

yechida's letters

Posted by yechidah - 23 Sep 2013 01:44

Preface to Yechida's letters

With God's help, I start this series of letters to you. I pray that it helps you in many ways. I would ask of you to read them slowly. Even the letters that may not seem to be directly related to the subjects of GYE-though I am never far from those subjects for ultimately everything that I write will lead there. The deeper dimension of all of you being here is a recovery that leads to a transformation. Not an external superimposed transformation but what was with each & every one of you.

It's the removal of the blockage that allows the clean fresh waters to flow from deep within healthy wellsprings that were dormant up to this point-but need not be dormant any longer.

These letters will focus on many aspects of life. I will not shy away from the subject of sexuality & its effect. For various reasons, I will also discuss marriage even though this section is not the married men's forum. But all those "seemingly" non-GYE material that you see here- do not skim over but read carefully. You will find that many of them are linked very strongly to the struggles you face on a daily basis.

Of the 112 pages in the yechida reflection's section thus far , I suggest you take a look there & read many of the posts carefully. Even those who dislike the "poem" format will find many important posts that are not poems that would be very helpful. Read the "light notes" & "soul note" as well as many of the articles posted that pertain to recovery .I will continue to post there as well. But this section will be designated in a letter format-& as time allows , I hope to explore many aspects of life so as to find ways both from chazal as well as from torah based therapies that will enhance life especially married life

I will make one disclaimer. I personally am often very far from the ideals expressed here. So never assume that I talk from the point of an ivory tower or that I somehow have achieved every ideal expressed here because certainly haven't. Very far from it. Very often this feeling of inadequacy has held me back from writing to you. I have struggles with my yetzer horah just as you do. I struggle in every aspect in life just as you do. I daven every day-3 times a day-for my sholom bayis as well as for others. I have seen a lot of siyata deshmaya in this area & prayer is a big part of it. But do not think for a moment that I don't need to work day in & day out to enhance my marriage or to better the chinuch in our home. I look at myself & I see myself full of flaws. I am no expert in any field & certainly not in the area of marriage & intimacy & sexuality or addiction. & this is what very often held me silent. It's a miracle that what has been posted thus

far has been posted. Because I am truly not the role model that is needed. I am a humble student-nothing more.

But despite all this,& despite my reservations & feelings of inner inadequacies, I will write because if there are many ideas & insights that have indeed helped me & helped others-why not share them? & even if they are obvious truths-why not review them? Very often , the most healthy transformations are from the constant repetition of obvious healthy truths.

Here is another point. For many of you, though it's the sexual aspect that pervades your consciousness, & that is the obvious open issue why most of you are here, nevertheless, I sense that for many of you its the symptom of a deeper lack that is felt inside. Sex alone cannot & will not fill that void.& as R Twersky says often "Marriage is not a hospital" But many aspects that will be written about here can indeed fill that void-& healthy sexuality in marriage the way God intended it to be can also help in the filling of the void-but only when one is finally free from the chains of his desires & his only world that has the sexual expression is with his own wife & in recognizing her as a whole unique individual -seeing her not just with your physical eyes but with a deeper soul & emotional connection. Some of the letters here will focus on how to achieve this.

You can email me at taryaga@gmail.com or PM me & I will try to respond as best as I can. Because I have a full schedule, I will probably respond via email quickly during the week & perhaps longer on weekends when I hope to have a little more time . Any suggestions on topics or insights are appreciated. Please forgive any delay & I hope one day God allows me to be able to devote more time to this because it's important. I feel bad that I couldn't sponsor many that need the sponsorship. Let us all not just pray for ourselves but for all our brothers & sisters in pain. & in that merit, may we all be freed from all inner & outer pain & may we all experience true simcha in our lives- & true healing that will last forever & ever

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by yechidah - 23 Sep 2013 01:50

Letter # 1 –Intimate Speech

Dear Brothers & Sisters

Marriage Intimacy is very connected to the Gift of Speech.

We see that when Adam called his wife “Isha” , Rashi states the word “Isha-Woman” is related linguistically to “Ish-Man” -& from here we see that the world was created in “Loshon Kodesh”-The Holy Tongue

The very fact that holy speech is connected to the oneness of man & woman indicates that the success of this union is derived & very much based on healing holy words that are spoken between them. Here is where the Torah decided to teach us about Loshon Kodesh-here is where the Torah tells us that Integral Speech is the building block of the world. Here specifically , where Man & Woman are One –because Isha is derived from Ish-& they are in essence one & the same.

Though Loshon Kodesh is THE language-the only one that is inherent & intrinsic & not man-made, nevertheless, the Chazal placed great emphasis on the power of holiness in the speech of all languages. That is why the Torah was translated in all 70 languages as it says in the beginning of Devorim. So that the holiness of Torah can spread forth into every spoken word-in every mode of speech & language.

