

Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...

Posted by Dov - 28 Apr 2009 22:44

Your site was emailed to me a few days ago and I enjoyed reading a lot here, thanks. It is always nice to "meet" other people I can relate with and commiserate w/others' suffering.

One comment: After doing my first step and seeing my entire story in one place (and sharing it with others) it became clear to me that I was actually very ill. For years and years, I thought I was just plain "bad", at best pitied by, at worst despised by Hashem. In fact, I was doing severe aveiros and failing miserably at being an eved Hashem. I knew life was not supposed to be this way but always seemed to get in trouble and act on my compulsions. As a result, my emunah that avodas Hashem was really possible for me, was very low. That continued over ten years - then I got married. It got much, much worse after that for another ten years. I went to a few different therapists and spoke w/a few rabbonim, usually under the pretense of "having marriage problems". The real problem was, of course, that I had a double life and it was driving me crazy. Some of those people were a little helpful to me, some quite the opposite. I even called Rabbi Twerski (in 1991 or '92) who told me exactly what you report here: that I probably need a 12-step group. I couldn't do that, I thought, cuz my wife would find out (I couldn't hide going to weekly meetings!!) and the whole complicated recovery thing would "cramp my style". I was sure that the best I could hope for would be dying at a ripe old age with a big, giant, ugly secret in my safekeeping. About six years later, I finally hit bottom. It became clear to me that I was getting worse, never better, and that in order to take even one step further - which I HAD to do - I'd have to leave everything behind - my family, my self-respect, my community, the Torah and mitzvos, and even give up on any struggle for a connection with Hashem... In short, everything I defined myself and life by, was "up for grabs". I saw no way out and was terrified. I had been terrified many times before (usually by getting caught or fearing getting caught), but this was different and I knew it had nothing to do with getting "caught" by anyone. Even alone with myself, "uncaught" this life became unbearable.

I went to a therapist the next week, told her my story, and she suggested I go to SA meetings. I have been going ever since and have been helped directly and indirectly by Hashem - Who I now know as my Best Friend - to stay sober so far. My davening and learning went through a long cold period (about 3 years) soon after getting sober, but with lots of help and a few years of patience it turned a corner and now, like our marriage and my life in general, the davening and learning are better than I had ever dreamed they'd be. I often have some awareness that I am really, comfortably, living with Hashem. Of course, I still have plenty of problems and have ups and downs but they aren't as big a deal as they used to be, and there is a "background music" of hope, telling me it's going to be alright.

Here is my point: The traditional AA approach saved my life. I mean the AA message that I have a mental illness of addiction (to lust), a spiritual disconnect from Hashem and people, and a physical allergy (to pornography and much more) that will kill me, eventually. Using it in any way makes my life completely unmanageable and makes me useless to others. Many other people appear to be able to use it a little without suffering as I do. For them it is just a "moral failing", while for me it leads to a downward spiral of insanity and failure. Just like alcohol is for an AA. For me, focusing on my struggle as having to do with my normal Yetzer Hora was a sure recipe for failure. It made me simply try harder, use new tricks, and get yet more support. The message of

AA to me (through SA) was not about any of those. It was about accepting the fact that I am fundamentally different from non-addicts and accepting that fundamentally, I am not a BAD person getting GOOD, I am a SICK person getting WELL with help from Hashem. I had to accept that this disease had me completely beaten, just like cancer or diabetes. You don't struggle against them, you get the treatment. Plenty of people don't, and die in the struggle. The standard teshuva thing did me no good at all, simply because it is not structured for crazy people. This was not just a "Ruach Shtus", it was my standard of living.

I needed to first learn to get honest with myself and others. That took me about a year and a half of frequent program calls, regular meetings, work w/my sponsor, and steps. And it was still clearly a Neiss (a miracle). Just like Hashem cures people from cancer and other illnesses when the patient takes his or her medicine/treatments, I had to do the same and He did the same for me, and continues to do it each day, for I believe I will still use my addiction and ruin my life, should just I get uncomfortable enough with living. Putting the steps into action keeps me comfortable and sane (at least it has so far!).

I think some frum people, especially those who feel strongly about either beating the Yetzer Hora themselves as a supreme kiddush Hashem, or who feel that the answer must be in Torah if they look hard enough have a hard time with this approach. I doubt they do the same with any other disease. Most of what I have seen in this website revolves around using teshuva and mussar advice to beat this yetzer hora one day at a time, etc. For me, it was too confusing to mix mussar concepts with the 12 steps, particularly early on. It was toxic, actually.

