

The nature of addictions in a nutshell

Posted by skaybaltimore - 17 Jun 2012 15:36

All physical sensations and pleasures have a physical limit/ceiling. Once that limit/ceiling is reached, it's impossible to go beyond it. All addictions are an attempt to recreate the maximum enjoyable physical sensation/pleasure experienced in the past, and so a short circuit is created, since the inherent ceiling of the physical is impossible to transcend, so all our efforts to recreate and maintain that initial high result in us running around in circles.

On the other hand, spiritual pleasures are infinite; they have no inherent ceiling, and the circular path is actually an upward spiral. (We have to pay careful attention because the circular motion is more apparent than the subtle upward movement, differentiating a circle from a spiral. So it's not always obvious to us that we're achieving more when walking a spiritual path.)

So that's our most critical choice: do we seek to invest our life's energies in pursuit of limited, physical pleasures, or do we seek out infinite, spiritual pleasures? Love, compassion, truth – these are all spiritual pleasures. They have no limit.

The question then arises: So why do most of us choose the physical substitutes instead? Because they're "easier", at least at first. They're tangible. They're perceived as being, somehow, more "real".

Adding to the mix/confusion, is the fact that spiritual pleasures have built in steps; safeguards to allow for a measured progress, rather than an instantaneous flood of awareness/pleasure, that would actually destroy our uniqueness by wiping us out into the process. But when we get confused, these spiritual steps feel no different to us than the physical ceilings. They feel almost identical, so we figure what's the point in denying physical pleasures, when there's no bigger bang for the buck by opting for spiritual pleasures?

But we're missing a key point when we do that: a spiritual step has the distinct difference/advantage of being able to be transcended, to arrive at the next step, ad infinitum. (Whereas the physical ceiling cannot be transcended, ad nauseam.) Sometimes, when we get frustrated, it FEELS as if we've hit a spiritual ceiling, and we feel stuck, and a rebelliousness kicks in. We then conclude, falsely, that since there's no difference between a physical ceiling and a spiritual step, we'd be better off (or at least no worse off) by going backward/downward, and clinging to the world of physical pleasures.

But it's just a mistaken perception. If we persevere up the spiritual staircase (stairway to Heaven), we then see, feel, and experience the infinite nature of spiritual pleasures, and get stronger in that pursuit. The key/secret is to keep remembering that the apparent ceiling of each subsequent spiritual step is merely the floor of the next spiritual "ceiling".

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by Dov - 18 Jun 2012 00:03

You refer to this thread *a description of the nature of addictions* - then you write and describe (very beautifully) the nature and limitations of physical pleasure-seeking and contrast it very well with spiritual pleasure-seeking.

I do not understand what this has to do with addictions.

The alcoholic considering recovery is typically *not* seeking **pleasure** from alcohol any more - he just cannot stop drinking. In his or her early years, drinking was loads of fun and did seem to help in some way. But at some point *it became the problem*, not the solution any more.

[This is why so few sex and lust addicts come for help in their teens, and most wait till their late twenties or thirties: sex and lusting are still fun. With all the religious and psychic pain, with all the costs and risks - it is still too much pleasure and not enough pain.

Only when the scale starts to tilt in the pain direction most of the time do we start to really see our 'pleasure-seeking and indulgences' as [i]the problem[/i]. Which means that - for all practical purposes - until then it **isn't** our problem!]

In the same way, I do not see how sex and lust-seeking has anything to do with addiction. Addiction is a *bondage* to using - not a past time that you or I - or Hashem - can say is 'mistaken'. What does it have to do with decadence vs enlightenment? I admit that the choices I make in active addiction *are* immoral - but pretending to see things as black-and-white and describe addiction as 'immorality' is myopic.

Applying works like Rav Noach zt"l's "Five Levels of Pleasure," to early addiction and recovery seems to me to be akin to the speeches every alcoholic since time immemorial has ever heard from well-meaning, loving and insightful people saying, "You really *must* stop drinking!"

Most addicts I know *really wish* they'd stop - but do not stop. And they are even more bewildered than anyone else is about why they can't seem to stay dry!

