

Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by KiviYVY - 15 Mar 2011 16:15

[This is a lengthy dialogue, but Guard encouraged me to post this with the hopes of others contributing and gaining more clarity]

Dear Guard,

First, a tremendous thank you for all I've gained from your site, your forums and your 12 step phone calls. They've absolutely changed my life and I'm greatly indebted to your program.

At the same time I'd like to voice a concern. I've read a little of buzz about this on the forums, but I just wanted to email you directly so the problem is addressed.

This is what happened: I had gained a lot from your site and had some serious conversations with my wife about your site. She was very understanding, Tzadekes that she is, and was sold on the GYE mission. Of course we're normal and we had our share of high emotions and crying, but Baruch Hashem we were able to sort things out favorably.

Being sold on your mission, my wife thought to suggest the site and the women's phone conference to people she knew who were suffering from lust addiction. After some further (painful) research she realized that the phone conference is really only for spouses of real hard core addicts.

For the record, I am technically not a hard core addict, B"H (about Level 3 in the "GYE Program in a nutshell"); I've never hit rock bottom, I suffer from a mild addiction which I suspect is quite common among men in my culture, and my wife and I can testify that our marriage has been absolutely wonderful. Not picture perfect, but a marriage that we can be proud of and that grows with leaps and bounds on a constant basis. Not having a full addiction I B"H do not fully relate to everything on GYE, but I have been successful in drawing out the lessons from the site and the 12 steps that have been helpful for my personal struggles.

Innocently suspecting that she was a codependent, my wife decided to join the Forum for

Spouse addicts and she was absolutely shocked and shaken by what she read; particularly this story - <http://www.guardureyes.com/GUE/Stories/FeatureStory.asp> - which is part of the suggested reading for all newcomers. She was also shocked by the intimate details that women shared with each other about their own marriages. She cried a long time after reading all of that and dwelled on the matter for at least a week before we were able to come up with some healthy perspectives.

After this experience and after my wife's discussion with a prominent Rav and Rebbetzin in our town we came to the following conclusion: Your site is very helpful for real addicts. It's a life saver - no question. However, when it comes to those who are not addicts, in many cases it's better that they do not join your 12-step calls. The Rav told my wife that there are a number of men (and women) that he knows who were encouraged by someone else to avail themselves of your services. These men were not real addicts, just normal men with normal lusts, and the site convinced them that they were addicts, that their disease was for life, and that they needed to do the 12-steps. It's possible that such men might be going down a road which is overkill for them and cause risks to their emotional well-being and their marriages. I, BH, have a good amount of Seichel and have been able to glean from the site what is helpful for my situation. Others may not be as fortunate.

When it comes to women, the risks are far greater. BH my wife was able find closure on this matter by speaking to a Rav and Rebbetzin, but others are not as assertive about the matter, do not consult with the right people, and end up taking risks that there's no need for them to take. Women take these matters very personally and are from the start at risk of not handling this matter with the proper Seichel, with the healthy approach that's necessary. Pushing such women into the 'addiction track' can cause much unnecessary pain.

You will soon be launching an international campaign for your site upgrade and publicity, which is absolutely wonderful. I wish you much success and I completely support your cause. At the same time, it's important that people are directed to the resources that are appropriate for them and not convinced that they need to take more drastic measures than are appropriate. Your "Program in a Nutshell" is a step in the right direction, but at the moment the site does not naturally follow the course outlined in that piece. I read discussion on the forums of setting up the site in a way that is appropriate for non-addicts (Prevention), while real addicts are directed to a special section to login and address their issues (for Treatment & Recovery). This is also a step in the right direction. My wife and I picture the ideal site to be one that fits this model. We picture a site that speaks to people similar to the way a Rav or Rebbetzin would - validating the normal struggles that people go through and providing a Torah Hashkafa for men and women to gain a healthy approach to Male/Female Tayvah, Triggers, Tznius, the Yetzer Hara, and send normal couples on their way with tools for a healthy marriage.

Undoubtedly you have put much thought to this exact issue already and that you are consulting Gedolim on how to best approach it. My intention is only to highlight the severe importance of addressing this. What I've heard from Rabbonim regarding your current site is that it's a wonderful site, addresses an very important issue in our community, *but it's not for everybody*. Your hope is to make your site for everybody so please do your best to address the greater public as is most appropriate and helpful.

Much Hatzlacha!

Here is my followup to Guard's response (Guard is in quote boxes).

