

Working on my low self esteem

Posted by DavidT - 03 Feb 2021 20:50

I was just walking in the street and a very respected "*magid shiur*" passed by. My first thought was, "wow, this guy in a million times more worth than me! I'm a piece of trash compared to him..."

But then I thought, "if I go in the street now and try to guard my eyes and thoughts, I'm doing the will of Hashem even if it's not easy. Who knows what's more special to Hashem..."

It's very important to work on self esteem because people who suffer from low self-esteem and/or depression are often more prone to addictive behaviors (be it alcohol, drugs, or lust). We use the addiction to "self-sooth" feelings of inadequacy, and to escape from ourselves and from the harsh world around us.

Also, the "low self-esteem" is - *initself* - a form of addiction as well. "It" wants us to believe we are un-likeable, incapable, and that no one really cares about us. This is a kind of self-defense mechanism that we often use as a sort-of shell to hide within. Instead of facing our *real* issues (which we find too hard to face), we use "low self-esteem" to say, "*Heck, we aren't worth it anyway; no one cares anyway; we **can't** anyway*". *etc. etc...* and we close up within ourselves.

Any ideas?

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Re: Working on my low self esteem

Posted by wilnevergiveup - 03 Feb 2021 21:30

Tell me about it.

This s something that I and many others have posted about many times in the past, maybe we can collect some of those posts and post them together here.

Also, are you looking for tools or chizuk?

Hatzlachah

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Re: Working on my low self esteem
Posted by DavidT - 03 Feb 2021 21:44

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 03 Feb 2021 21:30:](#)

Tell me about it.

This s something that I and many others have posted about many times in the past, maybe we can collect some of those posts and post them together here.

Also, are you looking for tools or chizuk?

Hatzlachah

"tools or chizuk?" I guess both...

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Re: Working on my low self esteem
Posted by wilnevergiveup - 04 Feb 2021 15:53

Here are a few things that I wrote in the past, let me know if this is even close to what you had in mind.

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 01 Sep 2020 06:30:](#)

[OivedElokim wrote on 31 Aug 2020 21:10:](#)

It seems to me that you have two issues that should be separated and dealt with separately:

1) depression and burnout from yeshiva life , learning etc.

2) a porn and masturbation issue.

Not sure if I agree 100%, I think they are very much connected. Although it's true that p and m issues need to be dealt with on it's own too, it's almost always caused by some underlying issue. Unless you are a full blown addict, it can be much more effective to work on underlying issues as well (in my case, low self esteem and general lack of fulfillment in life). This will help prevent a significant percentage of triggers thereby making your struggle much more focused on just the struggle.

I am no expert, just sharing my understanding, but usually we act out as a pleasure seeking activity. This is usually a result of a need to cover up some uncomfortable feeling we are experiencing. This is true regardless of if we started acting out before we had these issues because we still use them as our "feel good fix", now, just as many people start unhealthy eating habits in early childhood but only start using eating as a fix later on.

It's true that it can get overwhelming to work on too many things at the same time, so you have to take it slow. There is no quick fix, it takes time to grow, a lifetime in fact.

I was once told to think of it like a plant, there is only so much you can do, water it, prune it, etc. If you don't do these things it won't grow and will eventually die, but if you try do do more,

thinking the more I do the better it will grow, then it will die for sure.

@klishavur your story sounds eerily familiar. I struggled a lot with the question of "who is the real me?"

I suffer from low self esteem and in my case, I believe, I became really "shtark" as a result. As I grew and worked on it, I kind of just lost the drive. I realized that a huge part of my drive was to prove "them" wrong. I wanted to prove my parents wrong, my Rabeim wrong my Menahel wrong, all the people who had written me off, I wanted to shove it in their face. I wanted to show them, you see, I can go to this Yeshiva (one of the top places in EY) and it's not even because of you. As I grew I kinda didn't really care about "them" anymore. The truth is the "them" didn't really exist anymore.

This made it very hard for me to find motivation and I went through a tekufa where I was really depressed (oh, and btw also one of the worst in acting out as well, coincidence?).

It took me a while to get back to somewhere stable and in the meantime I played the part of what I thought I was expected to be.