Everything you written here is probably true about responsible living. I will strive to remind myself of it often - seriously. But what does it have to do with addiction?

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by skaybaltimore - 18 Jun 2012 00:27

@Dov

Below is a direct quote from my original post. I'm not sure how you missed it, or what was unclear as to the connection between physical pleasure and addiction, and how spiritual pleasure, by its infinite nature, does not result in addiction, because there is no limit/ceiling, thus it's a completed circuit, not a short circuit.

"All addictions are an attempt to recreate the maximum enjoyable physical sensation/pleasure experienced in the past, and so a short circuit is created, since the inherent ceiling of the physical is impossible to transcend, so all our efforts to recreate and maintain that initial high result in us running around in circles."

You say:

"The alcoholic considering recovery is typically not seeking pleasure from alcohol any more - he just cannot stop drinking. In his or her early years, drinking was loads of fun and did seem to help in some way. But at some point it became the problem, not the solution any more. "

The alcoholic is initially seeking pleasure and escape from pain. At the beginning of an addiction, it's a process of re-capturing that first high (maybe more for coke than alcohol), as well as freeing oneself from one's inhibitions. Eventually, it's more an attempt to just be normal. (Maybe I should have been more specific as far as that process is concerned.) But freeing oneself from one's inhibitions TO DO WHAT? To experience a heightened sense of

PLEASURE.

And when it comes to pain, what is the source of the pain that the alcoholic is seeking to escape FROM? IMO, he's seeking an escape from his own internal existential emptiness, created by seeking to fill the soul with junk food, rather than spiritual food. The pleasure packed drug of choice is used to medicate some vague, unconscious pain or feeling of separation/not fitting in. Hence, the connection between pleasure seeking/escapism and addiction, especially in a world that is antithetical to Jewish/Torah spiritual values, that has sought to substitute true, eternal values for false, physical values/pleasures.

Do we become addicted to things that are not, at least initially, pleasurable? (Have you ever heard of anyone becoming a food addict because he pigged out on too much spinach?) Do we repeat things to the point of our own self-destruction that are not both initially, and for prolonged periods of time, pleasurable? I'm really not sure how or why you don't see the intrinsic connection between pleasure seeking and addiction.

Here you say:

"In the same way, I do not see how sex and lust-seeking has anything to do with addiction. Addiction is a bondage to using - not a past time that you or I - or Hashem - can say is 'mistaken'. What does it have to do with decadence vs enlightenment?"

All addictions are perversions of normal drives/desires. For example, sexual drives and desires are normal; sexual addiction perverts that normal drive to fill some sort of void. The key is THE VOID. And how does the void come about? It comes about because something inside of us -- our SOUL -- is empty. How does this come about? It comes about by way of distractions. The very materialistic, non-Jewish society in which we live does everything in it's power to distract souls from ascending, because fully aware souls are very powerful, and not easy to control.

And all modern societies are about nothing else BUT controlling their populations. So how do they do it? They saturate the media with so many different distractions that we rarely even stop to ask ourselves the most important questions: "Why do we feel so empty, and why are we wasting our lives on things that in no way shape or form satisfy our higher selves/souls?"

The "mistake" is pandering to the body's needs/drives/desires to the point that the natural balance is destroyed. The "enlightenment" is the understanding, and actions based upon the understanding, that the only way to restore the proper balance, and get to the root of the addiction (the void) is to feed the soul what IT needs: as clear and strong a connection with Hashem as possible. Those channels get blocked by over-attention to the physical, and under attention to the spiritual. That's the basic challenge for hybrid physical/spiritual human beings, who have the freedom of choice to prioritize one world or the other. Visualizations create a "picture" bridge between the physical and the spiritual, which, when done properly (i.e. consciously choosing images that connect us with Hashem, vs. unconsciously allowing our brains to think about whatever they want), allows the physical drives to be put back in their proper perspective, and the spiritual needs of the soul to be addressed and actualized.