I know that lust, using and acting on lust is not *exactly* like alcohol, as it involves aveiros chamuros while drinking alcohol is not an aveira, per se. Nevertheless, hanging onto the purely religious approach would have left me as I was for twenty years: looking for the answer **with broken eyeglasses**. The way I read them, the 12 steps are about getting my eyes (mind and body) fixed and THEN getting frumer, *not about getting frumer in order to stop*. In fact, I got very frum and the frumer I got the sicker turns my addiction took! I grew quite disgusted with myself along the way, to put it mildly.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying anyone is wrong, just sharing what worked for me. Even though the principles are Torah-based, AA, in my experience is a **sanity-building tool**, not a religious one. Because I am a yid, thank G-d, after I started to gain sanity and some freedom from the compulsive sexual acting out and lust-thinking I was able to start growing into the jewish man Hashem wants me to be. The steps are a tool I use to stay on that path now. I hope nothing I have written insults anyone. I hope it was helpful.

I wish all the people using this site hatzlacha and send my love to all of you, my brothers!

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by the.guard - 29 Apr 2009 06:47

Wow Dov, this is one of the most powerful posts that has EVER been posted on this forum. Seriously. I plan on using your story in a Chizuk e-mail today to 400 members, and I plan on bringing it up in an interview that I have this week with the Jerusalem Post for an article they want to make about our work.

Your story such an amazing example of how insidious this disease is, and how we must learn to become HUMAN again before we can start to be Jews, let alone **good** Jews. I have been emphasizing recently these very points you bring up here, in our daily Chizuk e-mails more and more. You would enjoy reading Chizuk e-mails 438-450 on [this Page](#), where I tried to convey to everyone a deeper understanding about how the 12-Steps work and why they are so basic and important in this struggle.

We can never know why we had to go through what we did in our life times. But after reading your story, all I can say is that I will make sure to the best of my ability to spread **your experience** to everyone else. This is one of our goals at GuardYourEyes, to help people "**Hit Bottom while Still On Top**" (see e-mail #441) by helping them understand the nature of this addiction and where it will ultimately lead us, so we can take the necessary steps to break free before we need to fall further and our lives start falling apart.

By the way, Dov, I am almost finished preparing a booklet of steps that people who struggle with lust addiction can take. It starts from the most basic steps, and moves on to the more extreme steps. I would like to ask you to look it over and give me your feedback. I also think that when you see it, you will understand why there are so many Torah ideas, Mussar and tips on our site. For people who have advanced to a level of addiction such as yours, these type of ideas indeed won't help, but there are many levels of addiction. At the earlier stages, a lot of the stuff on our website can be very helpful. (No one goes on Chemo treatment for a flu).

And that's why I am preparing this guidebook. It is easy to get lost on our site, because there are so many ideas, tips and approaches, and not all of them apply to the same levels of addiction. With the guidebook, people will be able to start from the beginning and move down through the steps we suggest there, starting from the most simple and fundamental tactics, and down through the more extreme. The booklet will also help people gauge how far their level of addiction has advanced.

Dov, please stick with us on this forum and help us provide insight and Chizuk to so many people. **We desperately need people with your type of experience on this forum.** I am so grateful that Hashem has brought you to us.

Welcome to the Guard-Your-Eyes community.

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by mevakesh - 29 Apr 2009 07:14

Hi Dov,

Your story is truly beautiful and inspiring!

I have been struggling for years, as you had, with attempting to fight this disease with yiddishkiet to no avail. SA tells us that our addiction is a disease and that self will, even if manifested from good intent does not work. We must give ourselves and our addictions over to Hashem before we can hope to recover. SA also makes no claims to have a monopoly on recovery, so we do not marginalize nor criticize anyone else's recovery efforts.

You are living proof that that SA and the 12 steps work.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for sharing this!

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 14+ yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 10 Nov 2011 21:50

Dov,

Your amazing journey toward Recovery bears witness to those whom you help of Hashem's Power, Hashem's Love, and Hashem's Way of life!!!

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by ur-a-jew - 11 Nov 2011 05:02

Amazing, wordiest person on the site and the shortest thread! Dov I love you, thanks for everything.

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by Dov - 11 Nov 2011 07:06

Dear Yosef haTzadik and UAJ,

Thanks so much for the chizzuk. Thanks for your friendship, and it is very nice to know you both a bit. Looking forward to more time in good recovery together,

Dov

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by sleepy - 10 Sep 2019 13:54

[Dov wrote on 28 Apr 2009 22:44:](#)

Your site was emailed to me a few days ago and I enjoyed reading a lot here, thanks. It is always nice to "meet" other people I can relate with and commiserate w/others' suffering.

