

Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?

Posted by Chachaman - 09 Aug 2012 19:55

My situation is as follows.

With great effort, I made it 28 days, then fell (pretty badly), then fell again 4 days later, and then went on a 6-week kollel summer program. While at the program, I had almost no problems. I got back home on Monday, with a renewed dedication to learning, and a 53-day clean streak to my name. I am a 16 year-old bochur, and my situation is B"H much better than many others on this website (reading some of the stories made me very makir tov to HKB"H for the truly infinite blessings that he has given me).

I fell today around an hour ago. I don't mean to somehow be melamed zchus to myself, but the desire was unbelievable. (I had little desire at the kollel, being in a Torah atmosphere, but as soon as I got back, the ta'avah kicked in with a vengeance.) To make things worse, it is extremely difficult to learn right now, and I probably won't fulfill my learning goals for the day as a result.

For the past two days, I was doing my best to fight this desire, but in the end the yetzer hara won out.

Let's assume I was on a 2-year clean streak; I would still probably have these ta'avos. My point is that trying with all my might to battle it is clearly not the solution for several reasons:

1) Every minute (or every time I am confronted with the desire) is a battle, and I must be strong enough to win. Even if I were to win 999 out of 1000 times, there is still that 1 time; no matter what, I can't be sure that I am going to succeed. (The 28-day clean streak--my longest ever independent (i.e. while in my normal home environment) clean streak for the last two years--consisted of myself battling, and I eventually fell. History has proven (for myself at least) that I will eventually fall; even if I won't fall, I want to be 100% sure that I won't fall in the future. As a part of a long-term solution, I don't want to be *mesamechon* the fact that 10 years from now I will be able to win the battle; I want to be *batuach*.)

2) For the past two days, the desire effected my learning as well. It was very difficult to shut this desire down; I don't want my life to be a 24/7 battle, for this will affect all of my different pursuits as well.

3) If the ta'avah potentially becomes stronger in a different situation, I won't win the battle. For example, at the kollel program, I practically didn't see any women for the entire 6 weeks. One can theoretically sit in a box his whole life and never see women, and ????? be shomer einayim. I go to public school (as my dad is not religious); to make matters "worse", my dad is getting remarried in a week and a half to a woman who has a 15 year-old daughter (all non-religious). Thank God, I'm not attracted to the daughter, but shemiras einayim and maintaining a neshama tehora will become even more difficult.

My point--I am inevitably going to be in situations where it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be properly shomer einayim. If I am relying on myself to constantly win the battle, I will probably be in a future situation where that battle becomes much more difficult; gone are the

days in the kollel program where I effectively sat in a box (as far as shemiras einayim is concerned).

Therefore, something has to change. I don't want this problem to continue; I will eventually need to be rid of this desire when I get married. I need a long-term solution that will change something permanently, so that I won't have this desire anymore. I could continue fighting the battle my whole life, despite the three considerations stated above--that is, I could try fighting the ???? of the addiction--or I could change myself, the ????, in such a way as that the desire is no longer ????. (Also, it's possible some other factors like self-esteem or despair could be part of my problem (e.g. when I used to fall just because I was feeling bored or insecure), but I think the largest part of it has to do with desire, plain and simple.)

My question--for anyone who has any knowledge that could help me out of the situation that I'm in--is as follows:

[list]

Is there a way to get rid of the desire/addiction itself, through perfecting myself or through other means (but not a pill, obviously, as this is a ???-type change and also not even remotely practical)?

Any practical advice for being shomer einayim in a home situation or public school situation such as myself--or for that matter, in any situation that I ever might find myself in?

[li] Is there something I can change so that this will never ever be a problem again--e.g. eliminating the desire through study of Torah or other means--or must my life be boiled down to a constant battle?[/li/

[/list]

How can I achieve the level of holy tzadikim of past generations, like R. Akiva, or R. Yochanan, who in the Gemara in Berachos (in the story about how he used to stand at the entrance to the women's bathhouse) was asked how he wasn't concerned about his desire, and responded that women were the same as geese in his eyes, or even like R. Nachman of Breslov who wrote that in his youth, he worked very hard on the problem and eliminated his desire, so that women were no different than men in his eyes?