What I've personally experienced over the past several weeks -- all "clean" days, btw -- is that there's this hidden, natural "high" that is just a meditation/visualization away, that does not

require drugs, porn, or any other "addiction of choice". (That's what I've referred to as "the Honeymoon" period, because all "new" discoveries carry with them an initial "high", but the work needs to continue in order for the feeling of euphoria to extend beyond just the initial honeymoon.) And just as important, if not more important, is the fact that I've been able to take this new found perspective out into the world and not get thrown off balance like I had in the past. So in essence, what I've done is replace a former "bad" habit with a new "good" habit. And this new good habit really delivers the goods, and by its intrinsic design, is infinite in terms of its delivery system, not limited, like the old bad habit. It's been a truly joyous several weeks. Very clear. Compassionate. Focused. And balanced. That's really something new for me.

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell

Posted by Dov - 18 Jun 2012 05:03

Thanks for clarifying.

Maybe this will help my view be more clear:

I have worked with a lot of guys in SA and GYE - it is clear that the overwhelming majority of GYE guys - even posting on the forum - are not addicts. They refuse to do many of the basic things that most recovering addicts do in 12 step recovery:

They hide behind fake names, generally don't go far out of their comfort zone for their freedom, and do not share the most important details of their problem. I can say that I have met at least ten GYE guys who posted for months about a 'porn problem', yet when they engage in open and real recovery work, admit they have either been seeing prostitutes, phone sex, voyeurism, etc on a regular basis, and that these behaviors were 'their real problem'.

So yes, the pleasure thing is big, but I do not see it as a significant point for early recovering addicts to think about. It would have been a huge distraction for me - because of what I tried to clarify before: the ikkar problem in addiction is not the acting out behavior at all. Not the drinking, not the porning, and not the sex. All that is the medicating. It is a symptom of the real problem: sobriety (life w/o our drug) is just too painful and disgusting for us - it is unacceptable.

What we become addicted to is not really relevant. Why we are addicted to it is also not really relevant. The sobriety at all costs will lead to enlightenment and acceptance of life's value *without* the medication.

So the pleasure issue I still see as a red herring. Not in your theorizing and clinical autopsy of "the addicted mind" - there, it is nice, yes. But in the reality of living as an addict, I see the bondage as the first and most dire specter, in the addicts personal experience. We are in chains, know it, and we eventually hate it. The guilt-ridden recreational masturbators out there are NOT in chains. They (as you explain so well) are seeking pleasure - not medication.

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by skaybaltimore - 18 Jun 2012 11:12

@Dov

With all due respect, you and I have completely different understandings of addiction and the root cause(s) of addiction. And as I've said before -- I hope your approach keeps working for you.

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by Dov - 18 Jun 2012 15:05

I have plenty respect for you, too (whatever your real name is)! So, in a nutshell, are you saying that you see addiction as revolving mainly around chasing the drug rather than about self-medicating in order to escaping from real life?

I think Pat Carnes sees it more your way. Lots of people I know do - most are spiritualists and theorists - truly experts - and are not addicts themselves, though Carnes has said he is a recovering sex addict.

The AA/SA that I have been exposed to (and what I have been trying to work, be"H) is more about focusing on action rather philosophy, more akin to na'aseh venishmah. The value in it for me is that a very healthy humility comes from admission that it was my own twisted mind that got me into and perpetuated it for years and years. It seems hubris to give my own mind the job of straightening me out, the program tells me. Humility is thus the calling card and basis of 12 step recovery. And the focus is on recovery, not sobriety.

Another thing I find interesting about 12 step recovery is that it does not focus at all on the addiction. There is no mention of the drug (or the addiction, for that matter) anywhere in the 12 steps except once at the beginning of the 1st, referring more to admission of my illness. All the rest of the steps are exercises in living right with myself, my G-d, and other people. Not so much about *thinking* right, mind you, more about taking the right actions. (Sure, we need to think differently...but the emphasis in learning to do that seems to be on taking right actions - let the right thinking follow naturally as a gift of G-d. Very similar to na'aseh v'nishmah but all for

Derech Eretz and not Torah, of course.)

