

Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by boruch - 18 Mar 2009 21:25

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[battleworn wrote on 18 Mar 2009 16:36:](#)

Think you can do this without the 12 steps groups? Do you think that you can serenely learn the Eibishter's Torah while the yetzer hora disturbs you with the most profane temptations? I wish you the best of luck, but it is at very least, much easier said than done. And it is certainly a lot easier to do it a lot more effectively by joining a 12 step group.

I've kept silent on this issue for a long time for two reasons. First of all, I try very hard to avoid confrontation. I've learned from a lot of experience that debate gets you nowhere at best. So, as much as I have said on this forum, there's just as much that I've refrained from saying.

Second of all, before commenting, I took a lot of time to make sure I really understood the issue properly.

It's plainly obvious, that the 12 step groups are an absolutely amazing thing.

Battleworn, since that first quote was from me, I'll say a few things.

Firstly, I apologize to you Yaakov for having gotten into a vikuach with you on your thread. I certainly meant well, but at the time I did not at all anticipate how it would come across. There is a time, place and way to share a message and the key to making sure that the message is on target is to focus totally on the person with whom you want to share it. I did not realize that then and I realize that more now.

Secondly, since I created a discussion of the steps and the entire system as first practiced by Alcoholics Anonymous, the steps, the sponsors and the groups, I am going to ask you Yaakov for a little patience to allow me to undo some of what I posted earlier.

The first thing I want to share is how that system is changing the way I am posting on this forum.

But before I do that I need to share with you how I have come to see an approach that was after all is said and done, totally conceived by goyim.

The Maharshal in teshuvos (98) said that the author of the sefer hakrisus, the Rash Mikinon, had studied all of the hidden mysteries of Kabbala and yet, when he davened, he davened like a one-day-old baby.

What could a one-day-old baby possibly teach Rash Mikinon that he did not know from Kabbala?

I will tell you how I now understand it. There is knowledge in all its complexity. And then there is behavior. Someone who has all the knowledge of hilchos shechita who has never seen a shechita will have no concept of how to shecht. That is shimush. Learning the behavior.

So knowledge of tefila is in Kabbala, but learning how to behave? Rash Mikinon chose a one-day-baby as his model.

Why?

There are two things about a one-day-old baby.

1) He is totally dependent on his parents and has no hope of taking care of himself.

2) He only has one option of self-expression. He cannot choose how to approach his problems. How to present them. What words and expressions to use. No complications. He just opens his mouth and cries. Straight from the heart, honest and direct.

That's how Rash Mikinon davened. With the same total dependence on Hashem and with the same simplicity as a one-day-old baby.

Now, if we wanted to visualize for ourselves, the behavior of a one-day-old baby we could walk in to any maternity ward anywhere in the World. The baby doesn't have to be Jewish. It could be a Mexican baby, a Vietnamese baby, it makes no difference whatsoever.

That's exactly how I understand the original AA groups and the 12 steps. The alcoholics of AA were, just like the one-day-old baby. They were totally desperate, they knew that Hashem was their last and only hope and they knew how they needed to come humbly to Hashem for His help. They needed an approach so simple that even a drunk could get it.

Now, we Frum Yidden are not short on knowledge of how to Return to Hashem. We may not be Rash Mikinon but we do have Shaarei Teshuva of Rabbeinu Yonah, we do have hilchos teshuva from the Rambam. B"H knowledge we have in plentiful supply. And knowledge of hilchos teshuva we will not find among goyim, Torah bagoyim al taamin. But where are we addicts to learn how an addict who is returning should behave? Certainly not from a one-day-old baby.

I have found that, as a Frum Yid, I can learn the *behavior* with which an addict should return to Hashem from the early founders of AA. I can learn a set of behaviors so simple that even *this* drunk (me) could get it and implement it.

Does it matter whether the AA founders were Jewish? Absolutely not. Whether they were American, Mexican or Vietnamese? Absolutely not.