Thank you for reading my long email and taking my concerns to heart. I've understood from your site and it has been confirmed by your response that you approach your mission thoughtfully and sincerely and always seek out the most appropriate course of action Al Pi Torah. Please see my comments and responses below:

Guard Eyes wrote: Thank you for your well thought out and respectful letter, from the heart. Your concerns are very important, and we are indeed addressing them as best we can in the new website design, which will be based on the "Program in a nutshell" from the start. Your letter has helped us gain even further clarity on this issue, especially in regards to Miriam's CODA call which is indeed only for the wives of real addicts.

Thanks for saying this. It's encouraging to know my voice is being heard and is making a difference. As you said, Miriam's CODA is only for wives of real addicts. My wife did call in once to listen in and her heart goes out to these women. She was struck by what seemed to be a "tough love" approach, the labeling, and the exposure to sordid details.

If I may ask just a few questions. 1) What level of addiction do you see yourself in regard to our

"Program in a nutshell"s 8 levels? (see attached).

Level 3. I reached my 1st 90 days rather easily, without much help from the Forum and without the 12 step calls. After 90 I fell and struggled for 2 months or so, peaking at a month. Entering a mini cycle of falling I felt a more desperate need to do something concrete and I read the INCREDIBLE GYE handbook (printed out a pocket size copy I could pull out to read 5 minutes here and there) and started listening in on the 12-step calls periodically. Duvid Chaim encouraged me to start participating in the calls, which I was very hesitant to do, but now I share my voice on the calls from time to time.

2) Do you think that for your level, the 12-Step calls of Duvid Chaim may have been too much? In other words, do you think it might have been Yatza Secharo Behefsedo for you? If yes, what particular aspects of the approach do you feel might have been the hefsed?

I think I mostly gained from the calls, but as I said - I think I have a good dose of Seichel and self-esteem about these things. I know that others might not approach the matter with as much Seichel, label themselves as addicts, and find themselves treading in the shark infested waters of labeling themselves as hard core addicts and treating their pneumonia with chemotherapy. I don't think I lost much of anything from the calls, except for time out of my hourly-waged work day.

3) What shook up your wife so much in the "Feature Story"? That guy didn't even use the 12-Steps at all.

It was the exposure to the intimate and unsavory details of his life. She feels there was no need for her to even know about these things, and other things she read on the forums, and it only made her more nervous about things like protecting her son from the issues the writer of the article faced. As just one example, it's certainly unproductive for her to be nervous about her son taking a bath! The truth is that what's described there likely comes with a background of abnormal domestic issues, maybe abuse or trauma of some sort, and should not be framed as something that "can happen to anyone."

4) Did you see yesterday's chizuk e-mail #980? Coincidentally (I hadn't even read your letter yet), it deals with how to tell the wife, and what to say and do...

I read it and I completely agree with it. You can see my personal notes on my own discussions about this matter here - www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=3231.msg86326#msg86326 . I also once wrote you a thank you note, the "we felt newly married" note that you published in the Chizuk email recently.

GYE has no "hidden agenda" at all, and I don't mind you posting this on the forum because it may help others gain clarity as well, but maybe let's wait until you answer the questions above, and then we can include some of your answers in the letter you post as well, to help people have more clarity on where you're coming from...

Thanks for your easy-going'ness about this. "GYE has no "hidden agenda" at all" really says it all. Your sincerity with this project is really rare and I believe it has been a driving force behind your success. May Hashem continue to give you this strength of character and grant you much success in reaching all those who are crying internally for the help they so desperately need.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by geshertzarmeod - 16 Mar 2011 01:29

kosher - where can we see your approach? maybe start a new thread for guys like yourself to discuss a working approach.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by kosher - 16 Mar 2011 02:49

[geshertzarmeod wrote on 16 Mar 2011 01:29:](#)

kosher - where can we see your approach? maybe start a new thread for guys like yourself to discuss a working approach.

It was sent out as part of Chizuk email #965 and shemiras einayim email #437.

The link is:

www.guardureyes.com/GUE/PDFs/ebooks/Reah%20Chaim.pdf

The issue is managing to get discussions on the appropriate level with adequate vitality. People have tried started threads of that nature, but they don't seem to get very far. No one can be blamed, but we do need to come up with a plan to deal with this.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 16 Mar 2011 03:58

[ur-a-jew wrote on 15 Mar 2011 23:04:](#)

I was sitting next to someone on the train and noticed the following caption to an article: "Better scared than sorry." It think its an apt principle for the men's forum. Better someone think that they are an addict and act accordingly then have them ignore the problem and end up never getting rid of their problem/addiction/whatever you want to call it.

I would have thought you were right, but convincing a healthy person that they are an addict is not so Pashut. Like the Mashal I mentioned earlier - we wouldn't treat pneumonia with chemo. Chemo destroys the good cells along with the bad and it's reserved for desperate cases, Lo aleinu. A healthy person convinced he's an addict is at high emotional risk.

