

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 Dov - 14 Jan 2014 04:38

[Dr. Watson wrote:](#)

I don't know, Dov. I don't want to accept my shortcomings. I'm struggling with that concept to be honest.

Exactly why are you talking about accepting shortcomings? Why is that relevant to quitting and getting clean at all?

Do you mean 'shortcomings' as in the steps 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the 12 steps that talk of accepting, sharing, letting go of, and "humbly ask(ing) G-d to remove our shortcomings"? If so, that has nothing to do with stopping, at all.

But if by 'shortcomings' you r referring to your masturbation, lying about your porn and your compulsive sexual stuff...then that's not what those steps are directly about, and I thought you accepted all that here already. No?

Clear me up on this ok?

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by thatguyoverthere - 14 Jan 2014 16:57

Dr Watson,

I have been "lurking" on your thread for months. Receiving emails on new posts but not actually going here to write something. Mostly because I don't really know what to write.

I just wanted you to know that I admire you. Most people would either succeed in becoming clean and stay that way, or fail and give up, and leave the forum altogether. You are persisting trying to stay clean despite your many difficulties, and you write about it openly. I admire you for

that. You are not giving up, and I believe that will eventually be your ticket to becoming clean, and staying that way.

Feel strengthened and keep on trucking!

going back into the lurking shadows

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 21 Jan 2014 23:19

You there, Doc?

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by RebYid90 - 21 Jan 2014 23:48

hey mr doc,

i too have been lurking. but i wana post and say thanks. you where one of the first people who posted on my thread a couple of months back, and it ment alot to me. it still does.

and it pains me to see you in so much pain and agoney. someone who took time to help someone else when you yourself is in pain, thats the real deal right there.

so thanks, and id like to send the favor back in kind

im not one to eve nbegin giving advise in this inyun. this inyun i liken to having loosing a lost one (stay with me here)

when you go to a shiva house, the reality is, even if you yourself have lost some1, there is not a single word in any dictionary that you can say that will make the person your going to see feel better. but you go anyways, why? because sometime, just knowing that some21 else care,s and i mean REALY gives a darn, means evrything.

so here to. there nothing i or maybe any1 can say that will truly help you. sure we can give) but the thing that is site is for is realy more then that. its to show u, (and me) that we are not alone in our misery. we all are, and have been, and are trying to be happy. and that sometimes is all it takes. to know some1 cares.

so here i am saying it. i care

advise, and there r many veterans of the war to tell war storys (sup Dov

luv ya bro

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by some_guy - 22 Jan 2014 08:53

Hey Dr. Watson, I have to agree with RebYid90 and thatguyoverthere. Just read what they wrote. They have said everything I have to say. Just by coming back here and posting you are proving that you are strong and that you will not let the Yetzer Hara control you.

-some_guy/Elias/Eliyahu

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dr.Watson - 22 Jan 2014 23:54

Thank you all for your support.

To those who have left me messages which I haven't answered, I'm sorry. I just don't feel up to it right now.

I'm having a tough time and I feel weak.

I would like to get through a few days without looking at any pictures of naked women, without fantasising about girls in my neighborhood, and without masturbating.

It's bothering me that with all the reading of the Big Book and listening to conferences, I was doing better before.

It's hard to swim upstream.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Pure Daniel - 23 Jan 2014 02:12

Hey Doc I feel you. I went through the same situation. When I started the 12 step program i started to fall much more than I ever did before.

I came to realise that this is because somewhere inside we feel the fear that the program might actually WORK.

We then start to feel premature withdrawal symptoms.

So we try to 'get us much as we can while we can'!!

It sounds like you are getting close to hitting rock bottom. Try and get to the feeling that you have truly had enough and then you will be ready to do 'whatever it takes' to stay sober.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by chesky - 23 Jan 2014 18:50

[Dr. Watson wrote:](#)

It's bothering me that with all the reading of the Big Book and listening to conferences, I was doing better before.

I identify with this a lot. After I started going to SA meetings, after each fall, i was really frustrated and resentful that here i was doing the best i could, and i was still not getting sober.

I obsessed and analysed the reasons for this for goodness knows how long.

i can only say to you from my experience is that 1. recovery does not happen overnight. For some it comes quicker than others, but the main thing is "progress not perfection". 2. the reasons are irrelevant. The main thing is that you do what you can. With HaShem's help you will one day have long tern sobriety

May HaShem grant us sobriety and sanity.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 24 Jan 2014 03:33

[Dr. Watson wrote:](#)

It's bothering me that with all the reading of the Big Book and listening to conferences, I was doing better before.

Wow, that's a valid thing to reflect on!

So many here are not addicts - and when they bombard their (normal) problem with 'recovery' talk (mostly about lusting vs not lusting - even though 11 of the 12 steps are not about the addiction!), they just get worse!

