

From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by qi - 05 May 2013 15:38

Hello all,

I'm in my late 20s and have been masturbating since I was 12. By the time I found out it was wrong I was so used to it I couldn't stop. I saw lots of pornographic pictures online but wasn't addicted until I discovered pornographic videos. I tried hundreds of times to stop but when the inevitable fall happened I despaired of ever fully recovering. That changed about a year ago when I started really trying to stop and when I fell I got right back up.

However, I'm far from recovered. The longest I've gone is 40 days with no P or M. I found GYE a few weeks ago and joined last week. I think it's fantastic that we have a frum site on this. And, it's much better organised than goyishe equivalents.

So here I am trying to kick the habit of a lifetime for a lifetime. I'm interested in the 12 steps although I don't fully understand how they work. But here goes:

Hi, my name's Qi and I'm a porn addict. Porn has damaged my life considerably. It affected my school work when I stayed up till 2 am looking at it. It affected my learning when I needed to leave mid seder to M. It affected my shidduchim in a profound way. It made me depressed when shidduchim were hard. It affected my shteiging because nothing else matters compared to this. It affected my moods. It affected my relationship with my family. It affected my relationship with HKBH.

When I first found out it was wrong I still didn't know how bad it was. I'm ashamed to admit this but I actually masturbated on Yom Kippur once. HKBH please have mercy on me and forgive me.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by Dr.Watson - 22 Aug 2013 13:59

Thank you Cordnoy for your insights. I see what you're saying about the 2 choices, it occurs to me that one is lechatchila and one is debieved. lechatchila I want to be totally clean, no acting out, no peeking at porn, no looking at women in the street (there's a difference between seeing and looking), etc. Why, because I know that if I ogle a good-looking girl in the shop/store, it will make me want to see a naked body that I haven't seen before. My wife just won't do in that situation, it has to be new. I know, I'm sick.

So what I'm saying is that if I start the ball rolling, I will eventually fall. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but it's beyond my control to stop it at that stage. I am powerless over it. So in a bedieved situation when I've already looked I need to admit that I am powerless and I need to turn to Hashem to save me. Please Hashem take away this urge from me before it causes me harm.

I'm not certain if that's what you're saying. If I've misunderstood, please clarify.

The thing at the moment is that I haven't ogled any women or peeked at porn for 10 days, and b"H I have no urge to act out. What I have is the desire to artificially create the urge, so I can start to act out and get the pleasure from that. Chas vesholom, I won't actually be motzi, so I won't technically have done that aveiroh. What I want is to be in a difficult struggle so I can feed my lust and stop myself at the last moment so I won't even have to feel guilty about it.

Why? And who am I trying to kid?

What I'm doing right now is trying to control the initial thought that I want to create the urge. So far so good, but my worry is that I can't keep this up. I so want to be free from this.

I know, I was put here to fight this yetzer hora so really I don't want to be free from it, because then my life would be without purpose, but I'm nervous and worried that I'm going to fall soon, and it's going to hurt me both physically and spiritually.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by cordnoy - 22 Aug 2013 14:10

[Dr. Watson wrote:](#)

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I know, I was put here to fight this yetzer hora so really I don't want to be free from it, because then my life would be without purpose, but I'm nervous and worried that I'm going to fall soon, and it's going to hurt me both physically and spiritually.

Don't worry about keeping it up! focus on the moment. leave the worrying and the future up to God.

also, don't worry about your purpose; just get rid of the @\$%in yetzer hara. God will find a purpose for you. There is so much good that needs to be done in the world.

If you need a purpose, go to Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Square and hang shemiras einayim signs.

b'hatzlachah

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by chesky - 22 Aug 2013 16:16

Why is this

[Dr. Watson wrote:](#)

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different from this

[Dr.Watson wrote:](#)

What I'm doing right now is trying to control the initial thought that I want to create the urge. So far so good, but my worry is that I can't keep this up. I so want to be free from this.