We see that sexual relations is also connected with Speech. When the Mishna in Kesubos talks about seeing someone “medaberes”-speaking of a woman-it refers to intimacy. Though many say that this is so as to use a more refined way of expression-many feel that speech is indeed connected with sexuality

The seforim are filled with this concept. That the “Bris” of the “tongue” & the Bris Milah are very much connected to one another. Because when the one is holy-the other is drawn into holiness as well

Sexual intimacy is only fully realized when the Speech between husband & wife is refined, full of love & compassion & understanding. When couple suffer from problems in intimacy, very often the first step (, aside from the obvious which is to be loyal & to watch one’s eyes & sexual purity) is to develop a loving understanding language between husband & wife-that will bind them , Ish & Isha-as One. & it is speech that will bind them as One. Just as words can destroy, words can heal, words can connect , words can draw husband & wife together as One.

Often, to experience physical intimacy in the most deepest way, one needs to learn how to use speech in the binding loving healthy way it was meant to be used all along.

One very amazing & powerful allusion to the concept of refined speech enhancing marriage is in Mishlei-Proverbs Chapter 18

Look at these 3 sentences in Mishlei carefully. The middle one talks about a good wife/marriage.

Look at the two sentences that Shlomo Hamelech put it in between the middle one of marriage

1-(18,21)-Death & Life are in the power of the tongue; those who love (to use it) will eat its fruit

2-(18,22)-One who has found a wife has found goodness, & has brought forth favor from Hashem

3-(18,23)-A pauper utters supplications ,but a rich one responds with brazen words

We see how a description a good marriage is put in between two verses that discuss the power of speech!!! We see from here that Good speech builds a marriage. You find a wife of goodness by spreading the goodness of loving encouraging speech.

Here are a few guidelines to healthy speech

1-Tell the Truth. I know that there are times in marriage when this rule can (& sometimes should) be “bent” .Nevertheless, being authentic & honest is a most powerful way to build trust & develop mutual respect as well as love & kindness. Very often “truth” & “kindness” are viewed as contrasts or opposites. We see that for Kotzk (or keirkegaard in the secular world) to be “true , there is a certain strictness & severity that is sometimes connected with it. This need not be so. R Yaakov Kamemetzky, R Pam, the Chofetz Chaim & many others valued Emes in their speech & life & yet spoke with Chessed & Shalom.

Included in Truthful Speech is not to exaggerate & to be consistent –no double talk-no speaking about someone in one way to one person & the opposite way to another for selfish or manipulative reasons

Use peaceful language-Don't use insulting or violent words , cruel speech, verbal abuse or condemnation.

Even with human flaws , there is a point of truth that is good & kind. Look for that point in your soulmate & speak to him/her in that mode of the beautiful point & build upon it

'I am there for you"-these words-with the deep commitment behind it is one of the greatest gifts you can give to a loved one-be present-be understanding-& use your words to convey & reflect this presence & this understanding

This is "compassionate communication"-very rarely used these days. With all our distractions, even if we are well meaning, it's not easy to take the time & effort to use your ears & mouth to listen with compassion & to speak mindfully. To look at your husband/wife with compassion. To put aside whatever pain or frustration you are feeling & to open up your heart & let those words you need to say –to be said.

This special compassionate communication - especially in the beginning- takes a lot of effort. It's sad that we lost the ability to speak & listen with compassion. But it's a skill to be learned & an achievement in marriage & especially for men & women who have been married for a long time. These kind healing words add a freshness & newness to marriage. I have not discussed it here, but(with God's help later & I have touched upon it earlier) that physical intimacy is very much connected to the healing words of compassionate communication. It can bring even the physical aspects to a whole new dimension. A place when Ish & Isha are indeed one. & it starts with the building blocks of language & speech & the sincere connecting element that lies behind it.

Before we say the "Amidah" we say "My Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise". In various parts of the Yomim Nora'im prayers we also appeal to God that our mouths should express our prayers properly. We can pray for our speech. We can pray for God to help us with compassionate speech. Especially at home-especially with our husband , wife &

children. We often do not realize how healing speech can transform our lives-especially since the positive effects are usually gradual in nature & not sudden. Sort of like the drops of water piercing the rock that Rav Akiva observed that changed his life .Not that slow-but still –not overnight. A lot of growth takes place under the surface until in finally is seen. It's worth the effort because life & especially life in marriage can be beautifully enhanced by practicing compassionate loving & honest communication in speech

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by yechidah - 06 Oct 2013 05:31

Letter # 2-Compassion

Dear Brothers & Sisters

Reb Aryeh Levine ("A Tzaddik in our Time ") writes in his memoirs

" I recall the early days,from 1905 onward, when it was granted to me by the grace of the blessed Lord to go up to the Holy Land, and I came to Jaffa. There I first went to visit our great master Rav Avraham Yitzchok HaKohen Kook ztl who received me with good cheer, as it was his holy way to receive everyone. We chatted together on Torah themes. After we prayed Mincha Gedolah, he went out, as was his hallowed custom, to stroll a bit in the fields & gather his thoughts: and I went along. On the way I plucked some branch or flower. Our great master was taken aback: and then he told me gently "Believe me: In all my days I have taken care never to pluck a blade of grass or flower needlessly, when it had the ability to grow & blossom. You know the teaching of the Sages (Bereishis Rabbah 10-6) there is not a single blade of grass below ,here on earth, which does not have a heavenly force above telling it "Grow" Every sprout & leaf of grass says something, conveys some meaning. Every stone whispers some inner hidden message in the silence. Every creation utters its song (in praise of the Creator)