One takeaway is that no matter what drove me, no one can take away what I did accomplish, even if it wasn't with good intentions. I still grew by leaps and bounds, during my "flipout" stage.

Now I am just a regular guy in kollel with nothing to prove just doing what I realized I really want to spend my day doing.

It took a few years to inspire myself again to continue to learn full time because I had to build scratch. I learned all the classic sefarim a few times, got a better picture of what life is about, thought about it a lot, and in the end I now am in a much healthier place then I was back then, even if I am not as *shtark*.

Then I was selfish, now I try to do things for others and my creator.

This is my story and I think it relates in some way to yours.

Once again, it takes time.

Feel free to reach out if you need, or disregard if I am totally off.

All the best,

Wilnevergiveup

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Re: Working on my low self esteem

Posted by wilnevergiveup - 04 Feb 2021 16:11

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 04 Jan 2021 05:39:](#)

[YeshivaGuy wrote on 04 Jan 2021 02:52:](#)

If I had a low self esteem etc then it wouldn't bother me so much. But I really beleive in myself that I can become a Big Talmud Chacham and Oved HaShem.

And that's what bothers me, that I'm not pushing harder. Not enough Mesirus Nefesh...

Every single time I attempt to get better to get back on track, I just fall back down.

So what's the mahalach?

Not to get into a whole debate here but low self esteem is exactly that. people with low self esteem usually have master plans for their future and believe they have potential but feel like they are not worthy in the moment. Trust me, this is my life, I feel like I really can learn well, I imagine myself handling with my Rosh Yeshiva, yet I never actually do, because I think I will be "found out" that I am really not as good as he thought I was etc. For some reason, in the moment we forget all the grand plans we had for ourselves.

It's hard to say what the eitzah is as it can vary but there are two mehalchim depending on where you find yourself.

I once heard from a rebbe of mine that when struggling to find cheshek (for someone who usually has it) do the motions that you would normally do and don't beat yourself up if you don't learn or daven the way you are supposed to. Try to just show up and be proud of just showing up and doing the motions and it will iy"H pass. This can be called mesiras nefesh if you want but the point is not to go totally against your will, rather to prevent it from getting worse while at the same time holding on to the potential to getting back into it.

The other mehalech (they can be done at the same time) is not to overthink things. A different Rebbe once told me that in yeshiva, when you want to do something and are start second guessing yourself, just do what came to your mind first and be confident. Don't think too much just do it and move on. This helps you not overthink everything.

As long as you are still in yeshiva, you can be confident that if you just go with the flow you will end up in a pretty good place (not to minimize trying harder but you know that you are in good hands). You don't have to think too much, just go with the flow and you will shteig. My Rosh Yeshivah always tells me "Ploiny, you have to stop thinking!"

So to sum it up, yes the mehalech is to keep moving forward, it seems like you figured this out yourself already but just make sure not to much, go with the flow and IY"H things will fall into place.

P.S. This is the story of my life (I wrote about it on my thread and a few other places) life has it's ups and downs, but the bigger the challenge the bigger the thrill. It's like surfing, the only fun part is the wave, the bigger the wave the bigger the thrill.

Ride them waves!

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 05 Jan 2021 07:12:](#)

Wanna hear my take?

My point was that having *sheifa legadlus* doesn't mean that you don't have low self esteem in fact it could (possibly) even be the cause of it.

Not to take away from having master plans for your future but I was trying to give *eitzos* for breaking out of a funk. We need to identify ourselves by our growth and take the lows as opportunities to grow. Someone like myself likes to identify himself by the lows in order to inspire himself to push harder. This is where I think many people go wrong. In the confusion of trying to become great people (which is a great thing by the way) some mistakenly try to inspire us by showing us our shortcomings and how far we are from our goals. For a healthy person it's debatable whether this is effective, but for most of us with weak self esteem, we begin identifying ourselves by our shortcomings. At first, it may seem inspiring and push us to push ourselves (and that's why our Rebeim do it, because they see instant results) but in the long run it causes us to break down. This can be compared to hitting a child out of anger, where you will see instant results but the actual chinuch value is a negative one.

