

My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness

Posted by grateful4life - 19 Apr 2018 00:50

Hi Everyone

Yesterday, by the grace of Hashem and the help of the SA fellowship and GYE, I celebrated 600 days of sobriety! Thank you Hashem!!

I've been on GYE for almost a year now, mostly in the chat rooms, and seeing that I've chatted with dozens of people here (even acquiring 2 sponsees through GYE recently), I figured I should properly introduce myself and give over my ESH (Experience, Strength and Hope) *letoeles harabim*, for whatever it's worth.

I'm a grateful recovering sex/lust addict, with a mainstream yeshiva background, married for almost 17 years with a bunch of kids BH, living on the east coast, USA.

My lust addiction manifested itself into extreme binges of porn, movies in general, sexual fantasy, voyeurism along with compulsive masturbation.

I was a "late bloomer" and only started masturbating 3 years into my marriage. It was a particularly stressful time in our marriage and after I acted out once I was drawn in and from then on, I was totally consumed by the urge and the enjoyment that it brought.

I was a "periodic" - on and off of sobriety all the time. Would go act out for a week then try to stop which would last 3 weeks, then fall and binge for 5 days and stop for a week and the cycle continued. Other than Elul and Tishrei, I basically could not go a whole month without having a serious acting out binge. Usually, I would start off with innocent pics or innocent movies or after an extended period it was just a "second look" that progressed and spiraled downward rapidly and then would continue to be obsessed for days till the wee hours of the morning, until it was no longer enjoyable. I would often have a dvd player, a laptop and a phone running at the same time and browsing for the "good parts" (even risking my life to watch while driving long distances). Then, when I finally had enough or came to my senses temporarily I always went through the following ritual - I would go to immerse myself in a mikvah and I would try to stop, usually by telling or begging G-d that this would/should be the last time I watch this stuff. Sometimes I was sober for a couple of days and many times it lasted a few weeks and then the depressing cycle would start all over again.

I travel a lot for work and in my acting out days I would often disappear for days at a time and park my car in some random parking lot, stock up on DVD's, also watch movies online and of course porn for entire days without stop, along with masturbating many times a day. I would watch until my eyes closed, sleeping in my car in less than desirable neighborhoods, and then wake up in the morning and start all over again. This happened numerous times. I was completely disconnected from society and although I'm by nature very sociable, even attending a social function, like a wedding or bar mitzvah and coming in contact with the outside world was uncomfortable for me.

I just couldn't stop. The only thing I thought I enjoyed and the only thing I craved was to watch movies, porn and masturbate.

I couldn't work normally for years. I thought my life was somewhat manageable because my abilities enabled me to compensate and "get by" but it really wasn't manageable. About 5 years ago I started my current job which was my 4th job/business opportunity in a period of 5 years. I have a lot of skill, business acumen and talent but I just couldn't focus and keep a steady work ethic. Prior to my current position I had landed a great business opportunity and became CEO and partner of a large business with 200 employees. I started strong but eventually caved in to my addiction and my business went to hell within 18 months. I was left with tremendous debt, losses of several hundred thousand dollars, shame and financial ruin.

As time progressed into my addiction I was progressively finding ways to make the acting out more enjoyable. Just the hours of time I spent searching for specific fantasies that would get me my fix, was insanity in and of itself, as being a responsible father and bread winner. **But I was a Sex Drunk and the urge for my fix was soooo powerful!**

I wanted to stop, or I wanted to want to stop many times so I would get filters on my internet devices that I used regularly but either I'd find ways around it or I'd have other devices within reach that were unfiltered so whenever I was weak or tempted slightly I would always cave. I always left "lust bottles" (SA equivalent of leaving bottles of alcohol) hidden around the house/office.

I even tried some drastic measures like fasting for 40 days in a row, TWICE within 2 years, hoping that in the merit of this kind of repentance and sacrifice, Heaven would grant me the strength and divine intervention I needed to stop - but nothing helped!

Eventually I went to a sex addiction therapist and he wasn't of much help for me either except that he suggested that I start going to SA (Sexaholics Anonymous) meetings. So on Thursday Aug. 25th, 2016 I went to my first SA meeting and thankfully, one day at a time with the help of Hashem, I have been sober ever since.