" The words , spoken from a pure & holy heart, engraved themselves deeply on my heart. From that time on, I began to feel a strong sense of compassion for everything"

From R Kook ztl own writings , we see that he practiced this internal compassion on a very real & powerful level

Here is a small selection of some of his writings on the subject

Great Is My Love For All Created Beings

Great is my love for all created beings, for all creation. Heaven forbid that I should put into my heart even a small splinter of hostility, of hatred toward others. I feel within my entire being my great love for all creatures—in particular for human beings and in more elevated measure for the children of Israel, and a number of degrees of holiness [higher] for those who fear Hashem, who keep the Torah and mitzvah—and that much more for those wise in learning.

I do not desire the denigration of the honor of any human being. I want everyone to rise, everyone to gain honor, be elevated and glorified. I must recognize my inner will, the point of the desire of my soul, so that I may know how to direct my path, ever upward.

I Love All

I love all;

I cannot but love all:

All the nations.

From my very depth, I want the glory of all,

The perfection of all.

My love to Israel burns more greatly

And is deeper,

But this inner desire spreads out in the force of its love

To all.

I have no need at all to force this feeling of love--

It wells directly from the holy depth of Wisdom

Of the Godly soul.

To Love All

How much does [my] heart sigh to love all: all creatures, all beings, all of creation, all the multitude of the things of the Maker of everything, the roots of things, life, power, the rising glory, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, beauty, eternity and beauty, the fundament and the monarchy.

How precious are Your friends, God, and how much does my heart desire to love all souls, and the beauty of the good things and finished things within them.

How pleasant and sweet are the refined spirits of those of uplifted heart, of those profound thinkers, of those with holy yearning, of those who grasp the Torah, mighty in faith, heroes of the spirit, those who create expression and poetry, those who dedicate the holy, those who beautify life and the world, how mighty are these leaders.

How beloved are the pious of the world, [whose] minds [are] filled with the emanation and beauty of holiness. How have I loved all of them together; how strong is my affection for each one of them. How glad am I for their goodness, for their honor, for their tranquility, for the delight and comfort that they find in their lives.

What is greater for me than to take part, aid, work and be active to increase the light of life, to broaden the settings [in which they are set] so that the loveliness and glory will be seen, the divine radiance of the pleasantness of love, of eternal love—which entwines its many branches, rises beyond all being and spreads out over all creation, brings into sharp relief the beloved faces, increases the knowledge, sharpens the feeling, strengthens life, strengthens the refinement and enflames the strength, fills all the breadths of the soul with a supernal might, with the might of God, with the energy of truth and light.

There are many other writings of his that reflect this compassion-but here I quoted a few of them

In truth, we can learn so much & we can transform our lives with the internalization of such compassion. It is not a mere emotion. It's a compassion borne out of an inner wisdom & of understanding that just as God is Compassionate so it is manifested in all of His creations & all of his created beings

How much can marriage be transformed with such a perspective!!! & to practice this compassion towards one's spouse. If stones & grass express deeper hidden meanings , how much more so a human being!! How much more so a fellow Jew!!! How much more so your soulmate, your husband or wife that is internally connected to you!!! In situations where there is abuse, passive aggressive behaviors etc, then this compassion has to be directed in a way that protects the hurt party. So we are in no way promoting a compassion that has no borders & creates more hurt & damage. We see that even King Shaul was reprimanded for having "excessive" compassion on Amalek. But barring any extreme case, & assuming regular human flaws & frailties-compassion is the basis of every Jew's life-in thought, in speech & in deed.

Even in the intimate life of a husband & wife, compassion within the love is what is the glue that binds them. The difference between a healthy desire & lust is very often in that lust lacks a degree of compassion because self interest takes over.

True compassion will remove from a person's heart the self interest that creates a degree of selfishness in this encounter, while a healthy desire is always one that has great compassion towards one another & as compassion increases, intimacy gets healthier as well. Compassionate within the interaction of intimacy has many healing components-for both body & soul.

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by yechidah - 13 Oct 2013 06:01

Letter # 3 –Create your own biography

Every moment of life is a gift. It's an opportunity to fill that time with true meaning.

“Days are scrolls. Write in them what you wish to be remembered by in your favor” (Chovas Halevovos-Shar Cheshbon Hanefesh chapter 3-10th Meditation) .

Even with man's mistakes, errors & backslidings, we need not despair or have our hearts sink into depression. We have the gift of Repentance from Above which transform those times from sins to merits.

There is transformative healing that brings forth great light-even to those moments originally experienced in darkness. This is one of the greatest gifts our Kind Creator has given us.

He knows we are human. He knows we have frailties & flaws. And yet He allows us to transform & heal & become partners with Him in the process & in the world.