Certainly the AA founders wrote the steps in English and certainly they were to an extent influenced in some of their external presentation of the steps by their religion and culture. But in essence the 12 steps represent a Path of Return to Hashem so simple that even a drunk could get it. That's why it can work for me too.

And if you want to see the steps working, you need to look no further than the latest change in my style of posting.

When I wrote that piece above I had not gone beyond working steps 1 through 3, and most importantly, I had not read the primary text of Alcoholics Anonymous, commonly referred to as the AA Big Book (it's available online, in PDF and as a Palm DOC). In SA, the working assumption from the beginning has been that whatever is true for alcohol and liquor is true for lust. They commonly read directly from the Big Book, replacing the words alcohol and liquor with the word lust, and replacing the word alcoholic with sexaholic.

Today, having read the AA Big Book and working currently on all 12 steps, these excerpts from page 65 and on best capture how I have learned about self-will and it's impact on my life as a whole and even my posts on this forum:

"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good. Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Each person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including himself, would be pleased. Life would be wonderful...

What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well...

He decides to exert himself more. He becomes, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him...

Is he not, even in his best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?"

Until now, in my posts on the forum *I have always been most mindful and have focused on how I wanted to post*, even though, and as much as, to a certain extent I have also tried to bear in mind, after the fact, people's reaction to my posts.

Being brutally honest with myself, as the AA founders say they were, much as I had taken notice of how people responded, I was still not getting beyond the description above in the Big Book. As the Big Book describes, my relationships, as my posts on the forum, were often self-serving and defined on my own terms, even when I thought I was being helpful.

Now I realize the difference and B'Ezras Hashem I will do whatever I need to in order to post with much more patience and with much more thought and attention to how others need to hear the message.

[battleworn wrote on 18 Mar 2009 16:36:](#)

But listen to this: To me it's seems clear that going to R' Tvi Meir *instead* of the 12 groups, is **at least a 100 times as amazing**. So why don't I push R' Tvi Meir, like some people push the groups?

The answer is, because I try not to project myself on to other people. In my humble opinion this truly wonderful forum could use a little more open-mindedness (I'm not talking at all about Rabeinu Guard) Just because ploni didn't have emunah before he went to the groups, it doesn't mean that everyone is like that. Just because Almoni suffered abuse, it doesn't mean that we all did. Etc... Personally, I don't believe that the groups are appropriate for ykv at all (The fundamental differences between him and boruch are quite obvious to me) But I know I could be wrong.

Battleworn, now that I have read the primary text on the 12 steps I can finally express what I had been unsuccessfully trying to say. Obviously different people are inspired in different ways and obviously you cannot stuff everyone in the same mold. But that is not the issue at all. What I was trying to share with Yaakov is something I later found in the AA Big Book describing the experience in the late 1930s of the newcomers who joined AA and worked the steps, p85,

"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone--even lust. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in lust. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward lust has been given us without any thought or effort on our

part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation."

So that's the claim printed in 1939. Is it true? Well, as I explained earlier on this thread, *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book*, I was most certainly *fighting* my addiction, I had been for 36 years. And losing. Then *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book* came SA and the day I called my sponsor. He told me to stop *fighting*, to surrender to my Higher Power and in a moment of temptation just work steps 1-3.

Of course, as many people on this forum have written the last thing on their minds in a moment of temptation is 12 steps, let alone the presence of mind to use them. And I was originally no different.

But I have since found that when I made my recovery the single most important thing in my life and I joined SA, when I took part in a weekly Back to Basics Step meeting that works through all 12 steps in 4 weeks in addition to a regular meeting, when I met and learned from people with 15 years of sobriety and more, when I was working the steps together with everyone else, much as soldiers march in step and find it easier to march together, doing the steps became the most natural thing in the World. And *before I had seen the piece in the Big Book* I experienced what I posted earlier in this thread. That I no longer needed to fight.