Today, I'm a grateful recovering sexaholic. I (and countless others) find SA and the 12 step program to be an incredible way of life, not just a method of breaking the cycle of addiction. I'm

now able to be "grateful for life", to enjoy even the little things in life, to accept myself and love myself with all my weaknesses and defects of character and to have a real and constant relationship with my Loving Creator.

Growing up I never had any normal or healthy relationships with my parents or siblings for various reasons and naturally my marriage was in shambles prior to recovery. After a few months of sobriety I disclosed to my wife and our relationship has turned around 180 degrees! My relationships with my kids is also improving on a steady basis. My work ethic has come a long way and my finances are in order more or less BH.

I still have plenty of challenges in my life BH that I now see as realistic opportunities for growth but the emotional pain and hopelessness that I constantly felt during my acting out years has completely slipped away.

FELLOWSHIP. I don't know of anyone who is not in a fellowship that knows the true definition of real friendship. I used to love social gatherings and mingling with friends and different people and thrive on that type of environment (probably was another form of escaping real life for me) but today those gatherings are no longer really enjoyable due to the fact that the relationships and friendships from those encounters are all fake or just on the surface. In contrast I love my SA friends. We all know about each other through and through and support each other through thick and thin. I can share with them the darkest secrets without being judged and they can tell me and sense when I'm not in a good place.

My recovery work helps me to stay spiritually fit to the point where I no longer need to battle with the urges and temptations on a daily basis, unlike in the past. I speak to my sponsor on a regular basis and I have 5 sponsees that I work with, who help keep me spiritually connected. My dedication to Torah and mitzvos has also improved through the 12 step program. On the irregular occasions that lust urges do creep in, with the help of my Loving Higher Power (aka the Ribono Shel Olam), I am able to address them immediately, surrender them to Him and move on very quickly.

These days I go to about 5 live meetings per week and spend 2-3 hours in daily actions of recovery (i.e. phone calls, step work, GYE chat, fellowship, prayer/meditation, DSR etc.).

I started frequenting GYE once I was already sober for about a year and I keep coming back here to practice my 12th step - to carry forward the messages of 12-step living and to give back and help others to recover.

I spend a lot of time with SA guys and through GYE - with people all over the globe. Through the GYE chat rooms I've had many inspirational and fascinating conversations with Jews and non-Jews from Australia, Portugal, France, Sweden, India, Chile, Israel and all across the USA.

Several weeks ago I met with a GYE member while visiting the west coast which was his first face-to-face meeting with someone in recovery and yesterday I had a long conversation by phone with a GYE member in the UK that is going through a rough patch.

Above all, the most gratifying GYE story for me so far happened just 10 days ago. I was schmoozing with some guys after an SA meeting at my local home group and somehow I mentioned about my having tried to fast for 40 days twice etc. Suddenly a relative newcomer to SA who had overheard my conversation, turns around and asks me if I frequent GYE? After answering in the affirmative he tells me that he is sure that he chatted with me on GYE about 10 weeks ago (I had mentioned about this exact measure of fasting in our conversation then) and that because of that conversation he became inspired to make a serious commitment to recovery and joined SA. Now he is sober for 75 days for the first time in his adult life, he is working the steps with a sponsor and with the help of Hashem he is on his way to a happy and free life that he never dreamed possible!

Finally, if you think my ESH may be able to help you in some way please feel free to reach out (don't be shy) and send me a PM here or chat with me in the GYE chat rooms - I look forward to it!

Thank you for reading my story and may Hashem bless all those on GYE and in the greater recovering community with the strength to live a life of spirituality, healing and recovery!!!

Very Truly Yours,

Grateful4Life

=====
=====

ute M
Posted by StrugglingHard - 16 Aug 2018 13:40

Wow.. what a story. I am new here and only on day 2 and I just found this website yesterday and reading your story was great inspiration for me.

I would like to add that I am reading this at work in the bathroom and before yesterday, I would be doing something totally different in here. Thank you !!

=====

====

Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by Realestatemogul - 22 Aug 2018 04:27

Wow this is truly inspiring!

It sounds like you spend 2-3 hours everyday working on being in a good place so you are able to conquer your addiction? What happens if you aren't able to do that much? Also did you say the program comes before family etc?

=====
=====

Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by grateful4life - 26 Aug 2018 02:28

[Realestatemogul wrote on 22 Aug 2018 04:27:](#)

Wow this is truly inspiring!