Each individual spreading light from within-into his or her range of influence-can make the world a very special place-with your unique stamp on it-one that God wants you to use & give & bring into this world. His gift to you is the gift he allows you to give to the world around you

We need not be superhuman. Not even spiritual super humans. God respects (yes –respects!!!) & loves each one of us-despite inherent limitations-no matter how weak or inconsequential we may seem or may we feel we are.

One great Rabbi once said “Birth is God telling you that you matter”. Each one of us plays an indispensable role in Creation. Human minds may deem such roles as lowly & mundane. But in God's world, there is no such thing as “mundane”. A true leader sees within the soul of every person & senses & intuitively every human beings inner light & gently guides that person to bring that inner light from the potential to the actual

Simon Jacobson in “Towards a Meaningful Life” says as follows :

“You are absolutely necessary. You are indispensable to G-d's vision of the world, chosen to fulfill a mission in this world that you and only you can accomplish Like musical notes in the grand Divine composition, each of us has our unique music to play.”

& he continues in one of his articles

“Yes, you matter, not because you think you are important, or because others tell you that you are, or because of your buying power, monetary value, looks, performance or productivity level. But because G-d put you here. You are an indispensable musical note. Irreplaceable. Period. The world would be different if you were not here or if you do not fulfill your calling. You have been allotted a certain section of this globe, with certain talents; people you will meet; experiences you will have; places you will go; objects you will obtain - all are allocated to you in order for you to transform them, to leave them differently from how you found them. And this change lives forever. Eternally.

When you know that you and your contribution are crucial, it infuses all that you do with a compelling sense of urgency”

May we all try our best to internalize what is written here. It can transform our lives.

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by yechidah - 20 Oct 2013 21:02

(not a letter , but an article on emotional intelligence in regard to marriage)

Emotional Intelligence is Vital for Husbands

By Eric Sentell

Women expect more from their husbands than ever before. The days of us husbands putting our feet up or refusing to share our feelings are long gone. Though we acknowledge this shift, we struggle to adapt to these new expectations since we lack role models for doing so. When I talk to other young married men about our dilemma, they always agree (tongue in cheek) that something went terribly wrong between our fathers' generation and us – and we must discover a solution quickly if we want happy marriages.

The solution is **emotional intelligence**. In his book, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, marriage expert John Gottman claims that the “emotionally intelligent husband is the next step in social evolution.” He’s not necessarily sensitive and in touch with his feelings, but he knows “how to convey honor and respect” toward his spouse. This doesn’t mean previous generations of husbands didn’t convey honor and respect to their wives, but they did it far differently because their wives’ expectations – and therefore their roles – were much different. My father was a provider, my mother a nurturer. When he returned from work, he wasn’t expected to help with cleaning, laundry, or cooking. He wasn’t “disrespectful” if he didn’t do the dishes without being asked. In fact, I don’t think asking even occurred to my mother.

During my first month of marriage, several years ago, I came home from work and sat down on the couch with the TV remote in hand, thinking my day was done. I was happy to perform some handyman task if asked, but I certainly didn’t jump up to fold laundry when my wife put the basket in front of me. If she wanted me to go grocery shopping with her, I went with little patience and some confusion: “I know I should go because she asked, but she can’t expect me to tolerate this longer than half an hour, right?” Worst of all, I was mostly uninterested in conversation. **Though we talked all the time while dating, I assumed a detached role once married.** I preferred to zone out after a long workday and felt little need to interact since we shared the same roof during all of our free time. The reality check came when my wife told me in the midst of a heart-to-heart, **“We’re not friends anymore.”** I realized my role would have to change if I wanted to provide my bride with the happy, fulfilled relationship we had always wanted.

I realized I had to renew our friendship. After years of research on highly-satisfied married couples, **Gottman concluded that “happy marriages are based on deep friendship,” defined as “a mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other’s company.”** Emotionally intelligent husbands not only help with household chores but also cultivate a deep and mutually-satisfying friendship with their wives. They naturally implement Gottman’s first three principles for making marriage work. “Unlike husbands before him,” the emotionally intelligent husband **“makes a detailed map of his wife’s world,” nurtures his “admiration and fondness” for her, and communicates his love by “turning toward her in his daily actions.”**

Although I knew her well, I “mapped her world” by becoming even more intimately acquainted with her likes, dislikes, preferences, passions, and daily frustrations, irritations, and joys. I took time to appreciate all the things she did (and still does) as well as the qualities that made me fall in love with her in the first place. And most importantly, I conveyed my admiration and fondness to her **both directly and indirectly**. I made a point of expressing love and appreciation, but I also “turned toward her” by showing interest in her interests. We already shared many interests and values, of course, but hers were expanding and evolving as we entered a new stage in our lives. She wanted me to share her enthusiasm for cooking nice meals, grocery shopping, and decorating. **It’s hard for a man to be excited about such things, but attentively listening to his wife’s gushing description of a new recipe can add new information to his “map of his wife’s world”** (oh, I didn’t know she loved ricotta so much), nurture his admiration for her (she’s such a good cook, she takes great care of me), and communicate his love more powerfully than any bouquet of roses. **Flowers are cliché; listening attentively and responding enthusiastically to her interests is a much more sincere and meaningful expression of romance.**

