

Discussing past struggles with others

Posted by Lev Tahor - 20 Mar 2014 11:32

Haven't been on this forum in a long long long time. Had ups and downs during that time, mostly strongly linked to episodes of loneliness in my life. Now after years of dating, I am iyh standing on the cusp of engagement. I wonder what the good people of GYE can advise with regard to discussing these kind of struggles with one's Kallah/wife. I have, and anticipate continuing to have a very open, frank relationship, with the young woman in question, and am generally reluctant to hide things from her. FWIW, the last time I fell substantially was before I started going out with this particular girl (coming up on the famed 90 days).

Also FWIW, I think the nature of my struggles has been more directly linked to loneliness than in some other cases (I've seen how it's been easier and harder at varying stages of my life based on that), and hope I can sincerely say that I've moved beyond the hardest part. So that further plays into my question - hoping, praying, and proactively ensuring that is in my past makes me feel it is less important to discuss - although I still think the question might come up one day as to how do I know as much I do about these matters...

Hope my question makes some sense! I searched and couldn't seem to find it having been brought up in the past. Thanks for all you do!

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others

Posted by MBJ - 20 Mar 2014 13:43

First off, Mazel Tov on the impending engagement.

If you really think that your stuff is behind you, I see no reason why you would want to burden another person with it, especially your wife. But maybe someone with more personal experience can give you better advice.

One thing I will say is that I can relate to using porn and masturbation to alleviate the feelings of loneliness. But it is also possible to be lonely in a marriage. Thinking that marriage is a magic potion to solve your problems in this area is a very common misconception, that never ever works.

Good Luck

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by Lev Tahor - 21 Mar 2014 05:14

Thanks for your prompt response!

Well aware of that pitfall, of thinking that marriage will automatically solve all. (Maybe everyone they know that, but I really believe it.)

I understand that there's no reason to randomly burden anyone with my past as it were. I raise the issue specifically because I see this kind of discussion coming up...being asked how I know certain things, or whether I ever struggled with it. We do have an open relationship and I can totally see such a conversation coming up.

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by mr.clean - 21 Mar 2014 08:23

I've heard from many rabbim that if u feel u are health/past this then there is no reason to discuss the past. Ive always felt like u that I wanna start a relationship with complete openness and transparency, but people say that its unhealthy to be so open and that there are some things u just dont say.

I myself have been worried about this bec I'm also gonna enter the parsha nowish and I really feel confused. Ultimately u should rely on on a rebbe, they will tell u what to say and how to say it or if to say anything at all.

I hope we hear simchas real soon pls keep us posted! hatzlacha!

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by gibbor120 - 21 Mar 2014 20:02

Welcome LT! Can you discuss it with someone you respect and trust like a Rav?

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others

Posted by Lev Tahor - 24 Mar 2014 11:55

There's really no one I can discuss this with in any detail...I'm surprised there isn't more of a response to this - I would think it's a fairly common scenario.

[gibbor120 wrote:](#)

Welcome LT! Can you discuss it with someone you respect and trust like a Rav?

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others

Posted by Avrom - 24 Mar 2014 16:36

The reason nobody is responding clearly is simple:

Because it depends on many factors, some of them include:

-how long was your struggle?

-how long are you clean?

-what was the quality of the time above? (Holding your breath? Many slips?)

-do you go to SA, or any other program?

-do you plan on continuing these after marriage?

-what else are you planning to do to stay clean?

I wouldn't trust myself or an ordinary GYE member . Speak to a rav a shrink or to dov (I spoke to all three)

Another point: Even if you do share it, you may not have to say everything.

I once heard that when wives find out that their husband betrayed them, by watching porn - they blame themselves, because they think they are not good enough. The truth is so far from that, as we all know. So if for any reason ch'v you end up having the same struggles again - by telling her now, that you "once upon a time" had these struggles, it will help her (and your relationship) knowing that the problem existed without her.

This is a very delicate situation, Make sure to daven! Ask hashem to help you with the right decision. You can be proud that your doing this. Many just try to ignore their history (which is a bad idea), but you are ready to do the right thing,

Ashrecha!

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others

Posted by Hope - 25 Mar 2014 02:22

I think there is something else important we should be aware of. All the struggles we do bring up are perfectly human (as long as it doesn't go beyond addictive behaviour) and it is a very difficult and challenging struggle and specially when you feel a bit down. The issue we are discussing is that they are Aveiros, however small they are, but they are difficult to deal with. I think we can till some extend unburden ourselves and shouldn't get confused and think that we always have a real problem.

Do I make sense?

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others

Posted by mr.clean - 25 Mar 2014 05:37

i completly agree i thought that more would be said on this topic. but the truth is that the only real answer is to ask someone with expirance. i am curios to know what u end up doing or plan on doing seeing as im in/gonna be in a similar situation soon.iyh.

hope if i understand what ur saying then yes totally makes sense, are u saying that not necesserally are we messed up just we have taiva and a hard time overcomming it and so we shouldnt always beat ourselves up,rather we should know when its addictive and when its taiva?

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by Hope - 26 Mar 2014 12:20

Yes, that is what I meant. You know in the Goishe world, a lot of parents would encourage their teenagers to go and explore with these things, point being because it is a natural thing and considered normal. Therefor I say to Jewish teens, who struggle with this that it is 'normal' but 'Osur'

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by skeptical - 26 Mar 2014 21:28

It seems to me that there are blanket statements being made here.