For me I am powerless over that too. If I think for a moment that I can control the "initial thought which create the urge" then I will lose. So I have to remind myself constantly that I am powerless irrespective of how long I have been clean.

In SA the rule is that if you feel really good with yourself it is probably a good idea to call a friend to admit powerlessness.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dr.Watson - 22 Aug 2013 16:40

This I don't understand. It's all very well to admit that we're powerless, but we've still got to make the effort, Hashem won't do it all for us without that.

I understood that when we make the effort Hashem will reward us with success, not that I've done the thing itself but it was a gift from Hashem. But I've got to put in the effort and try and control myself.

Put another way, if I can't even control my initial thought to create the urge, what can I do? I mean at the end of the day it still comes down to our choice and our free will, doesn't it?

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by cordnoy - 22 Aug 2013 17:10

yes doc

as we were discussing....that's the tricky point of what they have been sayin.

step 1 is that we are powerless. 'powerless' means that we cannot control that initial thought.

now, assuming that this is a true fact, our battle plan must be to do everything we can not to put ourselves into such a position, but when we are on the front lines, we 'surrender' (which I don't really know what it means...although its a good word here, for we are on the battle field) our thoughts to God, and tell Him, "You take care of it."

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dr.Watson - 22 Aug 2013 17:16

I just can't understand it. I can't ask Hashem to control my thoughts, my thoughts are my bechira and Hashem doesn't get involved. surely it's my job to control my own thoughts?

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by needtoquit - 22 Aug 2013 18:01

Dr. Watson and everyone else,

I also anxiously await a clarification of this subject. I admit, though haven't internalized it completely, that once I start lusting (heavily) or fall, I'm powerless. When I fall I don't get back up for days (or weeks) on end. However, I also was under the understanding that it is **our job** to put in an actual effort in preventing those thoughts into our minds, via *shmiras aynayim*, blow up method, etc.

As I write this, I just came up with a possible answer. Although, I can **try** to keep the thoughts out of my mind, at the end of the day whether they are there or not is up to *Hashem*. Am not sure if that is any better, but maybe.

Hatzlacha,

NeedToQuit

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Pidaini - 22 Aug 2013 18:25

It is impossible for us to "control" which thoughts we have. It is up to us to decide which thoughts we want to wallow in.

We have trained ourselves to be busy with thoughts of lust for a very long time, and it is difficult to change that. It takes time and persistence and obviously starving it of new material. So what we can do is avoid lust at all costs, and when it comes, tell ourselves "I would love to fight this and show that I can beat it (since if not that means that it is really part of me), but I know I can't (and it IS part of me) and I accept that. Therefore I am going to give away my preference of fighting to take away the feeling of lust and live the way Hashem wants me to live, and right now that is with the feeling of lust"

We surrender our desires, the way we want our life to be, to His desire, the way He wants our life to be. When we do that He will be there to help us.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 22 Aug 2013 20:57

[Dr. Watson wrote:](#)

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I understood that when we make the effort Hashem will reward us with success, not that I've done the thing itself but it was a gift from Hashem. But I've got to put in the effort and try and control myself.

Put another way, if I can't even control my initial thought to create the urge, what can I do? I mean at the end of the day it still comes down to our choice and our free will, doesn't it?

Wow, what a question!

Here are a few copied old posts of mine on the issue you can filter the dross out of, if u want (most in mid-conversation, sorry):

1- ...Maybe to clarify be"H a little 'issue' that brings confusion regarding what Tzadik Gomer referred to. He mentioned the taboo-idea that makes no sense to any non-addict and goes something like this: "Only when I truly give up completely, can I win." It is an idea that countless recovering alcoholics, sexaholics, chronic gamblers, and heroin addicts have discovered works for them, and it is the experience first shared clearly in the book and program called "AA". And it is not for everybody.

But the drunks did not make it up. It's a path toward success in Derech Eretz that is kodmah laTorah, and many addicts have found they simply do not succeed in Torah (or any way of life) unless they have it, first.