I cannot overstate the impact of greater emotional intelligence on marital happiness and fulfillment. It develops deep friendship, which in turn leads to “positive sentiment override.” Each spouse’s positive thoughts about the other supersede any negative feelings, and it takes a much more significant conflict to disrupt their happiness. As Gottman says, “Their positivity causes them to feel optimistic about each other and their marriage, to assume positive things about their lives together, and to give each other the benefit of the doubt.” **When my wife and I focus on cultivating our friendship through emotional intelligence, we have much more tolerance and patience for each other’s imperfections and mistakes.** In the past, my forgetfulness sometimes communicated a lack of respect and love (“If he loved and cared for me, he wouldn’t forget things that are important to me”). But when my wife knows I love, care for, and respect her – because I know she loves ricotta, because I thank her for cooking, because I respond with genuine interest when she talks about how she made dinner – then she just laughs off my forgetfulness. We are freed from unnecessary conflict and can focus instead on valuing each other for our positive qualities.

We still have arguments, of course, and sometimes I’m still as emotionally dumb as a rock. But when I’m emotionally smart, I strive for a mutually-agreeable compromise rather than winning the argument. Gottman believes this may be the “fundamental difference” between emotionally intelligent and unintelligent husbands. Whereas past husbands were the authoritative “heads” of the household, the “new” husband has learned the necessity and advantages of compromise. He follows the fourth of Gottman’s seven principles and lets his partner influence him. **He isn’t a doormat, but he searches for common ground rather than insisting on having his way.** He respects his partner’s perspective and values, acknowledges her feelings, and shares decision-making power with her. **No relationship can thrive if one partner always dominates.** The other will inevitably resent, resist, or withdraw from the dominant partner’s control. One can easily win an argument about a specific issue but lose in the context of the

relationship. The emotionally intelligent husband understands this and reboots his role accordingly.

Most importantly, practicing the principles involved in emotional intelligence are the foundation for living out Gottman's remaining principles: "solve your solvable problems," "overcome gridlock," and "create shared meaning." Solving the solvable requires distinguishing between solvable and unsolvable problems and practicing emotional intelligence to establish a strong base on which to practice more traditional conflict resolution techniques. Couples cannot resolve disputes unless they have positivity between them. **If each believes the other is good-willed, then the focus can rest on the problem, accepting influence, and seeking compromise.** If each believes the other is ill-willed or unloving, then the focus will likely remain on blaming, judging, and resenting each other. Some problems, Gottman argues, are simply unsolvable because their cause lies in fundamental differences. Couples often "gridlock" over these problems when they argue repeatedly with no progress, not even mutual understanding. However, a couple in "positive sentiment override" can minimize the intensity and frequency of the conflict and maintain a happy, satisfying friendship, thus overcoming gridlock. And to experience the maximum fulfillment marriage can offer, couples can use their emotional intelligence and positive sentiment to create a shared culture in which both individuals' dreams, goals, and roles are strongly valued and supported.

Of course, both men and women should practice emotional intelligence, but men usually need to make a special effort. Women and men are socialized into relationship- and task-oriented perspectives, respectively. Playing cooperative games on the playground might help boys grow into good team players, but it doesn't develop their emotional intelligence since the relationships in the games are secondary objectives. In "house," "dress up," "school," and other girl-oriented games, the relationships are the game. So, in practicing emotional intelligence, men play catch-up. But the men who play it well are the future. As John Gottman says, "The more emotionally intelligent a couple – the better able they are to understand, honor, and respect each other and their marriage – the more likely that they will live happily ever after."

(in truth, emotional intelligence enhances all aspects of marriage & there is an emotional intelligence needed in the sexual intimate aspect as well which can indeed enhance that aspect very strongly & generate a love & a healing connectivity for both the husband & wife)

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by dmm11219 - 20 Oct 2013 21:04

Powerful

Thank You

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by yechidah - 03 Nov 2013 07:44

(not a letter but an article on the emotional corrosion of casual sex)

Recently I had the opportunity to work with a group of people from starkly different backgrounds. Most of our conversations were simply small talk. Yet one woman was surprisingly open about her life. Without prodding, she often articulately explained her philosophy on sex and relationships. Having been married and divorced multiple times, she now welcomed “no strings attached” sexual encounters. She thrilled at the hunt and the conquest.

However, studying her over a period of time I noticed that she was often depressed. One day she came to me and asked, “Why does casual sex hurt people?”

This painfully honest question deserves a truthful answer.

Casual sex is sex for physical pleasure only, without emotional connection, no strings attached. Often it's a one-time occurrence. It includes any kind of sex act with anyone, heterosexual or homosexual. In its rawest form it involves total strangers—no names, no history, no tomorrow. It coldly seeks to suppress the development of any type of relationship.

Casual sex has been glamorized in movies and on television. Casual sex membership websites, often accompanied with pornographic material, make it easy for partners to hook up. Many authors praise its advantages. They assure us of the thrilling excitement of the casual sex lifestyle. Its joys are made to appear unquestionable.