Mesilas Yesharim in perek 1 describes where we are going. The reason why this is so important is because if we are not going anywhere we can never grow. This does not mean we will ever get there. Take a look at Da'as Tevunos perek 9 se'if 2 where he says clearly that we all have a specific task to complete in this world and no two people have the same task and that we cannot know what this task is. If this is so, how could he say in Mesilas Yesharim that everyone's goal is the same?

I think the answer is that since we don't know what our exact task is, what we do know is that if we use the characteristics that Hashem gave us and we follow the path that leads to a certain goal, we will accomplish our task. Because every person has different characteristics every person's journey will look different, and based on that we will IY"H fulfil our task in this world. So

the concept of understanding *chovaso b'olamo* is not that we must achieve *shleimus* or we failed our task, rather that we need to use *shleimus* as our beacon, as our destination so that we can be certain that we are hitting all the right milestones along the way. Each and every person will be taking a different route to get there based on there specific nature and with Hashems help will reach what they were put on this world to accomplish.

So, practically, I think that it is important to have a big *sheifa*, but primarily as a destination and not as a goal. The only way to get anywhere is by making a plan and that means making real tangible goals and a way to reach them.

I didn't mean you have to make more realistic goals, I meant they have to be more tangible. Trust me, I have a lot of faith in you becoming a gadol hador, that is not the issue here. My point is that in order to get through the trials of day to day life you have to make goals that are real and tangible in your life right now. It's not enough to have *sheifos* (aka dreams) about the future, you have to backtrack and figure out, if that's what I need to be then, what does my day have to look like now. If my day needs to be a certain way today, what kind of goals do I need to make for today and what do I need to do to accomplish them.

You spoke about struggling with shachris. Many people struggle with getting up, the mehalech is not beating yourself up, rather it's pushing through and realizing that even though something is hard it still can be done. It also helps to learn about the inyan that you are struggling with. Rav Shimshon Pincus has an excellent sefer called "Shearim B'tefillah" if you want to try this.

In my experience, being a few years older than you and having been through many of the struggles you describe, I found that having expectations of myself usually leads to failure. The mehalech that works for me is to backtrack and try to figure out what I need to do today in order to become great, not because I expect myself to become great, rather because that's the destination. Don't have expectations of yourself, rather a destination, and a route. The route is a plan that includes goals and how to reach them.

Feel free to disagree, if you do, I would love to know why.

Nothing like a good debate.

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Nothing like a good debate.

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 25 Jan 2021 08:56:](#)

[YeshivaGuy wrote on 25 Jan 2021 03:20:](#)

...but I'm not some massive tzadik. I got a lot of middos to work on- chesed,savlanus etc etc.

gotta work on my bitachon, on my learning/Tefilla etc.

So I overcame some hard nisyonos, nu nu.

Hows my learning? Davening? Middos?

A couple of nisyonos sure ain't making me a Talmud Chacham or getting me to Olam Haba!

...It's not like I'm some massive masmid and Baal middos

The answer?

Im a stam guy.

And there is nothing wrong with that! The most important step to greatness is being comfortable in your own skin. This doesn't mean to shortchange yourself, it means to grow apples from apple trees and tomatoes from a tomato vine and not try to grow watermelon trees. Watermelons were just not meant to grow on trees because they will get too heavy and smash onto smithereens when they come crashing down...(and ouch, if anyone happens to be passing under...).

If you want to become all of those things (massive masmid, massive talmid chacham, gadol hador etc.) the way is by growing with your strengths.

There is something fascinating that I noticed whenever I speak with my Rosh Yeshivah. He always says "when I was in your stage..." and he would go on and explain how he dealt with all the issues that I am going through. Now my Rosh Yeshiva is the R"Y of what is considered a top Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel with hundreds of talmidim and thousands of alumni. It fascinates me every time that he (at least he says) went through most of the *nisyonos* that we all go through. I am pretty sure that if I want to become anything like him, it's going to be by being aware that every great person has his struggles too.

Something that I found to be far more powerful than reaching for the stars, is aiming for consistency. When setting goals, work on whatever level you can be consistent on. Again, I don't mean to shortchange yourself, but if you want to see real growth, then really work on being consistent. If you are having a hard time, you either need to change the goal, or change the plan (oh yeah, and you have to have had a plan in the first place to change it...).