And for all the non-addicts who only occasionally dabble in porn if you think it has no effect on your married life, you are living in la-la land.

100% - and they should address that; just not necessarily with treatments reserved for real addicts.

As for the need for the site, I think it was best highlighted by the following quote:

[YVY wrote on 15 Mar 2011 16:15:](#)

I reached my 1st 90 days rather easily, without much help from the Forum and without the 12 step calls. After 90 I fell and struggled for 2 months or so, peaking at a month.

I'm not sure if you're taking a jab at me here. I have gained a ton from this site and it was that struggle above that forced me into putting my all into this. I struggled with the term addict and it took much thought before I could sort out mild addiction from hard core addiction. For the record, I'm now, B"H, in the midst of my longest streak - 124 clean days!

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by the.guard - 16 Mar 2011 11:13

[guardureyes wrote on 15 Mar 2011 23:10:](#)

I agree. I had plans this week to try and come up with a more updated "Welcoming Package" that includes mainly the Nutshell - but I am so busy with the web development lately that I haven't gotten to it yet. Maybe tomorrow bl'n.

Ok, I finally updated the GYE Welcoming package. It now suggests the "Program in a Nutshell" and the newer edition of the handbook, as well as contains better links to the phone conferences and other changes...

From now on, when a newcomer joins the forum, please point them to this link:
www.guardyoureyes.org/forum/index.php?topic=3677.0 (or copy and paste the welcome for them - just make sure you include the links).

Yasher Koach!

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by ur-a-jew - 16 Mar 2011 13:34

YVY: The problem is that the moshul is not domeh to the nimshul. Which part of the 12 steps is killing good cells: developing a relationship with Hashem, not keep resentments inside, doing for others. I just don't get it.

Moreover most people who are here whether or not they are addicts are not "healthy." And no quoting back your words was not intended as a "jab" it reflects my firm belief that neither you or I are "healthy." If we were we would not be Yashuv v'Yashuv we would have said long ago this detrimentally affects my life, my marriage, my job, my religious observance everything that's important to me so I'm stopping. But it somehow never works. When a healthy person sticks his hand in the fire and it burns him he stops putting his hand in the fire. We don't. The fact that we only put our hands into relatively small fires and not raging infernos does not make us "healthy." Moreover the fact that I have never visited a massage parlor never acted out live -- and with Hashem's help I hope I never will -- does not mean I can't learn from these people. If they can get sober then I can too.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by KiviYVY - 16 Mar 2011 13:59

[ur-a-jew wrote on 16 Mar 2011 13:34:](#)

YVY: The problem is that the moshul is not domeh to the nimshul. Which part of the 12 steps is killing good cells: developing a relationship with Hashem, not keep resentments inside, doing for others. I just don't get it.

My understanding is that it's mostly Step 1 - admitting powerlessness, labeling yourself as an addict, and joining a fellowship of other addicts labeling you as an addict by association. That's a big blow to a person's ego and some people have trouble recovering from big blows.

Moreover most people who are here whether or not they are addicts are not "healthy." And no, quoting back your words was not intended as a "jab;" it reflects my firm belief that neither you or I are "healthy." If we were we would not be Yashuv v'Yashuv; we would have said long ago this detrimentally affects my life, my marriage, my job, my religious observance everything that's important to me so I'm stopping. But it somehow never works. When a healthy person sticks his hand in the fire and it burns him he stops putting his hand in the fire. We don't. The fact that we only put our hands into relatively small fires and not raging infernos does not make us "healthy."

Excellent point. However, I will argue that a sick person can use healthy means to heal his sickness, or he can use unhealthy means. He has to assess his level of sickness and find the appropriate medication. No one in this world is absolutely "healthy." Being sent to this world by the Borai means, by definition, that we are unhealthy and that there are issues we need to work out through our life.

Moreover the fact that I have never visited a massage parlor never acted out live -- and with Hashem's help I hope I never will -- does not mean I can't learn from these people. If they can get sober then I can too.

There's plenty to learn from these people and I'm living testimony to that. I was "prescribed" a large dose of medication and I had enough Seichel, with Hashem's guidance, to not take the full dose, but there's a risk when you hand a sick person an inappropriate prescription.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Kedusha - 16 Mar 2011 14:00

I agree with UAJ that there is nothing harmful in the 12 steps (on the contrary), it's just that healthy (or "not so sick") people aren't desperate enough to go through the trouble of working the steps. But, if they would, they would experience a great benefit. That does not mean that everyone should be going to live SA meetings - Rabbi Twerski said (at GYE's historical parlor meeting in August) that live meetings are not for everyone.