The philosophy underlying all this hype is that marriage is out; casual sex is harmless fun;

everyone is doing it; you are missing out—just do it!

This is a seriously flawed philosophy. Risks are minimized. **The threat of possible lifelong damage is ignored.**

Let's face the problem squarely. The misuse of sex brings incredible personal sorrow. Monogamous, marital sex is the only source of true fun.

Casual sex is extremely risky and harmful to all involved. Yet, without question, casual sex experimentation is most destructive to our youth. All parents must come to grips with this problem. Why? Young adults and the youngest of teens are the most likely to be taken in by such thinking.

The current adult generation has yet to deal with the problem of and the problems caused by promiscuous sex. Our sex-crazed society willfully overlooks the bad fruits of its actions.

Contraceptives—including condoms—are not the solution. The harm done goes much deeper than an unwanted pregnancy or being struck by a health-threatening sexual disease.

New brain research proves that there is no such thing as safe sex outside of marriage. How science has come to this conclusion is amazingly interesting.

The Brain and Sex

Neuroscience research has uncovered useful information about how sex affects the human brain. Using mri techniques, scientists have gained a clear picture of what takes place within the brain during sexual activity. Although it is not new knowledge, **science confirms that the use of sex can either give us wholeness—or damage us, possibly for a lifetime.** These scientific facts add support to necessary sex instruction that must be provided to protect our teens and young adults.

Joe McIlhaney and Freda Bush, both ob-gyns, have taken the current neuroscience research and translated it into a plain-speaking, easy-to-understand book titled *Hooked*. Dr. McIlhaney also founded the Medical Institute for Sexual Health in order to tackle the global epidemics of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (stis). These two medical professionals have much experience in working with teens and young adults. They have seen the incredible damage done to our youth as a result of the improper use of sex.

In *Hooked*, the duo confront the emotional and psychological damage casual sex does to young, developing brains. "[W]ith the aid of modern research techniques and technologies, scientists are confirming that sex is more than a momentary physical act," they write. "It produces powerful, even lifelong changes in our brains that direct and influence our future to a surprising degree."

In other words, the use of sex can either keep the human brain healthy or severely damage it.

Emotional Bonding

The brain has been described as the largest human sex organ. Neuroscience confirms this fact. Sex triggers a magnificent biochemical process within the human brain. Three different chemicals flood the brain from initiation to completion of the sexual act: dopamine and oxytocin in women, and dopamine and vasopressin in men. Each chemical is designed to fulfill a specific purpose.

Dopamine is known as a feel-good chemical rewarding us when we accomplish something thrilling or exhilarating. Runners often experience dopamine highs during exercise. Dopamine has an addictive property that causes us to want to repeat whatever we have accomplished.

Oxytocin is present in both males and females, but it has a far more important role in the life of a woman. Science has known for some time that oxytocin is present when a mother nurses her baby. It aids and accelerates the human bonding process between the mother and child. During sex, the release of oxytocin in the female brain helps a woman bond with her mate.

Vasopressin serves a similar function in males. Besides helping a man to bond with his children, during sex it aids bonding with his mate.

How does all of this relate to casual sex? McIlhaney and Bush connect the dots. They emphasize that parents need to understand the role these hormones play in sexual experience.

Concerning dopamine and young people having casual sex, they write: "It seems that the dopamine reward signal is working very well in these young people. Once they experience sex, they want to repeat it again and again. We have discussed elsewhere how sex is similar to drug, alcohol, or nicotine addiction; it is understandable that a young (or older) person would want to experience that same rush again" (ibid.).

The dopamine reward process in the brain is values-neutral: It cannot distinguish between positive or negative behavior. If an individual gets a thrill out of risky sex, the dopamine reward will encourage the repetition of the risky behavior.

Loss of Connectedness

The dopamine reward for sex is intensely powerful. Thus, a sexually active couple upon breakup will often move quickly to sexual intercourse with a new person. In a culture that encourages casual sex, many people are moving quickly from partner to partner. Sexual addiction is often the result. The tabloids are full of accounts of the broken lives of people suffering from this addiction.

Certainly this is a terrible problem that is extremely difficult to overcome. Yet those who move from partner to partner suffer even greater damage.

The bonding biochemicals oxytocin and vasopressin are just as powerful as dopamine. Neuroscience shows that these hormones are released with intimate physical contact such as hugging or kissing. McIlhaney and Bush explain: "When two people join physically, powerful neurohormones are released because of the sexual experience, making an impression on the synapses in their brains and hardwiring their bond. When they stay together for life their bonding matures. This is a major factor that keeps them together, providing a desire for intercourse, resulting in offspring, and assuring those offspring of a nurturing two-parent home in which to grow" (ibid.). Although not new knowledge, science confirms the immeasurable value of monogamous sex within marriage.

Science also affirms a destructive downside to casual sex. The doctors explain: “[E]very time a person has sexual intercourse or intimate physical contact, bonding takes place. Whenever breakups occur in bonded relationships there is confusion and often pain in the brains of the young people involved because the bond has been broken.”