In fact, Rav Dessler describes it perfectly when he explains why Dovid hamelech could afford to go to battle and kill his enemies with his very hands and weapons - yet Assa and Chizkiyahu could not. Assa discovered he would lose his proper relationship with his G-d if he had any more active a role in his success than davening. And Chizkiyahu couldn't even do that! Even davening for victory would have subtly convinced him at a gut level that he made the victory...and that would ruin his relationship with Hashem and his avodah would fail. So Chizkiyahu reasoned that since he was far weaker in emunah than Dovid hamelech and Assa, he decided he had to go to sleep. Surrender from the fighting and leaving it to Hashem was the only way for him, because he was lower. And Hashem took care of him just as well as He took care of the two earlier and greater kings: Sancheriv was vanquished. 'We' won!

Those men were not addicts. But al derech avodah the idea is an exact parallel to recovery - the lower one is, the sicker one is, the less of a part they can play in their victory if they want to win. Addicts let go of the entire fight. When we struggle with our drug, we are really just trying to control it...to be like everyone else who can be nichshal 'a little'. But whenever we are 'nichshal a bit, we end up in misery and our lives become unacceptably messy. So we discover that we need to dump the struggle to control it, and give the whole mess to Hashem.

This is surrender. Many well-meaning people here get into the halocha/hashkofah/philosophy - but that's all irrelevant and misleading. Surrender is just a mature, humble acceptance by an addicted individual that he or she is simply disqualified from doing the 'normal thing' and fighting for kedusha as other, healthier people **can** do. He sees that fighting and 'working on it' was not working, period. Instead, it was the very thing that got him into the mess he finds himself in today! Bechirah as he understands it is not working. He tried the rebbi, he tried the shrink, he tried Reishis Chochma, Tikun Klali, mikvah and crying till he fainted - whatever - and it failed him. So? Is the problem in the Torah, the shrink, the tehillim Rabbi Nachman picked wrong? No way. The problem - whatever it is - is in the addict.

Einstein said that judging a fish's greatness by how well it can climb a tree is a very unfortunate mistake. So is expecting to fight his problem and win, for the addict. Saying the magic frum words, "well, of course, I mean b'ezras hashem!" means nothing at all. He is fighting, period, and the ego gets into it - the stakes are high, and the shame moves him to BEAT it and WIN -- for kedushas haBris and for Klal Yisroel, of course... ..and he is back on the holy Teshuvah roller-coaster that we all know so well, again. (I went Coach after the first few years in First class...)

This is not a matter of philosophy, hashkofah, or anything else - it is a fact learned by an individual addicts bitter experience. No religion, 12step book or group has permission to 'teach'

anyone this. I can't say, "you really need this" to anyone! And even if I could - and even if Hashem could, it'd be a waste of time! The only thing that really matters is what you learn and come to know about yourself - and that only comes from experience. And Goy or Jew it is all the same. OK, now for the fun part:

'Giving up the struggle' is not anything like giving in to the desire. I think that ch'shash is what freaks frum guys like us out when we heard it the first time. It is a surrender to Hashem, not to lust. And it does not mean manipulating Hashem into saving us with the 'koach hatfillah'. There is ultimately no shochad here - Leiv nishbar v'nidkeh Elokim lo sivzeh. Period. For an addict that means simply: he is either broken and machniya himself to the truth of his powerlessness and failure, or He will not get Hashem's help and will fail.

This is not our regular 'party line'! Of course it isn't. For example, how can a Rabbi get up at the podium and talk of the full extent of his personal temper, sex, and honesty failures in detail? Isn't he supposed to inspire by good example? No Rebbe does that - none. Even those few who do share their failures and humbly admit their shortcomings do so in parcels. They take care not to overdo it, lest they make a 'chillul Hashem'. AND THEY ARE 100% RIGHT! The typical pulpit Rabbi is not speaking to a kehilla of addicts! Most people (even men!) who are nichshal in these things are not addicts, at all. If the Rabbi would lower the bar, he would be doing a grave disservice to the majority of normal strugglers. Yes, a little admission of humanity is powerful - but he needs to go easy on that. Maintain the perception of near-perfection for his kehilla's own good. And maybe he really is nearly perfect! So?