Just because the behavior is common doesn't mean it's a healthy thing to do.

Just because the goyim encourage it doesn't mean that they aren't mistaken.

Just because some can do it without it being a problem, doesn't mean that it can't be a serious problem for others.

The reason we are here is not **just** because it's ossur.

Yes, it **is** ossur, but that guilt will not get us very far. In fact, the guilt will most likely have the opposite effect.

The problem is that many of us have learned that whenever we encounter things in our lives that are uncomfortable, instead of dealing with them in a healthy way, we instead to seek to escape into our fantasies and pleasure, and then we and everyone in our lives suffer because we are neglecting real life.

"Normal" behavior in our messed up society means absolutely nothing. We live in a society where boys are taught from their earliest moments that girls are objects to be acquired. Society teaches that for girls to have any value, they need to be super attractive and dress in a way that shows off all their "assets."

There are many goyim who are also realizing that porn and masturbation has messed them up and are getting the help they need. They have no issur, so why don't they just continue and be happy? Because they're **not** happy. Their lives are deteriorating all around them, because they're too busy escaping it, and they realize that if they don't do something, they will lose way too much.

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by skeptical - 26 Mar 2014 22:09

I can't legitimately give advice on whether or not you should tell your kallah* about your addiction, because when I was in that situation, I didn't. I could only share my own experiences.

skeptical

This whole issue started when I was a young teenager. With the internet in its infancy, I had my own computer in my own room and I had hours to explore. I knew that what I was doing was wrong, but I was extremely curious, nervous about the topic, and fascinated. I tried a bunch of times to install filters, but then I would always open them up. I tried to write tiny letters on my calendar to indicate that I would try to stay clean those days, it didn't work. I deleted accounts to certain services but would then just open new ones. I was just way too interested in the stuff.

I got a little older and went away to a yeshiva. While at yeshiva, I was able to stay clean without a problem. I didn't keep track how long I was clean - that wasn't really a thought at the time, so I

have no idea how long each stretch was. Each time, I thought I had it beat. Then I would go home and just out of curiosity, I would go to certain programs/sites just to see if the people I use to interact with were still there. Pure stupidity. In reality, I was testing myself to see if I still had the desire for the stuff - and I failed miserably. And you know how it usually goes. Once I fell, I was a failure and would stay down for a while.

Then I started going out, looking for a shidduch. Would I share this most embarrassing side of me with anyone? No way! Once I'd get married, there'd be no reason to do this stuff anyway, I'd have the real thing and then I'd be cured! From the time I met my wife until about 3 months after my chasuna, I was clean. I remember just before my wedding, I was a bit down that I had never really beaten my YH before it was game over for him by default. How foolish! Life after marriage is stressful too (who knew?) and one day while at home on the computer, I once again decided to check out places I used to frequent just to make sure the YH was really dead. It wasn't.

A year or two after I got married, while I was at work, my wife came across a browser I had accidentally left open. That was the beginning of years of pain and anguish for the both of us. She was extremely hurt by my actions, and my world was coming crashing down around me. My deepest, darkest secret was out. I may have resolved to stop, but at that point it was only half-hearted. The truth is, I didn't see why she was so bothered, and I didn't feel she really had the right to be. This stuff numbs us, it numbs our feelings, and it did a good job on me. To me, it was just simply a way to wind down at the end of the day and though I knew it was wrong, I felt it was something that was between me and Hashem. My wife on the other hand wouldn't buy that. She started speaking to people in the community and soon Operation-Get-Me-Into-Therapy-Or-The-12-Steps began. I was hurt, frustrated, embarrassed and annoyed. My deepest darkest secret, the one I wouldn't dare breathe to a soul was coming out...

*** Rabbi Dr. Twerski**

There is an adage, "You're only as sick as your secrets." Revealing information that may ruin a shidduch is understandably very difficult, but keeping it secret creates a constant anxiety and a barrier to mutual trust and sincere communication. Marriages have enough problems without adding secrets.

In the case of alcohol or drug addiction, we generally tell people to avoid even getting into a relationship before one year of solid recovery and with the approval of one's sponsor. One month sobriety is hardly a beginning.

There are many variables. How long was the addiction? Does the person still have urges?

Whenever one decides to tell, one should say, "I must tell you something about myself, but it is with "Bal Tomar." You must promise not to tell it to anyone else.

Twerski

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by Lev Tahor - 08 Apr 2014 07:42

Thank you for all the responses. The main theme I'm seeing is that not denying past struggles, both to oneself and to one's spouse, is the healthiest way forward. I'm BH at the point where I am comfortable enough to discuss that this is something I've struggled with. At least in my case, I've find communication to be key. I don't know if all engaged couples are able to be so frank with each other though.

I Daven that my struggles shouldn't have any long term resurgent effects on my relationship with my Kallah (we're now engaged bh) - any guidance about what I can expect, and need to look out for, would be appreciated.

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by skeptical - 08 Apr 2014 21:47

Mazel Tov on your engagement!

Just keep in mind that there's a difference between being open and honest, and sharing all the excruciating details.

Hatzlacha!

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Re: Discussing past struggles with others
Posted by dms1234 - 08 Apr 2014 22:55

MAZEL TOV!!!!!!!!!!

Agree with Skep but also do you have to tell her you have a lust addiction. Perhaps just say you struggle with Shmiras Eiyenaim? I am no way qualified, just a thought.

Anyhow, Mazel Tov!!! And I assume things are going well?

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