I see it the second way. If I am reading you right, you see it the first way. Many I have met who even work the 12 steps, see it the second way. They read the addiction into the steps, and see the steps as directly addressing the problem, much as your approach seems to do. In contrast, the AA/SA's that influenced me the most, see that approach as 'living in the problem'. My mentors prefer to 'live in the solution', meaning that they do not address their addiction as a struggle to remain sober - but as a struggle to remain sane and useful to G-d, myself, and others. Thus the second step is not about dependence upon my G-d to save me from the addiction, at all - certainly not from the drug itself. It is - as it reads simply and clearly - to be saved from insanity. Insanity vs sanity (as it is defined in any dictionary - sound living as an expression of a sound mind) is the struggle of working the rest of the steps. Accepting life on life's (G-d's) terms with serenity and joy.

I am avoiding any value judgement of either approach. Maybe your approach and the one I like lead to the identical place. For as long as I am having sex with myself or looking at and worshipping naked people, I will not achieve true happiness but will remain in the mud, distracted from the Truth and true joy by fake pleasure.

But a mission to achieve true (spiritual) pleasure - though Rav Noach and the RMCh"L seem to say it *is* the point of it all - seems a bit cheeky for the addict in recovery. The 12 steps seems to put the goal and emphasis more on usefulness to G-d and others as the goal. (See 3rd and 7th step prayers, of AA where "so that victory over them will bear witness to those I would help of Your Love, Power, and Torah", and "my usefulness to others" are the goals.)

I am trying to see our **common** ground here - not argue nor convince you of anything. I assume you see this and are not challenged by anything I write. Perhaps I have a lot to learn from you, another sick man getting well be"H.

Your approach may be more complex...but does the first paragraph above basically boil it down?

- Dov

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by skaybaltimore - 18 Jun 2012 16:02

@Dov

What I'm saying is that the root cause of addiction is the misplaced homage we give to the physical world -- the world of the senses. For the most part, the only way we "know" the world is through our senses. Those "sensations" -- whether visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or taste -- are the openings to the world with which we're most familiar, and they are also the portals for all

of our addictions.

But there exists an alternative way of experiencing the world -- through our souls (the eyes of our soul, the language of our soul, etc.). The problem is -- we're constantly being bombarded with incentives to keep paying homage to the physical world at the expense of the soul/spiritual world.

So what I'm talking about is a concerted effort to place the proper emphasis on the development of the soul side, allowing that side to become as familiar to us in terms of experiencing the world as the physical/sensory side. It takes time, and is really a lifetime/ongoing process. But to me, it's the most complete way of bringing addiction(s) fully under control. When the soul is allowed to guide the body, good things happen. When the body is allowed to direct the soul, bad things happen. It's really that simple (although not that easy to do, because there are more "incentives" to follow the body than the soul).

And one of the most effective ways of accessing the soul so that it can regain its proper function is through specific visualizations as described in the book: "Visions Of A Compassionate World". It's a book based upon very high level Chassidus. I'd never heard of it before I came to this site, but I purchased it, and was astounded by what it had to say. By focusing on the connectedness to Hashem's amazing world, a new understanding begins to grow. And as that growth continues, the soul begins to take charge, which is the way it should be, since the soul is not interested in the things that the body is interested in as far as addictions are concerned. The soul is only interested in the bodily functions and pleasures IN THEIR PROPER PERSPECTIVE(S), and on connecting with Hashem. This creates a positive upward spiral that is both limitless and balanced -- the exact opposite of an addiction, which is an out of control perversion of an otherwise normal physical function.

Additionally, the pleasures of the soul are for real, and provide lasting satisfaction, as opposed to the limited, momentary satisfactions provided by addictive pursuits. So there's a CHOICE that emerges: Do I want to keep spinning my wheels in this stupid addiction, or do I want to free myself of this nonsense and feel the much deeper, more lasting satisfaction achieved through connecting with the world via my soul.