Or are there any other solutions that can give a lasting fix to the problem, and not a band-aid solution? Thank God, I don't need (or at least I don't think that I need) any phone conferences or the like, and I don't think I need the 12-step program either (but some of the principles might be helpful)--but I have seen enough for this ta'avah to be firmly ingrained.

Please help! I thank in advance anyone who responds from the bottom of my heart.

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?

Posted by tocontrolmyself - 09 Aug 2012 20:11

you say you dont need the 12 steps or the phone conferences but b4 listed things that would be taken awayby the steps(and millions more problems too).many advanced 12 steppers testify that going into'dangerous' places(eg chassuna...) are no longer viewed as 'oh no' situations... besides an addict(as one I CAN TELL YOU)that although now the addictions m anifestation is smaller scale it tends to mushroom into bigger things...especially when life progresses and the stresses or better said challenges of life are greater.....all the best and hope to hear good things..have a great day..i might have made things sound too scary...im sorry if i did ...but i am not convinced at all that what i said is extrem...actually its quite proved...

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?

Posted by Chachaman - 09 Aug 2012 20:25

All I mean to say is that I'm only 16 years old, I'm not going to start doing any phone conferences or anything like that. I haven't really looked into the twelve steps, it's possible that they could apply to me. I might also start doing some of the ideas mentioned on the Shemiras Einayim Chizuk list (like keeping a journal and stuff).

My point is that I have the same desire as anyone else, and would like to know of practical ways to get rid of it, but my situation isn't nearly as bad as other people's, and I am looking for not quite an "easy" way out, but something that I can implement early on that will save me from my addiction mushrooming (as you said).

Additionally, after just looking at the handbook, it presents the 12 steps as when you've hit "bottom". I hope that I've hit "bottom" in the sense that I won't need to struggle in these areas in the future, and that this period in my life is the lowest level I'll ever be on (and the rest of my life will be a straight path up, and not down); however, I don't think I've "hit bottom" in the sense that the handbook means.

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?

Posted by nederman - 10 Aug 2012 02:00

I would say that you have indeed hit bottom because you cannot learn after you masturbate, by your own admission. So I think you could definitely take your first step and admit that "your life has become unmanageable." And if you go to sa meetings you will find that sharing at the

meeting will be a great feeling, and you will feel tremendous kinship with the other people there. And knowing that you have to state your sobriety date at the next meeting will enable you to surrender your lust each time.

That's the good side of sa, and there is more.

On the minus side, you will always see yourself as an addict. And you will be sober for years and then fall without understanding why. And while sobriety is pretty straightforward in sa recovery is not (the concept of the dry drunk.)

Another option is cognitive therapy. Basically your brain is manufacturing your feeling of powerlessness. You have a belief that takes the stimulus of an erva and generates the thought that you are powerless. And turning this off is totally doable. So if you don't want to go with sa maybe read "Feeling Good" by David Burns to see if it speaks to you.

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?
Posted by Dov - 10 Aug 2012 04:28

Hi Chachaman. I am a sexholic and know I am an addict. I am sober today and for the past 15 years and 5 months. I go so SA meetings and share my recovery with other guys. I have many shtraimel-wearing sex addicts who I know well and are in strong SA recovery from lust problems ranging from prostitute use, to 'just' masturbating to pornographic fantasies. And I have a question for you and mean it 100% seriously:

Who in the world told you that you have an addiction at all?

It seems to me that you have poisoned yourself with keeping the struggle foremost in your mind. The 'shmiras einayim crowd' wants this. They love it. For a guy to walk around doing practically nothing except guarding his eyes and shunning pritzus as soon as he sees it, is to them a great victory.

To me, that is not an eved Hashem, but an eved *atzmo*. Or perhaps rather an eved *yetzer hora* - because the yetzer hora has this fellows full, undivided attention! Struggling with mud makes you dirty, *even if you win!*

So please. If you hear what I am saying, and have not yet sworn your soul to the "shmiras habris all the time!" crowd yet, then I have a few suggestions that might still help you with

Hashem's Help:

1- Drop the struggle. Drop the madreigos, too. And drop the s'char for being a kadosh v'tahor. Give it all up. It is poison for you, apparently, and causing far more harm than good. You can do that, chaver. And if you fail a few times here or there, *you will be no worse off than you are now!* And in the end, you will fall **far less**, I wager. For you, as you yourself said, are probably just a normal guy with guy desires, and guy issues.