One comment: After doing my first step and seeing my entire story in one place (and sharing it with others) it became clear to me that I was actually very ill. For years and years, I thought I was just plain "bad", at best pitied by, at worst despised by Hashem. In fact, I was doing severe

aveiros and failing miserably at being an eved Hashem. I knew life was not supposed to be this way but always seemed to get in trouble and act on my compulsions. As a result, my emunah that avodas Hashem was really possible for me, was very low. That continued over ten years - then I got married. It got much, much worse after that for another ten years. I went to a few different therapists and spoke w/a few rabbonim, usually under the pretense of "having marriage problems". The real problem was, of course, that I had a double life and it was driving me crazy. Some of those people were a little helpful to me, some quite the opposite. I even called Rabbi Twerski (in 1991 or '92) who told me exactly what you report here: that I probably need a 12-step group. I couldn't do that, I thought, cuz my wife would find out (I couldn't hide going to weekly meetings!!) and the whole complicated recovery thing would "cramp my style". I was sure that the best I could hope for would be dying at a ripe old age with a big, giant, ugly secret in my safekeeping. About six years later, I finally hit bottom. It became clear to me that I was getting worse, never better, and that in order to take even one step further - which I HAD to do - I'd have to leave everything behind - my family, my self-respect, my community, the Torah and mitzvos, and even give up on any struggle for a connection with Hashem... In short, everything I defined myself and life by, was "up for grabs". I saw no way out and was terrified. I had been terrified many times before (usually by getting caught or fearing getting caught), but this was different and I knew it had nothing to do with getting "caught" by anyone. Even alone with myself, "uncaught" this life became unbearable.

I went to a therapist the next week, told her my story, and she suggested I go to SA meetings. I have been going ever since and have been helped directly and indirectly by Hashem - Who I now know as my Best Friend - to stay sober so far. My davening and learning went through a long cold period (about 3 years) soon after getting sober, but with lots of help and a few years of patience it turned a corner and now, like our marriage and my life in general, the davening and learning are better than I had ever dreamed they'd be. I often have some awareness that I am really, comfortably, living with Hashem. Of course, I still have plenty of problems and have ups and downs but they aren't as big a deal as they used to be, and there is a "background music" of hope, telling me it's going to be alright.

Here is my point: The traditional AA approach saved my life. I mean the AA message that I have a mental illness of addiction (to lust), a spiritual disconnect from Hashem and people, and a physical allergy (to pornography and much more) that will kill me, eventually. Using it in any way makes my life completely unmanageable and makes me useless to others. Many other people appear to be able to use it a little without suffering as I do. For them it is just a "moral failing", while for me it leads to a downward spiral of insanity and failure. Just like alcohol is for an AA. For me, focusing on my struggle as having to do with my normal Yetzer Hora was a sure recipe for failure. It made me simply try harder, use new tricks, and get yet more support. The message of AA to me (through SA) was not about any of those. It was about accepting the fact that I am fundamentally different from non-addicts and accepting that fundamentally, I am not a BAD person getting GOOD, I am a SICK person getting WELL with help from Hashem. I had to accept that this disease had me completely beaten, just like cancer or diabetes. You don't struggle against them, you get the treatment. Plenty of people don't, and die in the struggle. The standard teshuva thing did me no good at all, simply because it is not structured for crazy people. This was not just a "Ruach Shtus", it was my standard of living.

I needed to first learn to get honest with myself and others. That took me about a year and a half of frequent program calls, regular meetings, work w/my sponsor, and steps. And it was still

clearly a Neiss (a miracle). Just like Hashem cures people from cancer and other illnesses when the patient takes his or her medicine/treatments, I had to do the same and He did the same for me, and continues to do it each day, for I believe I will still use my addiction and ruin my life, should just I get uncomfortable enough with living. Putting the steps into action keeps me comfortable and sane (at least it has so far!).

I think some frum people, especially those who feel strongly about either beating the Yetzer Hora themselves as a supreme kiddush Hashem, or who feel that the answer must be in Torah if they look hard enough have a hard time with this approach. I doubt they do the same with any other disease. Most of what I have seen in this website revolves around using teshuva and mussar advice to beat this yetzer hora one day at a time, etc. For me, it was too confusing to mix mussar concepts with the 12 steps, particularly early on. It was toxic, actually.