It's my belief that the approach I'm talking about goes to the ROOT of addictions, rather than trying to clamp down on the leaves, branches, and trunk. (The classic example of NOT going to the root of addictions is Rabbi Twersky's description of the "dry drunk". That person is technically sober, but has not reached deep enough into the cause of the addiction.) I think you see my approach as risky/dangerous, and I see your approach as limited/only a partial solution, at least for me and the way I'm wired.

Hope this helps.

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Re: The nature of addicitions in a nutshell
Posted by E-Tek - 18 Jun 2012 19:07

Um...

The way I understand it, Reb Dov is saying that going to the roots of the issue is too slow, or possibly too late, for addicts to fix themselves.

Rabeinu Yonah's teshuva works two ways- Stop, and regret, or regret and stop. The addict's teshuva focuses on the stop only, because any charata will come back to hurt him. Indeed, start with the leaves and not the roots. And, if the habits have gone so so deep so as to change the psyche, it may be impossible to root it out completely- in which case it is definitely not where you start! I MUST start with the DOING, with being a (different) person who does good for others and relies on Hashem- I don't have the luxury to root it out.

If your psyche allows you too, Kol HaKovod. I envy you, but it doesn't help me.

B'Hatzlacha in all your endeavors. (Sorry for sticking my nose in here.)

Meir

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by skaybaltimore - 18 Jun 2012 19:39

[E-Tek wrote on 18 Jun 2012 19:07:](#)

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Meir

Sticking your nose in? Are you kidding? This is a message board for discussion. :D

The one thing I left out of the above post is that the two approaches are not necessarily

mutually exclusive. There's nothing wrong whatsoever with Dov -- or anyone else -- keeping the approach he's using, and adding in visualization to deepen the process. Or not. It's a personal choice.

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell

Posted by Dov - 19 Jun 2012 18:06

OK, very clear. BTW, Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh (Rabbi Itamar Schwartz) and Divrei Chizzuk (Rabbi Tzvi-Meyer Zilverberg) focus a great deal in their talks and own personal avodah on this idea you mention: realizing the neshomah is *ikkar* and the body as *tofeil* to it. The Ba'al Shem Tov would say, *baShomayim mima'al* - what is heavenly must be made a high priority...*v'al ha'aretz mitochas* - what is earthly must be made a low priority. Similar ideas. More power to you!

Now for the practical ('al-derech-avodah' as Pele Yoeitz would put it), not theoretical nor philosophical:

I see some definite advantages - and some disadvantages - to the approach you are referring to, and want to point them out. You may mistake these as tongue-in-cheek, but it's not:

Advantages:

1- **Total secrecy can be maintained.** I could work on myself from the comfort of my own home (or beis midrash). Many people who are very ashamed of the sins they are doing or have done, should be attracted to that factor. No coming clean is necessary - after all, doesn't Hashem know it all already?

2- **Total control is maintained.** I guide my progress based on what resonates with me - ie. whatever is in my comfort zone. I accept what I am attracted to at the moment, tabling what "I am not *ready* for yet".

3- As all this work is going on in my own mind, I see my progress as **achieving true holiness**, reaching madreigos - madreigos that many of the common folk do not even *think* about. So I can become truly great...in my own assessment. *Or* I can choose to remain a humble man by working on seeing my connectedness to the common folk, if I wish.

4- No powerlessness or illness ever need be admitted or faced, so it is much easier to protect my delicate self-esteem. After all, this is a *choice* I am making: to remain in the dirt, or elevate myself to the stars. **It's respectable.**

5- The utter shame of having to admit anything of real substance to another is a big obstacle 12-step recovery has. Hey, look at this forum with all the fake names we hide behind - it makes it easier...but at a price, *cuz the people we are admitting it all to **are fake as well!*** Your path eschews all that by keeping it all private and personal, like normal avodas Hashem is. If you want to bring in a rov or other spiritual mentor, fine. No encouragement to admit horribly embarrassing facts.

Disadvantages:

1- Good luck starting a movement that will **actually** help the masses. AA has helped millions, changed millions of families around the globe - and caters to Jews just as well as it does to goyim, for it is not a religion. There is a reason Hashem has given it such success among both goyim *and* frum yidden.