The more you put this 'lusting challenge' stuff front and center in your mind and heart, the more it **has** you.

2- For crying out loud, brother, please *stop* using the word 'addiction'. It has nothing to do with you at all today. Going to SA and getting wrapped up in 12 steps is not for a 16 year old who is just learning what it means to be a sexually endowed human being and Jew. Sexuality is a struggle, period. Speak openly to a trusted Rebbe about all your bad habits - exactly what you are doing when you get into trouble, before, during, and after. No need to hide a thing. And take his advice - at least try it out. If it does not work at all, then be open and honest and tell him. Then hear what he has to say - perhaps you did not understand his first suggestion, or perhaps he did not really understand your problem. Give peace a chance.

If that does not work, then find someone else you can trust to talk to.

But please let the emphasis for you be on not getting distracted by porn stupidity, images and seeing the skin of women and step-sisters, etc, but on living a nice life. You will not be perfect! You might fall. Do you think hashem is stupid and expects you to be perfect? Really?

He obviously wants you to try to be good - but not to try to be **perfect**. You keep writing above that you are waiting to get rid of the tayvoh and mention your heroes like R' Yochanan. You will never be like him, your rosh yeshivah will never be like him, and even Rav Shteinman will never be like him.

You are just lusting. This time not for sweet orgasm feelings of zera levatola or schmutz fantasy - but for madreigos that are not your cheilek. This is serving your own G-d, not Hashem. He is not a fool, and knows what you came from and what you can be. And perfect is not it.

So. Can you relax, remember that you are a Jew and your Tatty helps and loves you forever - and get busy with really living and doing good - **instead of obsessing about not doing bad**. Are you willing to take your finger off the 'hold button' labeled 'Tayvoh', and let your conversation with your G-d resume again? Live! Ubocharta bachayim!

Much love,

Dov

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?

Posted by mifatfait - 10 Aug 2012 06:59

Chachaman,

Welcome back (I remember you from our 90 time shmini atzeres discussion, back then I was going with the name Mefatfait).

Either way, Dov is absolutely right as usual, I remember when I was in the developing stages of the addiction before it was an addiction, the issues then weren't those of an addict but of a unstable lad busy lusting like everyone else. How I wish someone would have told me what you'll get here when I was just 16 (by the way, you sound so smart and mature, are you sure your'e sixteen and not twenty six?).

At the end I recieved the advice that Dov told you, but it was too late, I was already addicted.

Your'e job isn't to recover from an addiction, but to avoid getting addicted in the first place.

Success is not to let falls become a part of you and your life, if it happens once get up right away and move on, don't fall in the rut because of the stupid yetzer. Tell him clearly you aren't interested in what he has to offer you, you have better and bigger things to take care of.

Torah study is the best thing in the world, that terrifying capability to take us to another place free of anxiety and sadness (and responsibility) that we think only lust has, is found tenfold in our Torah.

In GYE they say Keep On Going, I'll tell you Keep On Growing!!!!

Your Brother,

Chaim

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?

Posted by Chachaman - 22 Aug 2012 22:46

Thank you very much to everyone for taking the time to respond. It's taken me awhile to reply, as I took Dov's advice and didn't visit this website in a while.

Dov is absolutely right; I was paying way too much attention to this topic, and that attention was not only getting me into more trouble, it also magnified greatly my sense of guilt after falls. I have learned a lot from this website--guidelines of Shmiras Einayim, the thought patterns of feeling bored or down that lead to acting out, specific triggers, etc.--but I never thought for a second that I needed SA meetings or anything like that.

I do disagree with two things Dov said: #1, this sin was some sort of addiction to me, though obviously not nearly as strong as that which others face. Any unhealthy habit--video games, reading sports articles, even *talking* too much/lashon hara--could be called an "addiction" if the thought patterns are ingrained enough so that when one is feeling a certain way, the relief is video games, sports articles, etc. Of course, these things shouldn't be treated as "addictions" and don't need the 12 steps or anything, but they might be called "addictions" (okay, that is kind of a strong word to use).