2- ...My point is that for addicts, taking credit for their sobriety has been found to eventually lead us to not need G-d any more. Yes, that is exactly what taking the credit for our actions the way you describe it does, for many addicts. I will explain, be"H.

But first, a comparison that is uncomfortable: Parnossah. Hishtadlus is often described as a 'mitzvah', though even like R' Yishmael, it is not clear if it is maybe just a heter. Certainly the Rmch"l and the chassidishe velt, too, see it as part of a mitzvah in the general sense. Now, do we need to do hishtadlus, or not? Doesn't Hashem give it all to us mibreicha elyonah? Yes, sure. So do we do our hishtadlus with the understanding that it is just an act - that really the shefa comes from him, and our actions do not make the money? No we do not. You do not. Practically nobody does. But I am sure that R' Yishmael did not argue with Rashbi about that becs he had less faith than Rashbi, c"v! He knew as well as Rashbi - but held we do the job of Odom differently than Rashbi did, right?

And we in this dark world struggle with the faith that actually only G-d provides and that all we

do does nothing and is just part of the curse from the cheit with eitz haDa'as that we must do - and then Hashem gives...yes, it is a struggle.

Sadly, the emess (that no one wants to say) is that we walk around all day actually believing it comes from our work - and with the perfect faith in our senses, that how hard we work is how much we will make. And as frum yidden we struggle - struggle very hard - to fight this false belief inside us, to live as Torah Jews in our hearts, not just in our maysim. The maysim is far easier than the heart! But it is so hard ignoring our senses and the ruach of everyone around us (including the yidden who are not struggling at all to maintain true bitachon)! Only yechidei sgulah go out and work and still have perfect faith that Hashem does it all. Right? Let's please be honest.

Well, for an addict - a true addict - sobriety is just like parnossah. All our senses tell us, "I was sober for a week - I am cured! Boruch Hashem!" - then we fall on our behinds a week later...we wonder how long we can go? Then we 'last' a month, or the coveted 90 days, and celebrate! Then we lose dependence on Hashem, and fall on our behinds. The humility is the most essential part. And the thing that is lost is not faith, here - but humility!

Perhaps your approach is more realistic and more sensible...just as surely the approach of the practical-minded man cries out to go to college, go to work and work long hours for the family even though Torah mah t'hei oleha!

My sobriety gives me my life and everything worthwhile in it. So I choose a drop of real humility over a lot of good sense, and even over what you may call 'proper' emunah.

I still love you, cuz we chatted a bit and I see the man you are. But I am sharing a different approach here that works for me and for many addicts I know.

3- ...So now, how can I share 12-step program concepts to assist you if you are not an addict?

But what I can share with you is this: calmness - not intensity - reflects true bitachon in Hashem. This is the same in marriage - see the young marrieds vs the old happy couple: the old ones

can be so relaxed with each other, for they are confident in each others' love and patience. The calmness is an acceptance of things like these:

1- no matter how hard I try, I cannot stop Hashem from loving me;

2- Hashem is not a dummy, and knows that I will fall sometimes; (We need to admit to ourselves that sometimes we think He fully expects perfection from us - that would be just plain stupid. He 'wants' perfection for us? Yes! He does not ever *expect* it, though.)

3- Hashem is not a meany nor a jerk and does ever hurt me, for any reason - even masturbating myself. Tzaros are only for my best benefit and only out of love and purpose - never ever to hurt me. Any other attitude is saying that He is capable of being bad or acting in any way that is not in my perfect best interest - and he is not capable of that any more than He is capable of dying from Small Pox! Rather, all He wants (as we say clearly in Y"K davening over and over is for me to make him my G-d. He said that the only reason he took us out of Mitzrayim was to be our G-d.)