I had a baby recently and among other things that have fallen onto my shoulders, I have to take my daughter to school. I got to a later minyan in shul and had to leave right after *chazaras hashatz* in order to get my daughter out on time. For some reason (maybe it's just perceived) I was getting lots of dirty looks for leaving so early. Inside, I was also feeling guilty but then I realized that it was still better than davening at home! I got up early, I got out of the house to daven and I even stayed through *chazaras hashatz*, are those not things to be proud of?

I don't think you need us all to tell you how good you are, I think you need a kick in the pants (HHM, you are welcome to have the honors), or someone to dump a bucket of ice cold water on your head!

You don't have to be something in order to become it, you have to become it in order to be it.

For more on this, I would recommend taking a look at a book called "The Gifts of Imperfection" by Brene Brown. There are lots of great books on low self esteem but this one is above and beyond. It's way better than anything else I have ever read and it's not just a bunch of useless information. You can also watch her Tedtalks [here](#) and [here](#) they are also great.

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Re: Working on my low self esteem

Posted by wilnevergiveup - 04 Feb 2021 16:18

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 13 Oct 2020 08:33:](#)

[YeshivaGuy wrote on 13 Oct 2020 01:16:](#)

Pretty stressed.

Felt empty today. I feel like I just wasted time.

So hard to not be in a Makom Aliya.

The Yetzer wants to build off this and make me masterbate, go online etc, after all, I had such an empty and pointless day with barely any learning, and everyone around me is just so stressed out- driving me nuts.

I'm not giving in, but it still feels superhuman,

feels like I'm fighting absolutely everything-defying nature.

Which is so difficult.

Feels like I'm restraining a lion on a leash.

Anyway folks, thnx for hearing me out.

Hatzlocha!

I want to address this point as it is something that I struggle with as well.

I want you to really ask yourself "did I really have a bad day?"

If you answer yes then ask yourself why, give yourself the whole shebang and then write it down (I write it on a google docs sheet) and **FORGET ABOUT IT**. You don't have to worry, if you ever want to remember, that's why you wrote it down, so just forget about it.

Now ask yourself, amid your awful day was there anything that you did do well? There is always something, did you wake up on time, did you daven, if you woke up late and still davened that an accomplishment too. were you kind, did you help someone out, did you make someone feel good. I can go on and on I am sure the list is quite long.

Focus on all the good that you do and try to build on them.

Aaaah, so why do we feel like losers?

This is the million dollar question and the answer is, well I don't really know the answer for every situation but I will suggest an answer that you may relate to.

When we make goals for ourselves, we tend to set goals based on what we feel the most guilty about, instead of what we will actually grow from.

This creates expectations for yourself and when these expectations are not met we feel like a failure.

We have to learn what to expect from ourselves and what not to but especially we need to learn to set the correct goals.

For example, two days before Succos I spent most of the day working on the succah and helping my wife in the kitchen with little time to learn or do some of the other things that I had planned.

I felt awful, I had planned on having a four hour first seder, learn my mussar, do my workout and finish a project that I was working on and I didn't get to any of those.

My whole day was a mess, I was stressed that I didn't get to all those things and I was stressed

about having to take care of the things that I had to take care of because they were preventing me from reaching my goals.

After the day was over I sat down and said to myself wow what a bad day, if the rest of bein hazemanim goes like this, I'm done for.

Then I realized that I can still change my goals retroactively. I said, listen here, today your goals are to daven before the zman, learn twenty minutes, finish building the succah, help my wife when she needs me and read Dr. Seuss books to my 2 year old so that my wife can work.

Wow! What an accomplishing day, and I even accomplished my goals!

I had Covid19 over Yom Kippur (and I am not the only one) and was stuck at home. My Rav told me, "you know Hashem doesn't want you to serve him on your terms, he want's you to serve him on his terms. Hashem want's you to show him that you can have a great Yom Kippur at home too."

Life is like a ladder, one rung at a time. If you stay on the same rung the entire time, you will fail to understand the point of the ladder and eventually just climb down, but if you try to take a giant leap and hopefully you will catch on somewhere on top you will end up in the same place and with far more pain too.

Reaching too high isn't growth, it's suicide. Of course you want to climb the tallest ladder, but you still got to climb it one ring at a time.