I know that lust, using and acting on lust is not *exactly* like alcohol, as it involves aveiros chamuros while drinking alcohol is not an aveira, per se. Nevertheless, hanging onto the purely religious approach would have left me as I was for twenty years: looking for the answer **with broken eyeglasses**. The way I read them, the 12 steps are about getting my eyes (mind and body) fixed and THEN getting frumer, *not about getting frumer in order to stop*. In fact, I got very frum and the frumer I got the sicker turns my addiction took! I grew quite disgusted with myself along the way, to put it mildly.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying anyone is wrong, just sharing what worked for me. Even though the principles are Torah-based, AA, in my experience is a **sanity-building tool**, not a religious one. Because I am a yid, thank G-d, after I started to gain sanity and some freedom from the compulsive sexual acting out and lust-thinking I was able to start growing into the jewish man Hashem wants me to be. The steps are a tool I use to stay on that path now. I hope nothing I have written insults anyone. I hope it was helpful.

I wish all the people using this site hatzlacha and send my love to all of you, my brothers!

Dov wrote:

*"I think some frum people, especially those who feel strongly about either beating the Yetzer Hora themselves as a supreme kiddush Hashem, or who feel that the answer must be in Torah if they look hard enough have a hard time with this approach. **I doubt they do the same with any other disease.**"*

Dear R' Dov,

I think why this disease is not a good comparison to other diseases is, because the cure to the disease of addiction is not a pop of a pill, or chemo. I don't know of anyone who has a deadly disease who requires medicine or chemo, will not take them, and will use Torah and Mussar as a cure just like they won't call a Talmid Chacham to fix their air conditioner. whereas addiction, as I understand it from reading articles here, the cure is steps in mental attitudes/steps and **working** those attitudes/steps seriously. therefore one can assume that maybe there are

attitudes to be found in Torah and Mussar ,Sefarim,especialy when we have Hashem helping us find the right sources and seeing that we are searching how to be metaher ourselves from lust,there is a glowing hope that He will bless our efforts.(im not referring to addicts who are in danger of harming **others**,or physicaly harming themselves ,meeting up with others ,prostitutes,they should probably takings meds.)

the sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh discusses a person who is walking in the street when he comes accross a woman of ill fame's block ,and visits her, after that episode he decides im not doing it again but when he approaches that block again , he visits again, although before he reached the block he was determined not to fall and this keeps on happening.(*sounds* like addiction),and the Cheshbon Hanefesh explains what happened when he reached that block and how to avoid such a problem.

thanks for clarifying .

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by sleepy - 10 Sep 2019 17:38

DISCLAIMER:it should not be taken from the above post ,that this poster is against the 12 steps, if it works for you, it works.

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by stillgoing - 10 Sep 2019 22:28

Sleepy wrote:

... I don't know of anyone who has a deadly diseas who requires medicine or chemo, will not take them ,and will use Torah and Mussar as a cure just like they wont call a Talmid Chacham to fix their air conditioner. whereas addiction ,as i understand it from reading articles here ,the cure is steps in mental attitudes/steps and working those attitudes/steps seriously.therefore one can assume that maybe there are attitudes to be found in Torah and Mussar ,Sefarim,especialy when we have Hashem helping us find the right sources and seeing that we are searching how to be metaher ourselves....

End Quote

Do you know the famous story of the lady stranded on her roof during a massive flood. She davened for Hashem to save her and a boat came by. She did not get on though since she was waiting for Hashem to save her. Then a helicopter came to rescue, but she stayed put waiting for Hashem to help... Eventually she drowned. In shamayim she asked "what happened? Why didn't Hashem save me?" To which the reply was, He sent you a boat and a helicopter but you were looking for something else...

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by stillgoing - 10 Sep 2019 22:34

[sleepy wrote on 10 Sep 2019 17:38:](#)

DISCLAIMER:it should not be taken from the above post ,that this poster is against the 12 steps, if it works for you, it works.

My turn.

DISCLAIMER:it should not be taken from the above post ,that this poster believes that everyone should go to 12 steps. Far be it for me to tell anyone what to do. If what you're doing works for you, it works.