2- Since you are espousing no rules and no true 'bottom line', this differs from the orthodoxy inherent to Judaism. A clear bottom line (like AA, NA, and SA have) is a convenient tool for preserving an anchor - they do not define recovery, at all - but they guarantee it...eventually. As we live life per the 12 steps, we will be forced to either act out our lust - or grow into Godly, spiritual, and beautiful people. Kind of the way that keeping the mitzvos definitely **does not** mean one is a good person....but over the long term, (as Zohar, the Chazon Ish and others see it) it will force one onto the path of human perfection. Is the rule at the base of this self-help program, "well, of course No Sinning Allowed" - probably not realistic - or is there a flexible 'bottom line' that the self-helper determines and adjusts as he goes on up the levels of spirituality? Christianity is full of nice platitudes, but we agree that something is missing in it besides that it is wrong, no?

These are, of course, not big *problems* - just issues for consideration. You *are* sincerely putting your heart into this, so I bring them up. These are 4 advantages and 2 disadvantages that I believe will affect the successful promulgation of your suggestion as a recovery program to a wider audience. Take 'em or leave 'em.

Finally, [skaybaltimore wrote on 18 Jun 2012 16:02](#):

Additionally, the pleasures of the soul are for real, and provide lasting satisfaction, as opposed to the limited, momentary satisfactions provided by addictive pursuits. So there's a CHOICE that emerges: Do I want to keep spinning my wheels in this stupid addiction, or do I want to free myself of this nonsense and feel the much deeper, more lasting satisfaction achieved through connecting with the world via my soul.

I have met many people in recovery so far - and many more stuttering at its terrifying doorstep. I have yet to meet more than two or three people whose lives have been changed by a self-help program like the one you are describing. In AA they say it is a *G-d-help*, rather than a *self-help* program. And those are not just words.

I have been touched by rare, true humility from people who after decades of trying, have given up their comfortable self-development-in-their-own-minds. I have met these people in 12 step

programs - very few anywhere else. And the addicts I meet are usually

The discovery I was given by AA/SA that I will only learn to be honest with Hashem by **first** learning how to be honest with *myself* - and will only learn how to be honest with myself by learning how to be really honest with *other people* is priceless. The value of my escape from the spiritual romance in my own head...as inestimable as it is uncomfortable!

True, we have a choice. But addicts have generally abdicated this choice. They typically do *not* get it back except through great personal pain. But then the choice seems ignoble on your standards: life or death (reminds me of the beginning of parshas Re'eh and Har Sinai, again!). You point out the greatness and beauty of the path of true spiritual self-actualization. It *is* beautiful!! But for all that, the average addict I know (including myself), it's still no comparison to the obliviousness and comfort of a really good porn-spree. Not because it isn't as much fun...but because we are too screwed-up to use it yet. I know so many frum addicts who cry in deveikus at L'cho Dodi...and cry in shame just two days later masturbating to porn on their knees in the bathroom. The highs are as poisonous as the lows...even good, holy, highs - for an addict.

And once again, I do not buy that addiction is about pleasure. I believe it is about avoidance of pain. So comparing pleasures is apples to oranges. This is not a battle in the mind. And all the spiritual bliss in the world is no substitute for comfort, *to an addict*.

When the typical addict comes creeping into AA or SA (because *they cannot afford **not** to*), they first give up the comfort they find in their alcohol or acting out their lust. But the party isn't over...over the next six months to a year or so, they find themselves running into raging, resentment, workaholism, all comforts cuz they are *familiar*. Those are as much 'pleasures' as their sexing was - **cuz it is not really about pleasure** (and never really was). The bondage of addiction is about comfort from our life-pain - life sucks, G-d sucks, we suck, and people around us suck. It's unbearable in some way, and we have some work to do (steps 1-3). Then if they work their 4th-7th steps they start to give up those underlying drugs - or 'comforting tools', if you will.

Finally we can start to make peace with the people we harmed (8, 9, & 10) and then start really getting close to our G-d (11).

Hatzlocha with your plan, skybaltimore, and please keep teaching and sharing.