I decided that I was going to daven at a certain minyan during the last week of bein hazemanim that I thought was reasonable for me but in the end I never made it there. Today I thought, I have two options, either I could continue to push and maybe I will feel like a loser or maybe I will win, or I could daven in a different minyan that there is nothing wrong with other than the fact that it wasn't in the plan.

Today I davened with a minyan and yesterday I davened at home, which one was better?

People spend all their lives feeling unaccomplished, not because they don't accomplish, rather

because they don't live up to their own expectations.

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Re: Working on my low self esteem

Posted by wilnevergiveup - 08 Feb 2021 06:48

A little random but my daughter was singing the song about how all the mountains fought about where the Torah should be given...

But little Har Sinai just stood there and sighed

I know I'm not tall and I know I'm not wide

the Torah shouldn't be given on me

for I am as small as can be.

From all of the mountains Hashem chose Sinai

because he did not hold himself high

he had such simple and humble ways...

So, I was wondering, is the Har Sinai from this song actually humble, or does he actually suffer from low self esteem?

I believe it's Rav Yerochum Levovitz that explains (but I can't remember off hand) that we find in Moshe, who was *anav mikol adam* that he was extremely confident and stood up against Paroh, the most powerful king of the time. He explains that *anavah* is not being small, rather it means to recognize that anything that could possibly be a reason for *ga'avah* is really a gift from Hashem anyway. *Anavah* means to recognize that whatever it is that you have is from Hashem and is what you need for your specific challenges in this world.

In the song, Har Sinai should have said, I am so small, I know I'm not tall or wide, but that's how Hashem made me and I fulfil my duties in this world without protest and therefore the Torah *should* be given on me!

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Re: Working on my low self esteem

Posted by DavidT - 10 Feb 2021 20:05

I found an interesting idea from Rabbi A J Twersky Z"L

How to find out if you have a low self esteem:

"Sit in a quiet room, close your eyes and breath. See how long it is before you have to get up and do something. If you got a good self esteem, you should be able to sit comfortably, doing nothing (not falling asleep) and relaxed for 10 minutes." – *Abraham Twerski*

Interpretation: Even though he was extremely successful, Twerski suffered from extreme self esteem issues which he was actually unaware of till the age of 38.

The problem showed itself when he was vacationing in Hot Springs, Arkansas and was asked to spend 25 minutes alone in a hot tub as part of a health program. Even though it was a deeply relaxing experience, Twerski soon started to feel uncomfortable after the first five minutes. The remaining minutes as he recalls were agonizing.

Upon returning from the vacation, Twerski tried to figure out why he felt this way. He consulted with a psychologist friend who helped him figure out the real issue.

The problem was that being in that hot tub with absolutely no diversions (no T.V., no one to talk to or listen to) meant that one comes into an immediate intimate company of oneself. And if you don't like yourself very much, you will start feeling uncomfortable.

This came as a revelation to Twerski that there was something about himself that he did not like (as he was not comfortable being with himself) and he started to investigate this further by asking questions like 'What is it that I think about myself?', 'Is my self concept true?', 'Why don't I like myself?', which further took into a life transforming self awareness journey.

So take this test and find out for yourself if you have a healthy self esteem.

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Re: Working on my low self esteem
Posted by DavidT - 10 Feb 2021 20:07

[wilnevergiveup wrote on 08 Feb 2021 06:48:](#)

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Quotes by Rabbi Twersky on the difference between being humble and having a low self esteem

"Low self esteem is not humility, low self esteem is a delusion and is not a desirable trait whereas humility is a desirable trait."

"Humility means, knowing the truth about oneself, knowing one's strengths and abilities but not thinking that therefore that makes me a more worthy person than someone else."

"Humility means, I do everything I can, I exercise my strength, but I still respect other people and I don't put myself above them."

"You can't really be humble if you don't have good self esteem."

Interpretation: As Twerski points out, there is a huge difference between someone who has a low self esteem and someone who is humble. A humble person knows his value but doesn't consider himself to be above anyone else in an egoic manner. A person with low self esteem on the other hand, does not know his value and considers others to be of higher value than him.

So it is clear that only someone with a healthy self esteem can actually be humble. You can only be humble when you know yourself, because in knowing yourself, you know others. In

knowing yourself, you become empathetic and hence humble.

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