The problem described here also has much deeper and long-lasting effect. The authors report: “Further, there is evidence that when this sex/bonding/breaking-up cycle is repeated a few or many times—even when the bonding was short-lived—damage is done to the important, built-in ability to develop significant and meaningful connection to other human beings.”

Living a casual sex lifestyle spawns a loss of human connectedness. The truth is, we all need human attachment to survive and thrive. Right use of sex promotes personal wholeness and builds stable family life. Casual sex, by contrast, impairs an individual's ability to form lifelong relationships.

McIlhaney and Bush warn that in fact, the emotional corrosion caused by casual sex makes people less than human: “It may sound blunt, but if we try to eliminate this connectedness from sex, we remove the uniquely human aspect of it, and the sexual act becomes nothing more than raw animal behavior.” It is time well spent to think deeply about that quote.

Abstinence Until Marriage

Let's be honest. Science is uncovering what God knew thousands of years ago.

God placed within the pages of the Bible vital instruction on the proper uses of sex. Just after the creation of Eve and while at the first marriage ceremony, God taught our first parents to “be one flesh.” The newly created couple were to use sex to bind them together for life. They were also instructed to multiply—build a family that would rule and beautify the Earth (Genesis 2:24). There was no shame to sex within this God-ordained boundary (verse 25).

We shouldn't need science to tell us what God has already told us. Unfortunately, we have

ignored God. It is likely that humans will also ignore the evidence of science.

Human sexuality was designed by a great Creator God to bestow lifelong benefits to mankind. To reap those benefits, sex must remain within the bounds of marriage. Abstinence until marriage is the only workable safe-sex practice. It is interesting to note that a survey taken among teens revealed that 93 percent of the teens questioned believe that teens need to be given a strong abstinence message from parents and other adults.

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote this in his book *The Missing Dimension in Sex*: "God designed sex to produce pure, righteous, clean, holy and rich blessings! He made it to be the loving bond which not only would inspire a properly mated couple to marry but which would preserve that marriage in love. Sex should be the energizing magnet to draw constantly closer and closer together with increasing love a husband and wife"

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by yechidah - 03 Nov 2013 22:54

another article seems to back up what was written above

How pornography works: It hijacks the male brain

by Albert Mohler

We are fast becoming a pornographic society. Over the course of the last decade, explicitly sexual images have crept into advertising, marketing, and virtually every niche of American life. This ambient pornography is now almost everywhere, from the local shopping mall to prime-time television.

By some estimations, the production and sale of explicit pornography now represents the seventh-largest industry in America. New videos and internet pages are produced each week, with the digital revolution bringing a host of new delivery systems. Every new digital platform becomes a marketing opportunity for the pornography industry.

To no one's surprise, the vast majority of those who consume pornography are males. It is no trade secret that males are highly stimulated by visual images, whether still or video. That is not a new development, as ancient forms of pornography attest. What is new is all about access. Today's men and boys are not looking at line pictures drawn on cave walls. They have almost instant access to countless forms of pornography in a myriad of formats.

But, even as technology has brought new avenues for the transmission of pornography, modern research also brings a new understanding of how pornography works in the male brain. While this research does nothing to reduce the moral culpability of males who consume pornography, it does help to explain how the habit becomes so addictive.

As William M. Struthers of Wheaton College explains, "Men seem to be wired in such a way that pornography hijacks the proper functioning of their brains and has a long-lasting effect on their thoughts and lives."

Struthers is a psychologist with a background in neuroscience and a teaching concentration in the biological bases of human behavior. In *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*, Struthers presents key insights from neuroscience that go a long way toward explaining why pornography is such a temptation for the male mind.

"The simplest explanation for why men view pornography (or solicit prostitutes) is that they are driven to seek out sexual intimacy," he explains. The urge for sexual intimacy is God-given and essential to the male, he acknowledges, but it is easily misdirected. Men are tempted to seek "a shortcut to sexual pleasure via pornography," and now find this shortcut easily accessed.

In a fallen world, pornography becomes more than a distraction and a distortion of God's intention for human sexuality. It comes as an addictive poison.

Struthers explains:

Viewing pornography is not an emotionally or physiologically neutral experience. It is fundamentally different from looking at black and white photos of the Lincoln Memorial or taking in a color map of the provinces of Canada. Men are reflexively drawn to the content of pornographic material. As such, pornography has wide-reaching effects to energize a man toward intimacy. It is not a neutral stimulus. It draws us in. Porn is vicarious and voyeuristic at its core, but it is also something more. Porn is a whispered promise. It promises more sex, better sex, endless sex, sex on demand, more intense orgasms, experiences of transcendence.

Pornography “acts as a polydrug,” Struthers explains. As Dr. Patrick Carnes asserts, pornography is “a pathological relationship with a mood-altering experience.” Boredom and curiosity lead many boys and men into experiences that become more like drug addiction than is often admitted.