It sounds like you spend 2-3 hours everyday working on being in a good place so you are able to conquer your addiction? **What happens if you aren't able to do that much?** Also did you say the program comes before family etc?

You pose a good question and I'm sure you're not alone on that so I'd like to take this opportunity to address it publicly.

To that question I ask, where did all of you find the time to act out for so many hours for so many years.....??

I try to make my program of recovery measure for measure. If I went to all lengths in order to act out then I will do that for my recovery as well.

Putting that sentiment aside, recovery is about **slow** and **steady** improvement. Recovery is not a quick weight-loss program, it's a lifestyle change of living more spiritual and healthy ODAAT and growing more and more over time. As long as your program of recovery is improving steadily you're on the right path.

As far as putting recovery before family... just like on any given day I will not have energy to do my job and get through the day unless I have a healthy breakfast so too I can not be there emotionally for my family if my recovery is at risk. I get a 24hr reprieve from my addiction when I take my spiritual medicine and work my program ODAAT.

May Hashem give you the strength to always put Him and recovery first.

=====
=====

Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by moish u.k. - 11 Oct 2018 23:45

Just came across this thread.

Amazing stuff.

So happy it's working for you.

Perhaps we'll meet one day... as we trudge the road of happy destiny...

=====
=====

Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by grateful4life - 22 May 2019 23:24

Hey Chevra,

I just wanted to share with everyone that miracle of miracles, b'chasdei Hashem I've reached 1,000 days of consecutive sobriety!!!!

After acting out so intensely and trying to stop for so many years (you can read my story on the beginning of [this thread](#)) it was only a few years back that I had thought to myself that I would never live to see this day - I just didn't think it was possible.

I'm now 40 years old and I'm here to tell you friends there IS hope and IT CAN BE DONE!!

Today actually feels like any other day. My program of recovery doesn't change because I'm now in the "4 digits" of consecutive days in sobriety. The struggle, temptations and challenges are definitely way easier than they were two years ago or even one year ago and ODAAT I've learned to live a life of "surrender" and "service" so that I can live a life of happiness, serenity and having a close relationship to my Creator.

I've learned that I can't take even a sip of lust because it takes me away from my quality of life and signals that something is wrong inside me.

I've learned that naturally my addict brain will continue to veer towards lustful thoughts and when it does I simply need to "surrender" it to the One Above and sometimes pray for the person and then move on. Not only for lust but I also need to surrender all my negative emotions and deregulating or potentially triggering feelings. On many days I may only need to surrender once or twice throughout the day and then there are days when I need to surrender ten times in a day or more - but it works!

I've learned that isolation is my worst enemy. I need to share my embarrassing thoughts and actions with my recovery friends if I ever want to be free of them.

I've learned that instead of trying to control things, I need to let go and let Hashem run my life and the world - He does a much better job than me anyway.

I've learned that I still have much to learn and that following other people's direction is a strength, not a weakness.

I've learned that being resentful or judging others negatively only hurts *me*

and I need to surrender those thoughts and to use the steps to free myself of those resentments.

I've learned that I can not feel "ok" with myself if I owe someone an amends. As embarrassing, uncomfortable and "not right in principal" as it may be I need to ask for forgiveness right away without ever expecting an apology in return. I need to keep "my side of the street clean" at all times lest I want to get dirty from the "cars of life" driving by.

I've learned that I need to turn Hashem into a real "tangible being" that I can connect with. As much as I always "believed" in Him and prayed to Him I never talked to Him on my level. I always viewed Him as an esoteric and scary G-d on high. I now talk to Him like I talk to any human being and as if he's "down here" instead of "up there". I even "take walks with Him" whenever I can. I now feel His love and we communicate openly and regularly - not just when I have a "major request".

And I've learned that the key to happiness is being grateful and always seeing everything in a positive light.

I don't post on the forum that often but I do read a lot of the posts here and get tremendous chizzuk from them. I also have made many GYE friends along the way and have had the opportunity of connecting with hundreds of GYE members by phone and via chat. I feel so privileged to be a part of this great community and I look forward to celebrating many of our milestones together BE"H!

With Many Blessings,

G4L

=====
=====

Re: My Journey From Absolute Misery To True Happiness
Posted by Yidyidyid - 19 Sep 2019 00:26

Thank you so much for sharing. A true chizzuk.

=====
=====