And for those here who are *indeed* addicts, the two things you mentioned are not very useful. They are about as useful as a splash of cool water on the face of a guy dying of thirst in the desert - they will make him feel great, will refresh him and give him hope...but he will still die of thirst unless he gets a real drink of water soon.

"Reading the Big Book and listening to conferences" or even to really good Big Book study groups, is actually not what the Big Book *itself* suggests we addicts do to get better, at all. It is *working* these steps - not truly 'understanding' them or figuring anything at all out that saves us from ourselves and our problem. Only *doing* them works, as it says in that same AA book (Ch 5, How It Works): "These are the steps we took." If we take them, they work - if we don't actually take them, but only study them and really admire them, they do not work.

One way to take them is:

writing out a first step inventory by hand and sharing it entirely and openly with a trusted safe person who understands; *writing out* who and what we have been treating as our higher powers till now that make us insane-ish and admitting and talking about it honestly with other real understanding people, then learning whether we really can trust our own G-d and how much - and admitting that, too; deciding to reach for true trust in our G-d (even though we know we never will *fully* do it); writing all the facts we can about ourselves and how (not *why*) we react to things that bother us about this life and the people that our G-d has been giving us; and coming to admit our true defects of character to ourselves and that they are the *only* real cause of our suffering; admitting all the true facts about our defects to another real, trusted person; becoming really ready to lose those defects - or admitting we are not; truly asking our G-d to please remove them, when we are truly ready to start learning how to live without them; admitting all the wrong we have done to others and then doing whatever we can to right our wrongs in some real way - those are the actions of recovery in the 1st nine steps. And studying about them and thinking deeply about them **does nothing**.

None of that is complex and any idiot can do it, with some minor assistance. It's only the smart people who have real trouble with them...like me. So it took me years and years to finally get from 'self-help', to recovery.

Hey - I love you, chaver!! I think you are a very good man, and may be an addict. But regardless, whatever you need, I hope you *do* the work. Then you will surely get it.

- Dov

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by moish u.k. - 24 Jan 2014 18:14

[Pure Daniel wrote:](#)

Me too. Do you still have my number?

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dov - 24 Jan 2014 23:25

The main thing I want to do here is elaborate on the huge insight that Pure Daniel shared above. It is near and dear to my heart!

But first, I want to caution you again against getting persuaded that you are an addict by anyone else. Particularly by anyone who seems desperate to convince you. Ans especially by anyone who seems to believe that practically anyone - especially a *frum yid* - who struggles with the desire to masturbate *must* be 'an addict'.

Maslow (a great, wise shrink) wrote, "I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail." Wow.

You may of course be an addict, Doc, and you may indeed need the 12 steps, too. And you may not. I love the 12 steps and working them has and continues to change my life - and I have emunah sheleimah that I *am* an addict and can explain to you why I believe it just as strongly as I believe in anything else I believe in.

But I came to that conclusion **myself** - based on *writing* out my entire 1st step inventory and *seeing* the facts all together through the context of my life b'skirah achas, and *admitting* all those facts to other safe, real people.

And it was that *last* action that made the knowledge and memories in my heart it so shockingly true and clear to me. I came to know I am an addict because *I took action* to look at it and see it for what it was. Just the facts - no philosophy, no religious interpretation, no psychobabble and no indoctrination. Nobody else ever tried to convince me of it, not even my sponsor.

Please make sure that it is always up to you and that you never get persuaded into anything that seems one-sided or cultish. Especially something like whether you are an addict. If it comes from you, it may actually be for real! If anyone seems to be pushing you, then it is probably fishy. Let your experience speak to you, mainly, and the experience of others. The traditional AA way of 'getting' an alkie, is just to share our own real unvarnished story with the drinker in trouble. They will hear it when they are ready.

And second, I want to caution you that some of the very same people who would try and convince you that you are an addict and that "you just need to finally admit that to yourself," are usually the ones who try to persuade the very same folks that "once an addict, always an addict," *also* needs to be accepted. As though it were a religious dogma of some sort.

And all the Big Book means when it relates that concept (in the story about the guy who was and addict and convinced himself that he was finally cured - and ended up getting drunk again) is that once a guy truly *has* come to see (admitted) that he *is* an addict and is *sure* of it himself - it does not mean that he is no longer subject to denial! We still are very subject to it! Now he may indeed be cured one day - surely we do not presume to *know for sure* whether or not any addict can ever become cured - but what we *can* be pretty sure of this: once one sees and knows that he is indeed an addict, he ought to see and know just as clearly *that all these years he has been a professional liar - to others as well as to himself*. So it just takes a little bit of humility to admit that just because he *feels* he is 'cured', proves nothing. To admit that it is quite likely that the very fact that the idea occurred to him that he is cured and can now drink like normal people, is fishy. He - of all people on G-d's Earth - ought to choose the path of humility and reserve judgement till he has a lot more evidence and time. I guess most sober addicts prudently assume we are not cured, because the only way to know if we are is to try some controlled drinking again and we simply choose not to risk it. Even though it is of course possible that we may be cured. Of course, there are other indicators that we are still ill in other ways than drinking or lusting, such as still feeling character defects pressing us, etc. But that's beyond the scope of this already long, boring megillah, thank goodness!