What YVY is suggesting is that the label "addict" can be harmful. If that's true, it's largely because of a misunderstanding that addicts = nutcases. That's not correct at all. My understanding (as discussed in the Big Book) is that an addiction = an allergy. We are very sensitive to pornography and other lust triggers, and therefore simply need to avoid them. When a person comes to this realization, it's a huge burden off his shoulders - he simply knows that he has to avoid certain things, and should use whatever ways and means (12 steps or otherwise) that allow him to do so.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by KiviYVY - 16 Mar 2011 14:10

[Kedusha wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:00:](#)

What YVY is suggesting is that the label "addict" can be harmful. If that's true, it's largely because of a misunderstanding that addicts = nutcases. That's not correct at all. My understanding (as discussed in the Big Book) is that an addiction = an allergy. We are very sensitive to pornography and other lust triggers, and therefore simply need to avoid them. When a person comes to this realization, it's a huge burden off his shoulders - he simply knows that he has to avoid certain things, and should use whatever ways and means (12 steps or otherwise) that allow him to do so.

Right, but that misunderstanding of addict is not disappearing anytime soon. That is how it's understood in our culture. I'm comfortable saying that we are all addicts in many areas. Chazal say, "Once a person does a Chet twice it becomes like Heter." It's a learned behavior and

learned behaviors don't go away with Teshuva. You get Mechila, Slicha, V'Chapara with Teshuva, but not freedom from learned behaviors. Yes - the 12 steps are helpful for recovery from all sorts of things - Lashon Harah, Not focusing on Davening, Shmoozing during Seder, cheating on your Taxes, etc. Most people are not so passionate about these things (unfortunate, but completely normal and "healthy") and are therefore not driven to desperation.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by Me3 - 16 Mar 2011 14:19

What I've learned from Step 1 "That I am powerless" is that Hashem control everything in this world. There is no such thing as "Kochi V'Otzem Yadi" I can't do anything by myself. In the same manner that I realize that I can't beat this addiction by myself, the same is true by everything. Addiction is just a tangible lesson a moshol. To everything else.

I always knew in theory that Hashem runs the world and I have no power, but now I know it as clearly as I know that I can't lift a car. I now apply this beautiful lesson to other aspects of my life.

My parnasa - it's not in my hands, it's all Hashem.

My kids / wife are not doing what I want? - it's not in my hands, it's all Hashem.

The driver in front of me talking on his cellphone who just made me miss the light? - it's not in my hands, it's all Hashem.

The radioactive nuclear cloud travelling around the world? - it's not in my hands, it's all Hashem.

Now if only I would remember that these posters who say such moronic things are also not in my hands.....

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue

Posted by oblum - 16 Mar 2011 14:30

Oh Me3! Hakol b'yada shomaim chutz miyiras shomaim...

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by Me3 - 16 Mar 2011 14:34

Aino Domeh Shimiya L'ri'iyah.

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by ur-a-jew - 16 Mar 2011 14:44

Ditto to everything Me3 said.

[YVY wrote on 16 Mar 2011 13:59:](#)

My understanding is that it's mostly Step 1 - admitting powerlessness, labeling yourself as an addict, and joining a fellowship of other addicts labeling you as an addict by association. That's a big blow to a person's ego and some people have trouble recovering from big blows.

It's interesting but the word addict is not used in Step 1 at all: "We admitted we were powerless over _____—that our lives had become unmanageable."

Do these same people get a blow to their ego when they read the gemara that says "Yitzro shel odom mesgaber alov bchol yom . . . v'ulmelay HKBH ozro ayno yochul lo." Or how about when they say three times a day in Shemone Esrei "?????" and recognize that He is awesome in that no creation can do good or bad only according to His will.

I'm all for self-esteem but it may be that a little blow to the overinflated ego ain't so bad.

Generally it's our ego that gets us in to this mess in the first place. After all why isn't my wife satisfying me doesn't she understand that I am in the mood and if she's not going to or my boss is going to treat me like that I am entitled to a little [pick your pleasure].

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by oblum - 16 Mar 2011 14:46

[ur-a-jew wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:44:](#)

[pick your pleasure].

A tub of Ben & Jerry's?

(if only!)

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Re: Open Correspondence with Guard on an Important Issue
Posted by ur-a-jew - 16 Mar 2011 14:49

[o wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:46:](#)

[ur-a-jew wrote on 16 Mar 2011 14:44:](#)

[pick your pleasure].

A tub of Ben & Jerry's?

(if only!)

I wondered what the "o" stood for. Overeaters Anonymous is a different website.

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