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell

Posted by meshugoyim - 19 Jun 2012 19:09

If I could interject for a moment and just say this thread, both the author and repliers, have been very helpful in helping me understand the nature of my addiction. I'm not sure I completely grasp exactly why/how my addiction arose, or why/how it's so hard to combat. But one thing's for sure, reading threads like this really help put it into perspective.

Thanks!

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by skaybaltimore - 19 Jun 2012 19:32

@Dov

Reading through your most recent post, it's clear to me that you're still not "getting" what I'm saying -- especially your #2 in "Disadvantages" (among others). The book I'm basing this on is written BY AN ORTHODOX CHASSIDIC JEW -- who presumes that all of the 613 mitzvahs are already being honored. So where in the world you concluded that it somehow has "no rules" is just beyond my comprehension. (It's the same with "powerlessness". Half of his foundation is built upon visualizing the smallness of each individual compared to Hashem and the entire creation.) But conclude you did, despite the fact that your "12 step" approach is virtually totally goyish, and not related to Yiddishkeit in any way shape or form. So honestly...if you can misconstrue something so basic, I'd say, respectfully, that my threads and approach(es) are really not for you. But since you seem to feel the need to be the "protector", by all means...protect away.

@Struggling0623

Thanks for the feedback. And the fact that this thread has been helpful makes it all worthwhile.

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 19 Jun 2012 20:46

I love Dov Debates™ ;D

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Re: The nature of addictions in a nutshell

Posted by Dov - 19 Jun 2012 21:02

I have yet to meet a single person who stopped drinking, drugging or acting out their lust, because they came to see the true nature of their addiction.

How many do you know?

Regarding your chassidic orthodox writer, skaybaltimore, I am not impressed by a writer, but by what is *written*. I base almost all I write here on my own recovery (and I *am* an orthodox Jew) and on the recovery I have been witnessing firsthand in *dozens* of sincere practicing **orthodox chassidic** (and **yeshivish kollel** guys) I know, some of whom are Rabbis. Please do not demean that by implying that all of us orthodox recovering people are somehow acting 'un-Jewish'.

And if the writer of your book assumes the person who is reading his book is already keeping all the mitzvos properly, then I guess they are not addicts, so who is he writing to? Sober addicts who wish to go higher? If so, then I agree 100% with your approach. For as I have written many times on GYE, Torah is past the program. The program is Derech Eretz. As the Rabbis have taught us, derech eretz Kodmah laTorah - it comes **before** Torah. Of course Torah is 'better' than sobriety and recovery! But Torah is not a substitute for it any more than it is a substitute for treatment for someone's cancer. It's the same issue.

Can you see that we are not really arguing about all that much?

If you disagree with specific principles of the program *and* want to discuss them because you need it for yourself, I'd be glad to share my cell# with you and discuss it.

Finally, you may not have read my entire post. I know you say that one must stay clean. But inspiration does not **get** anyone I know clean. What's the motivation you offer to get or stay clean? The reward of true vs false bliss is a nice thought. But is it not wishful thinking on your part? Offering something "oh, so much better"? You do not address this issue in any of your responses.

Did you read the **Advantages** section? I spend so much time with this thread because approaches that are long on intentions - but short on actions - get my attention. Fostering the illusion of spiritual growth - while a person is still masturbating - is a pattern I am very familiar with. I did it for 10 years as a bochur, and 11 years as a married man.

Active, failing addicts who treasure the maintenance of control, respectability, and secrecy above their sobriety love self-help approaches like that.

Please see my intentions and purpose. I mean no harm and never have desired to be annoying to you. Instead of referring to the authors of the books you use, can you just explain how you address the *concerns* I bring up.

- Dov

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Re: The nature of addicitons in a nutshell
Posted by skaybaltimore - 19 Jun 2012 21:10

@Dov

You keep referring to the people you know. Maybe you either know the wrong people, or not enough people.

I only know the impact this process has had on me. And I do know myself.

What I hear coming from you again and again...is fear. (Couched, of course, in authority and concern. But fear nonetheless.)

Peace.

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