And in our case, how would a person - especially a frum yid - try some controlled porn use, masturbation, and lusting? Hmm, that's a toughy. Many married SA's discover the subtle power of lust in our marriages, and that is a whole new world to work on - or else we *will* fall again. I

I think that's not the brainwashed way, but just the *humble* and realistic way. See what I mean?

OK, now finally to Pure Daniel's point about why you may have gotten worse in some respect since starting recovery work:

Whoops! First I wanna just repeat the consideration that the *work* you have done since starting here may not have been actual 'work', as I explained above. And that is not taking anything away from you, but just accepting reality - the work is work, not thinking and figuring out. If it were just learning things, then *Torah* surely should work better than anything a goy (or anyone) wrote, anyway!

And it could very well be that if you have mainly (or only) been studying, listening, and discussing the steps and recovery all this while, then once you start to actually work them you will have an entirely different experience - totally different, actually.

OK. But assuming Pure Daniel is correct, and you have been in real recovery all this time, then I want to explain the idea he mentioned a little more.

In Operant Conditioning there is a thing called the 'Extinction Burst'. It happens just before a subject gives up a familiar behavior pattern and accepts a new one. Like when you and I wait for an elevator a while, then hit the button again (even though it is already lit!?), wait some , we may hit

Here in a guy who has taught himself to self-pleasure when things are uncomfortable, or when he is bored, or when he is very happy, or when he is under pressure, or when he just *wants* to...quitting it hurts. It just doesn't feel *right*...even though he is truly frum, his body and heart has *still* learned this and truly feels things are 'just not right'. And it is true. The system is

When a guy feels a real change coming - not a fake change, but a *real* change - he may have that Burst. Old habits tend to die rather dramatically. It may express itself in more lust feelings than ever before. I think he or she needs help then, usually in the form of true loving understanding by others who have been this way before who can simply share their experience rather than tell him "not to give in," or something judgemental like that.

And in (annoying) conclusion, I just want to say that for the non-addict, there is a much simpler explanation. My wife taught it to me most clearly, many years ago, before I discovered that I'm an addict:

Take any normal guy with a yetzer hora and an 'eiver'. He will have challenges, right?

On the other hand, some have no trouble at all...go figure.

Naturally.

Now, tell him that he doesn't *just* have a yetzer hora and an eiver, but that **he is an addict** - ill. And tell him that he 'just' has to be "shomer eynayim all the time - vigilance is the key!," and that life is all a nisayon of kedusha v'taharah, and that Hashem is grading him for every little failure and every little success.

Whadaya get?

Answer: A guy who walks around *all day long* obsessing more than ever about his yetzer hora and his eiver, women, and whether he is lusting c"v or not.

Oh - my - G-d.

A monster is born.

Of course thinking about it *more* creates *more* of a problem.

And that is why 11 of the 12 steps make *not a single mention* of drinking, lusting, drugging, etc. Recovery is not about 'not drinking', but about growing up. When we make it about *not drinking*, we drink again. If we focus on growing up and into real life, we will end up staying sober in the long run. The steps do not **get** us sober and are not *designed* to get us sober. They are for enabling us to *remain* sober if we want to.

I think that is why guys who see this as being really all about Teshuvah, kedusha, tahara, or shmiras haBris, will have a much harder time succeeding. Naturally, since porn is a sin and taking a drink of beer is not, that attitude is very tempting, sure. But once we see it as that, then it is so very easy to believe that staying clean is what it is all about! Shmiras haBris *is* indeed so very precious - even / know that!! But for the addict, it never had anything to do with sinning in the first place! It's a drug and he is an addict, period. Just like a the inner city dope addict or drunk, no difference in the problem, and no difference in the solution.

And the guy who is doing it for shmiras haBris and Tahara may play lip service to the steps, cheshbon hanefesh, and tikkun hamidos. But he may have difficulty because he might really believe in his heart of hearts that the mission is just *not sinning*. Counting the days. The chart.

So the steps will remain just parpera'os l'chochma.

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dr.Watson - 09 Feb 2014 02:58

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Pidaini - 09 Feb 2014 08:34

It's good to see you Doc.

KIT!!!

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Re: From a deep pit to a tall roof
Posted by Dr.Watson - 10 Feb 2014 21:31

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