inhibited because I wore clothes! I imagined that living on a nudist colony would solve all my problems. I played out this fantasy by walking around the house naked when nobody was home, or at night when everyone was asleep. As time went on I felt compelled to take bigger risks—late at night I'd walk outside in our yard to our swimming pool without any clothes on.

These behaviors continued into marriage. During the week of sheva brachas, my wife and I went on a nature hike to a place with an outdoor mikveh. I don't remember if I actually dunked or not, but I remember that my wife definitely didn't want to and I thought something was wrong with her.

About two years into marriage, we got internet in our home. At first I had an occasional slip with pornography, and I wouldn't dare look at it when my wife was home. But it grew more frequent and more risky. Eventually our dial-up connection got too slow for E-mail, so we needed to upgrade to a faster connection. I felt like I was about to get sucked in—I had never seen pornography videos, partly for fear, and partly because our internet connection couldn't handle them. But now a whole new world was opening up. I was scared.

We asked our Rav about upgrading the internet; he recently spoke with Rav Twersky and heard that the internet is a plague that has destroyed thousands of Jewish homes. I was scared again, but stayed in denial—how can the internet really be that dangerous! I convinced my wife that we really needed it, so we upgraded. But I was reluctant to install a filter. My wife kept on bringing it up, so I eventually agreed.

THAT'S WHEN RECOVERY BEGAN. We found a particular website with information about filters (and recovery). I signed up for their daily E-mails and became active on their forum. I learned about sex addiction, and how the problem was really lust. So many things finally fell into place. I had been fighting a million separate battles—how not to masturbate in the shower, or in bed at night, how to keep my clothes on, etc. But now it was just one enemy—LUST! It was actually a relief.

My wife noticed my interest in the forum and E-mails and got suspicious. I disclosed my problem to her, little by little, and sugar-coated. She went through a stage of being furious—we had spent years in and out of therapy treating HER problem, but really I was the problem. As I became more aware of my disease, I got more involved with recovery—I joined an SA phone group, and eventually live meetings. After a while, my wife saw how much SA was helping me and she joined S-Anon.

Along the way, I've learned about the Restlessness, Irritability, and Discontent that underlie the addiction—the early warning signs of acting out. And, through the steps I've learned how to deal with these feelings in a healthier way. I've become much more available as a husband and father, and I can face a lot of the challenges in life which used to send me running to the toilet.

Sometimes I forget that I've done a lot of work to reach this point in recovery, and that I have to keep on working to stay here—so I want to remind myself of that. I'm a sexaholic, and grateful to be in recovery.

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by yehoshua - 15 Jan 2013 03:55

tnx for the honesty

i love the end of you post, where you write

've become much more available as a husband and father

i just read on chabad.org Tzvi Freeman answer this question *how to be a jewish father* and this basically what he said. Being there is what it is all about. With are whole being.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Dov - 17 Jan 2013 08:49

Thanks Elyah, for that review of all the important things. How nice it is to read someone else in this and see they understand my own heart exactly, from the *inside*. You are working a real program of recovery - which is (unfortunately) rare - and the good things that you continue to get increase over time...will never run out. A real life - a recovering life - is full of surprises (nearly all, good ones)!

Hatzlocha, chaver!

- Dov

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Blind Beggar - 17 Jan 2013 13:01

Thank you, Elyah. I remember when you gave over your 1st Step in SA. It was one of the most powerful emotional events I ever experienced. You are one of the biggest jewels in Hashem's Crown.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by gibbor120 - 05 Feb 2013 02:20

Thank you Elyah for sharing so openly and honestly!

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by mr. emunah - 05 Feb 2013 03:06

beautiful!

I can relate to the nudist thing! i did the same until a VERY close call (i was actually planning on going for a run around a park at three in the morning...

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by yehoshua - 13 Feb 2013 13:24

Tnx Elya.

Just thinking about that first step gives a calm feeling and feeling of respect. I remember how I acted out that day when my wife was on a business trip (the day I talked with you on the phone). I prayed so hard, that nothing would happen to my wife, because I acted out. Also a day at work, where I came to pieces in the small bathroom as I acted out minutes before. I was praying then, that Hashem is welcome to take my life, just that others don't suffer because of me...

Keep it on Chaver!!!

I have to keep saying that, sorry, but that night, on the phone, I guess you sort of saved my life. I felt suicidal, I wouldn't kill myself, but hey, I also said, that I will never act out again.

May Hashem bless every step You make Elya.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Eye.nonymous - 26 Feb 2013 22:12

I just wanted to write a little update about what's been going on with me.

As a result of recovery, I have become somewhat more mature and more capable of taking a more honest look at my situation and to admit where I am being immature. One area that I have found particularly difficult is finances.

My SA sponsor recommended I give DA (Debtors Anonymous) a try. I didn't really relate, so I ended up switching to UA (Underearners Anonymous).

A major turning point in my recovery from sexual addiction was one day when I was sitting in the Beis Midrash just learning Gemara and I had an overwhelming urge to go to the bathroom and masturbate. It didn't make any sense--I'm in such a holy place and doing such a holy activity! Why should I want to act out! I realized that, as soon as I sat down, I started thinking of how much I needed to learn and in how much time. I was feeling under pressure right away--and I was doing it to myself. I realized to let go of that, to stop driving myself crazy, and since then I've been more aware of this feeling, able to give it up, and as a result to feel more at-ease about life and, consequently, to feel less of a need to relieve pressure by acting out.