4- Give Hashem all the credit for your successes. Keep none whatsoever for yourself. Your joy - and it is a very great joy - is to see sweet evidence that He does love you, and that He does use you. Rachamin megulim. Chizzuk is nice, but pats on the back are poison for many. Success is its own pat on the back. G-d is with you, and knowing that is a greater chizzuk than any "You are great! You beat it! You did it!" schmooze can give. Anbd the poison of it is this: we insidiously stop needing G-d. It is the nisayon of wealth - the ruchniyus version. Hashem shows His love to the oni and makes them b'nei beiso (Zohar in many places) because they are like His malchus - d'leis megarme' klal. And the real oni is the person who knows he has nothing at all without G-d - not the person who says he believes that because that's what the sforim tell him to, but the one who knows it. Telling a person he has the power is just a trick to send him away from G-d.

I'll end with a Chaza"l:

Three great kings, Dovid Hamelech, Assah, and Chizkiyahu, dealt with (success in) battles in different ways.

Dovid fought and killed with his own sword. He thanked Hashem and often gave Him all the credit repeating things like, "You steady my feet and teach my hands to make war, put me over my enemies and give me victory."

Assa said, "I am not like my grandfather David - I cannot go to war and maintain true faith in You, Hashem. I will stay back and pray." Hashem gave Him victory over his enemies.

Chizkiyahu said, "I am not as great as my ancestor David and not even as great as my great-grandfather Assa. If I pray for victory and it is granted, I will take credit for it in my heart of hearts c"v and forfeit my true dependency on You. All I can do is go to sleep - You take care of it all, I'm staying out of it." He was granted victory over Sancheriv.

This is the strange truth that the alcoholics knew and plugged into: dependency is the name of the game when facing an enemy that is greater than you. "Ki fadah Hashem es Yaakov, ug'alo miyad chozok mimenu." The more we involve ourselves, the farther we get from Him in these struggles.

Of course there is a time to fight, and fight hard. But at all costs, all the credit must go to Hashem, the only real Power. These cannot just be words - and they are, as long as we thrive for self-mastery. It's about allowing G-d in. Having a broken heart allows Him in - Hashem is with the oni, indeed. So stay low. The letter of the RMB"N says it all. Humility is the foundation of all AA recovery, as is written many times in AA.

I do not know what you need and what is gonna work for you. But there things are very speacial to me for the past 15.5 years in recovery, and they have transformed me, my family and of course, my Avodas Hashem into a calm success. Not perfection, but success.

You can do that too, if you want to. And you do not need to be an addict to do it - just stay honest with yourself.

I am sorry if that was not concrete enough.

4- ...You know the midrash that Rav Dessler explains about the three great kings. Two were Dovid haMelech and Chizkiyah. I can't remember the other one. Dovid haMelech could actually go into battle and swing his sword and guide his troops - and still know it was Hashem doing it all truly in his heart. Only he himself could possibly judge this, and the truth about his relationship with Hashem was what it was all about, to him. If in his heart, he was trusting in himself, he could sense it - and that was intolerable to him. We certainly cannot relate to that - but that was Dovid Hamelech.

The other (later) king could not maintain his relationship and dependence on Hashem if he actually went to battle, at all. He could only watch the battle or daven in the palace, otherwise the increased participation would drive Hashem's role right out of the battle, in his heart - it would seem to him that it was he who was in fact beating the enemy.

Chizkiyahu was even lower than that king. He could not even *daven*, lest he take a part in the battle in his heart and 'push Hashem out', in his heart. So he elected to go to sleep! Bye Sanheriv!

I see addicts place like Chizkiyahu haMelech's. Now, c'mon...normal people do hishtadlus all the time and it's not a aveiro! What's chizkiyahu so hung up on? I see addicts as needing to put Hashem in that role specifically in the arena of their sobriety and recovery. Because we need to admit that all along when we were using our addiction, we were really taking G-d's place, weren't we?