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 00:01

[stillgoing wrote on 10 Sep 2019 22:28:](#)

Sleepy wrote:

... I don't know of anyone who has a deadly disease who requires medicine or chemo, will not take them, and will use Torah and Mussar as a cure just like they won't call a Talmid Chacham to fix their air conditioner. whereas addiction, as I understand it from reading articles here, the cure is steps in mental attitudes/steps and working those attitudes/steps seriously. therefore one can assume that maybe there are attitudes to be found in Torah and Mussar, Sefarim, especially when we have Hashem helping us find the right sources and seeing that we are searching how to better ourselves....

End Quote

Do you know the famous story of the lady stranded on her roof during a massive flood. She davened for Hashem to save her and a boat came by. She did not get on though since she was waiting for Hashem to save her. Then a helicopter came to rescue, but she stayed put waiting for Hashem to help... Eventually she drowned. In shamayim she asked "what happened? Why didn't Hashem save me?" To which the reply was, He sent you a boat and a helicopter but you were looking for something else...

true, but let's say there are two boats one of the mighty king of the land who happens to be her husband, and the other boat has some handsome dude much nicer looking than her husband and she ignores her husband's boat and waves frantically to the flirting dude's boat and hops on...

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by stillgoing - 11 Sep 2019 00:48

Im sorry, I don't see a connection to your mushel.

The Torah said it first. 12 step programs simply put it into a format. There's no chidushem in SA.

So if it says the same thing why not go to the source? Good point. Definitely first try the source. It's much more vast and rich. Sometimes though, some people need a special diet of limited food to get healthy.

If you want to use your mushel, perhaps compare it to two ships, one bright and dazzling - The King, and a side ship, smaller, with the same laws as The Kings boat, but built for the handicapped folks among us ,- may we all be zocha to reach the large ship soon

=====
=====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...

Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 03:12

Dov wrote:

*"I think some frum people, especially those who feel strongly about either beating the Yetzer Hora themselves as a supreme kiddush Hashem, or who feel that the answer must be in Torah if they look hard enough have a hard time with this approach. **I doubt they do the same with any other disease.**"*

Dear R' Dov,

I think why this disease is not a good comparison to other diseases is,because the cure to the disease of addiction is not a pop of a pill , or chemo.I dont know of anyone who has a deadly disease who requires medicine or chemo, will not take them ,and will use Torah and Mussar as a cure just like they wont call a Talmid Chacham to fix their air conditioner. whereas addiction ,as i understand it from reading articles here ,the cure is steps in mental attitudes/steps and **working**those attitudes/steps seriously.therefore one can assume that maybe there are attitudes to be found in Torah and Mussar ,Sefarim,especialy when we have Hashem helping us find the right sources and seeing that we are searching how to be metaher ourselves from lust,there is a glowing hope that He will bless our efforts.(im not referring to addicts who are in danger of harming **others**,or physicaly harming themselves ,meeting up with others ,prostitutes,they should probably takings meds.)

the sefer Cheshbon Hanefesh discusses a person who is walking in the street when he comes accross a woman of ill fame's block ,and visits her, after that episode he decides im not doing it again but when he approaches that block again , he visits again, although before he reached the block he was determined not to fall and this keeps on happening.(*sounds* like addiction),and the Cheshbon Hanefesh explains what happened when he reached that block and how to avoid such a problem.

thanks for clarifying .

=====
=====

====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 13:36

what im trying to get at is, it sounded like dov was saying that those who try to deal with it with Torah and Mussar are hypocrites,because they wouldnt do that for other illnesses.(now after you read this point , if you reread my post youll hear better what i was trying to say, sorry for not clarifying the first time.)

=====
====

Re: Hashem has given me 11 yrs sobriety but very different experience...
Posted by sleepy - 11 Sep 2019 13:42

Warning: Spoiler!

... I don't know of anyone who has a deadly disease who requires medicine or chemo, will not take them, and will use Torah and Mussar as a cure just like they won't call a Talmid Chacham to fix their air conditioner. Whereas addiction, as I understand it from reading articles here, the cure is steps in mental attitudes/steps and working those attitudes/steps seriously. Therefore, one can assume that maybe there are attitudes to be found in Torah and Mussar, Sefarim, especially when we have Hashem helping us find the right sources and seeing that we are searching how to better ourselves....

End Quote

Do you know the famous story of the lady stranded on her roof during a massive flood. She davened for Hashem to save her and a boat came by. She did not get on though since she was waiting for Hashem to save her. Then a helicopter came to rescue, but she stayed put waiting for Hashem to help... Eventually she drowned. In shamayim she asked "what happened? Why didn't Hashem save me?" To which the reply was, He sent you a boat and a helicopter but you were looking for something else...

Warning: Spoiler!

=====
=====