#2: About striving to be perfect. In my view, it is okay to *strive* for something and not attain it, as long as you aren't too disappointed when you don't necessarily reach it. "Shoot for the moon--for even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." Of course, some things aren't even in the same universe, but require steady progress to eventually achieve; I hope to one day be a yarei shomayim, but right now it's such a lofty goal that it's not even ??? to evaluate myself on the standards that go along with it. I can conquer this thing--you're right, definitely not to the extent of R' Yochanan or others, but I can make a lot of progress. When striving to be "perfect", it depends on how you define perfection. I wouldn't define it as the level of R. Yochanan, but rather whatever level I am capable of achieving is perfection; I can strive to be above perfect, and therefore achieve my own *personal* level of perfection. I guess Dov is basically right; for example, I'm not going to "strive" right now at least to learn Torah 16 hours a day, since that's not at all possible right now (but maybe in time)--I'm certainly not going to get down on myself for not learning Torah 16 hours a day, since that would be ridiculous. [At the same time, I'm not going to set my standards too low, either; even if I miss them, I will still be better off than without the standards.]

Anyway, I digress. I would like to mention one thing--I read somewhere (probably on www.briskodesh.org) that R. Nachman was able to work on this issue in his youth until he conquered it completely. This set me on the idea that since this issue is very important, I should work on it too, but I realize now that the idea is totally counter-productive.

Thank you very much for the input. I've learned enough, and I'll try my best B"H to stay clean, occupy myself with other activities, and not worry myself too much about it.

Thanks!

P.S. Thanks for the input as well, Chaim (I remember you too). Thank you to everyone else who commented, though the ????? (or *my* ????? went according to Dov.

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?
Posted by nederman - 23 Aug 2012 01:22

Don't wait too long to come back if it doesn't get under control.

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?
Posted by mifatfait - 25 Aug 2012 20:41

Great decision, Chachaman.

Hatzlochoh Rabbah!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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Re: Please help me--How can I get rid of this burning ta'avah?

Posted by alexeliezer - 27 Aug 2012 16:31

Forgive me for strolling in so late to this party. Hopefully the host is still around :D

Chachaman, your posts are beautiful. You are wise and mature beyond your years. In your opening post, you asked for eitzos. While I agree with Dov that you shouldn't (and *can*) make things worse by obsessing over this struggle, if you are truly motivated to achieve greatness, don't let anyone take that away from you.

As a side note, I'm not sure what R' Nachman was doing exactly. We do know that Yosef Hatzadik, at the age of 17, never looked at Aishes Potiphar. I heard Rav Miller Z'L say this. I venture to guess he never looked because he knew this was the only way to avoid the aveira. Rav Matisyahu Solomon credits his ascension to Mashgiach of Lakewood to his never looking and the high school girls his wife brought to the Shabbos table so her husband could be mashpia on them.

So my eitza to you is the same eitza the Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh gives -- guard your eyes and guard your mind. Guarding your eyes means, as much as possible within your social matzav, don't look at women. This will be very challenging in a classroom of teenage girls and a pretty teacher erasing the chalkboard. [There are online charter schools where you could finish up your HS]. If you do look, and you look too much, ask Hashem on the spot that the image shouldn't settle in your mind, ask Him to take it. Surrender the image to Hashem.

Guarding your mind means not entertaining lustful thoughts, be they images, fantasies, or even the thought that I feel like masturbating. What to do when these thoughts come? Try this tefila. I wrote it just for you. I've used a similar tefila to stay sober for the past 3+ years, but mine has addiction-specific language. Please alter it to your liking, but do say it, or your own tefila, every single time a lustful thought comes:

Ribono Shel Olam, my mind has become unmanageable with lustful thoughts. Only You can restore me to sanity. I turn my life and my lust over to your care and ask you to please take my lust for right now. I don't want to lust. I only want You and a relationship with You and Your Torah.

Bring Hashem onto the battlefield of your mind, at your side fighting for you. You just might achieve that amazing connection you're looking for.

Much hatzlocha,
Alex

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