We were saying, "my life isn't going the way it should. Hashem You obviously do not really know what You are doing, so I'll do what needs to be done in order to pleasure myself! I need to manipulate others to treat me the way I want. I need, I need, I need. Life should be going this way, that way, etc.

Recovery is not a time for more of that. Now it is time that of all people, we self-pleasers need to step back. We have lost the right that normal people have of being 'Hashem's co-pilot' - especially in our response to our addiction. It is a luxury we have abused too often. It is poisonous now.

The silver lining is that in recovery, the certain path to gaining luxuries - is by giving them up. In

Tzedaka, what you give away is what you keep. Same in recovery. When we give up on demanding sex from our wives, they relax and start to be OK with sex. When we let go and stop trying to stop ourselves from thinking about lust, we actually begin to be free of it. When we relax and let go of all outcomes - stop trying to control our lives 'so that it all goes right' and instead start to learn how to depend on Hashem for a change, our lives actually get better and better.

"He who runs from kavod - kavod will chase him!" Same idea. But he needs to really surrender - as the Chofetz Chayim pointed out, he cannot be turning around to make sure that kavod is really chasing him!

I flew all over the place with this very long one, and hope this mishmash was clear enough to understand, I am really tired and sorry if it is disjointed.

Hope that was useful, not too boring, and not too whatever.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by cordnoy - 22 Aug 2013 21:20

useful?....that is an understatement!

boring? hell no! I even read the rav dessler vort all four times!

not too whatever?...I loved every sentence, every word.

now, if I can get some of it to penetrate

thanks so much

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by skeptical - 22 Aug 2013 22:21

Dr. Watson

So far so good, but my worry is that I can't keep this up.

chesky

For me I am powerless over that too. If I think for a moment that I can control the "initial thought which create the urge" then I will lose. So I have to remind myself constantly that I am powerless irrespective of how long I have been clean.

Dr.Watson

This I don't understand. It's all very well to admit that we're powerless, but we've still got to make the effort, Hashem won't do it all for us without that.

There seems to be many definitions of what saying we are powerless means.

1) We are powerless. We have found that once we allow our minds to start thinking certain things, once we allow ourselves to look at or do certain activities, we are not able to control ourselves and end up going down a path of destruction.

2) We are powerless. Hashem runs the world. We try to do the best we can, but ultimately we are in Hashem's hands. Instead of getting stressed, angry, anxious, etc., we should turn to Him for help when we are in need.

3) We are powerless. We have done wrong in the past. We may do wrong in the future. We need to live in the moment and do what is right, right now. If we are having trouble right now, we need to ask Hashem for His help, as we should do in any other trying situation. But we must not worry about being able to stay strong in the future, for we are powerless.

As we can see from the above. Saying that we are powerless does not mean that we are helpless. It just means that when involved in selfish thoughts of this nature, we can't control ourselves, and are therefore powerless. We need outside help to learn how to live and to maintain living properly.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 22 Aug 2013 22:37

I just don't get what advantage an non-addict would have in admitting he is powerless, if he is, in fact, not powerless?

The steps are not a religion. They are a set of tools for those who see they have indeed lost the battle. Those who insist on winning, can fight till they win (if they are non-addicts) - or fight until they die with a dirty and disgusting double life (if they are addicts). It all depends on who it is, that's all. And who says that 12 steps is the only set of tools for addicts? Not me.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by skeptical - 22 Aug 2013 22:52

The 12-Steps don't have to be a religion.

They don't have to be a tool just for addicts.

They can also be a tool to help "regular" people be honest with themselves.

Am I wrong?

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof

Posted by Dr.Watson - 23 Aug 2013 01:54

It's getting late where I am, so before i go to bed I just want to say a huge thank you to Dov for sharing all of this with us. I need time to read slowly and try to understand all of what you wrote, but I am very thankful to you for taking the time to post such a thorough answer to my question.

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