I still look back over my day and have this awful feeling--where did the day go? Why didn't I accomplish anything? Or, I have this feeling like I'm in a fog--what am I supposed to do now? I just drift through time like a zombie.

Another frustration I have is that I feel that my lack of financial success is just because I have made the wrong career choice. If only I would clarify what my dream career truly is and then make the career switch, life would be Gan Eden and all my problems and worries would disappear.

My experience with UA (fairly limited so far) is that the focus is more on time rather than on money--using your time in a valuable way, not just for earning money.

The constant feeling that time is just going to waste and that my life is just going to waste, I must say, is a major source of frustration and is often at the root of my feeling like I have to act out to feel better.

I have begun keeping track of my time. I can look back over the day and realize that, even if I didn't accomplish what I intended to, I still did accomplish things of value with my time. I have a renewed feeling that I actually have the power to choose what to do with my time. Activities that I have done by rote for so many years--such as davening and keeping Shabbos--suddenly have taken on a shade of newness again.

I have come to realize that I am not likely to find my ultimate fulfillment and ultimate career in a single flash of inspiration and with a dramatic career move. In fact, my life's fulfillment, at least for starters, can very likely be found in the things I am already doing with myself and with my life

right now.

I am starting to take life a little easier and to stop cramming my day with millions of little tasks that I don't really need to do and that never really get done and that certainly aren't my main priorities right now. I've learned to let go of these hundreds of half-done projects that, in self-delusion, I have imagined would be really valuable some day. When I'm working, I'm trying to primarily spend my time on tasks that directly bring in an actual income.

At the same time, I am learning to recognize and respect my own limitations--stopping for short breaks along the way to keep my strength up, rather than waiting until I pass the breaking point and pass out.

My outlook and activities regarding financial affairs did improve as a result of recovery in SA. However, I have found it helpful to be involved with a fellowship that applies the 12-steps directly to financial concerns. And the tools offered in this other fellowship, I have found, have also been helpful in keeping my SA recovery strong.

Just thought I would share.

In case any of this resonates with anyone, you can find information for literature and meeting schedules (including phone meetings) on the website:

underearnersanonymous.org

--Elyah

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by gibbor120 - 26 Feb 2013 22:36

[Eye.nonymous wrote:](#)

In case any of this resonates with anyone...

Glad you are doing good things with your time, and sharing them with us.
the part about learning in the beis medrash...

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by Dov - 01 Mar 2013 04:23

Oh, you meant the financial part oops.

Wow. Thanks for sharing all that. It helps to see how we can grow up from just learning how to live in recovery. Not a big deal...

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by moish u.k. - 01 Mar 2013 16:48

Great post.

What resonates with me is that recovery from addiction is not merely about stopping to act out.

Long term recovery involves an ongoing attempt at discovering the root causes of my inner discontent, which is what drove me to act out in the first place.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count

Posted by Dov - 02 Mar 2013 00:02

[moish u.k. wrote:](#)

Great post.

What resonates with me is that recovery from addiction is not merely about stopping to act out.

Long term recovery involves an ongoing attempt at discovering the root causes of my inner discontent, which is what drove me to act out in the first place.

And thank G-d that is not where it stops! As far as I can tell, 'long term' recovery is about letting go of the distractions to living right.

If I were walking around in 'an ongoing attempt' to search for ever deeper self-improvement or even progressive tahara, I'd end up just as screwed up as I was *before* starting this trip! *For I was searching and struggling for tahara during all the years I was masturbating my brains out!*

Our part is only about one thing: letting go. Not fighting, figuring out, or growing in kedusha, tahara, etc.

*Sure we will grow! Sure we will gain deeper self-understanding! Sure we will have deeper kedusha and tahara! But they are all **His** business, not ours. That is the whole point, to me.*

They will all be gifts from Hashem, on His schedule. My only concern and job as an addict is to live free. To let go of my privates, let go of my demands on Him and on people, to let go of my pride, fears, and entitlements (steps 1-10) - and accept with **both** of my hands the life He is making and building for me today. Not to 'manage' my life. That is the great ikkar, as far as I am concerned, and I cannot even get *close* to accepting life of life's terms, while on of my hands are unzipping my pants. Just as an alcoholic needs to get out of the bottle, I need to get out of fantasies.

And **G-d** takes far better care of me today than I did all those years trying so, so hard to 'make it'.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by moish u.k. - 04 Mar 2013 17:35

I was refering to Steps 4-7 (or step 10).

But you are right. The important thing is not merely about *Discovering* the root causes of the inner discontent. It is more about letting go of them as they become apparent during recovery.

Thanks for putting me right, Dov.

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Re: Eye.nonymous (Elyah) official count
Posted by yehoshua - 06 Mar 2013 12:54

Dov, thanks. I also needed to hear that.

Elya, you hit a very painful spot for me too. Every time I feel like m* when I am reading a book or doing some work, it's like my constant companion. If i don't pray (thank Hashem for the pain and ask for blessing) in that very second, then i am toast in the second second. Hm...

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