Why men rather than women? As Struthers explains, the male and female brains are wired differently. “A man’s brain is a sexual mosaic influenced by hormone levels in the womb and in puberty and molded by his psychological experience.” Over time, exposure to pornography takes a man or boy deeper along “a one-way neurological superhighway where a man’s mental life is over-sexualized and narrowed. This superhighway has countless on-ramps but very few off-ramps.

Pornography is “visually magnetic” to the male brain. Struthers presents a fascinating review of the neurobiology involved, with pleasure hormones becoming linked to and released by the experience of a male viewing pornographic images. These experiences with pornography and pleasure hormones create new patterns in the brain’s wiring, and repeated experiences formalize the rewiring.

And then, enough is never enough. “If I take the same dose of a drug over and over and my body begins to tolerate it, I will need to take a higher dose of the drug in order for it to have the same effect that it did with a lower dose the first time,” Struthers reminds us. So, the experience of viewing pornography and acting out on it creates a demand in the brain for more and more, just to achieve the same level of pleasure in the brain.

While men are stimulated by the ambient sexual images around them, explicit pornography increases the effect. Struthers compares this to the difference between traditional television and the new high definition technologies. Everything is more clear, more explicit, and more stimulating.

Struthers explains this with compelling force:

Something about pornography pulls and pushes at the male soul. The pull is easy to identify. The naked female form can be hypnotizing. A woman's willingness to participate in a sexual act or expose her nakedness is alluring to men. The awareness of one's own sexuality, the longing to know, to experience something as good wells up from deep within. An image begins to pick up steam the longer we look upon it. It gains momentum and can reach a point where it feels like a tractor-trailer rolling downhill with no brakes.

Wired for Intimacy is a timely and important book. Struthers offers keen and strategic insights from neurobiology and psychology. But what makes this book truly helpful is the fact that Struthers neither leaves his argument to neuroscience, nor does he use the category of addiction to mitigate the sinfulness of viewing pornography.

Sinners naturally look for fig leaves to hide sin, and biological causation is often cited as a means of avoiding moral responsibility. Struthers does not allow this, and his view of pornography is both biblical and theologically grounded. He lays responsibility for the sin of viewing pornography at the feet of those who willingly consume explicit images. He knows his audience—after all, his classrooms are filled with young male college students. The addict is responsible for his addiction.

At the same time, any understanding of how sin works its deceitful evil is a help to us, and understanding how pornography works in the male mind is a powerful knowledge. Pornography is a sin that robs God of his glory in the gift of sex and sexuality. We have long known that sin takes hostages. We now know another dimension of how this particular sin hijacks the male brain. Knowledge, as they say, is power.

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Re: Yechida's Letters

Posted by yechidah - 08 Dec 2013 21:59

I posted this in "yechida's reflections" as well. But because this particular post is addressed directly to everyone here on a personal level-in an actual letter form , I decided to post it here as well

you are all beloved by Hashem

never think otherwise

even more than that

No matter what your past was like, God desires the personal interaction with you. He does listen. He does answer. You may not see it clearly right away. But if you look closely-you will see His responding to you.

Deep inside every human wants to connect with his Creator. Certainly a Yid. & God desires very much the personal relationship with you-no matter how flawed you may be or think you are.

Hope is the anecdote to despair. Keep that spark if hope alive. God , in our generation , seems to want the mode of Hester Panim-He is hidden behind a veil

Nevertheless, if you search & yearn & look- & we call out to Him with sincerity-He WILL interact with you. you will see His guiding hand. Don't let the fact that we don't see open miracles deter or weaken you. The sea will not split for you nor will money fall from the sky nor will your marriage turn around in a 3 minute span. But somehow, somehow, even through the veil, you will cross that sea, you will receive money & your marriage will heal

The first thing is to connect with God & ask. Even if you feel there is a "shelo leshmah"- an ego-type motive-don't let that hold you back either. You tell God, true, perhaps some of my requests

& desires have selfish aspects to it-but you also know that deep inside I want to be close to you-
& I am calling you from that place.

So dear friends, don't get down, don't let life's problems overwhelm you. I know how life can be overwhelming sometimes. Sometimes we spin in circles & we don't see a way out of it. & I don't have the magic formula either. I don't have solutions to many problems in my life either. But I do see these glimmers of hope. from behind the veil, I see God reaching out to me. & Im not special in that regard. No. That is not so. Every Yid is special in that regard. God wants to hear from each one of you. & He want your interaction, He wants you to confide in Him & express both your pain & joy with Him.

Our generation is a very confusing & dark one. There is beauty in our generation too so many good things but the confusion & pain is great as well. We cant live without God helping us-in EVERY aspect in life. & perhaps that indeed is one of the lessons of our generation. We see & feel that we need God in our lives-on a VERY VERY PERSONAL BASIS.

He is our lifeline. He is who we can turn too. & He DOES respond. We may feel deep suffering, each one of us in our own way-but He is the Healer of that suffering. It wont disappear overnight. Some problems may stay. But FEELING HIM WITHIN OUR HEARTS will indeed sooth us & comfort us & reframe us & will indeed give up a spark of joy that will eventually radiate & bring great healing into our lives.

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