Are there other methods that are so effective in turning a losing fight into no battle at all? I can only tell you of one method like that, doing the 12 steps by working them with a sponsor and active 12 step group meeting attendance. If anyone else has another method with the same results, I would certainly be interested to hear about it. Not because I am looking for another method. The 12 steps are helping me change in many areas and I would not trade them in. But recovery from addiction is extremely important to me and I am interested in all things Recovery.

Now you raise a legitimate question, Battleworn. Are the groups for everyone? Is the SA 12 step program which is directly and totally modeled on the complete AA 12 step program for everyone? The best way to know the answer to that is to read the first 164 pages of the [Big Book](#). You can download it as a [PDF](#) or put it on your Palm OS device from this [link](#).

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by aaron4 - 24 Mar 2009 18:30

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Boruch,

I agree with every word you said. Addicts and ex-addicts can never make the mistake of thinking they're "cured" and are now beyond the basics. Walking on the street quickly reminds you otherwise and brings you back to "working the steps" every day. However for some of us (myself included), those steps are not "The 12 Steps". Rather they're a combination of thoughts and actions (or inactions) tailored to the situation, many of which have been described in chizuk e-mails and on the various sections of GUE. At a later time I'll try to detail some of the practical steps that work for me since you like to hear details (I do too). Since this has been working now for almost 8 months, I'd like to keep working these steps. However if they fail (C"V) I **will** go to a 12 step meeting. So don't mistake my "12 steps are not for everyone" assertion as a dismissal of the need for basic chizuk of yesodos or schmuessen for poshutte yidden. In fact, I'm still working on the "basics". I haven't even gone through them once, let alone moved onto deeper learning.

Just last week I heard the story you recounted about R' Issser Zalman Meltzer hearing the schmuess on sholom bayis. According to the version I heard, R' Aryeh Levin gave the schmuess primarily for a particular b'aal habayis who had sholom bayis issues. The b'aal habayis came over to R' Aryeh Levin after the schmuess and said "I hope they get the message Rabbi, well said"! Meanwhile, the one who "got the message" was R' Isser Zalman!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 18:31

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Rabeinu Guard, I must say that you have no idea what it's all about. Going to R' Tvi Meir is a complete way of life (for those that are serious). For example, once someone is ready for the next step, there's a whole chaburah system which can turn any serious person in to a Tzadik Gomur.

Honestly, I WISH I was holding there. You know Battleworn, you should start a website called "TzadikGamur.com". But guardureyes.com is for people struggling with a vicious cycle of addiction to lust. How does "Tzadik Gamur" even come into the picture at that point? We are

miles away from that. We were acting like sub-humans. We need to become HUMAN again, and then we can think about being a YID. And after that, we can begin to explore how to become a Tzadik Gamur.

I do believe that **we on this site** have the potential to reach that. Especially since the strength and knowledge that one gains by breaking free of the addiction can be used to continue to rocket upwards to the highest highs. And I bet that's why YOU, Battleworn, are truly a Tzadik Gamur. But hey, one thing at a time :D

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 18:35

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At a later time I'll try to detail some of the practical steps that work for me.

Ahron, don't make us wait "too" long :-)

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by aaron4 - 24 Mar 2009 18:43

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But guardureyes.com is for people struggling with a vicious cycle of addiction to lust. How does "Tzadik Gamur" even come into the picture at that point? We are miles away from that.

It's funny how this works. Because the void left by leaving lust behind **must** be filled and **will not** be denied, an addict determined to recover will almost by definition find his way to the derech that Battleworn has found. It can be no other way. So in fact, GUE gets credit not only for helping to make us human but also for the Tzadikim that will undoubtedly emerge! Mitzvah goreres mitzvah and the ultimate s'char, when all is added up, is immeasurable.



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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by aaron4 - 24 Mar 2009 19:00

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Ahron, don't make us wait "too" long :-)

Ok. Here are some of the steps that work for me.

When online, I consider my motivation for every site I visit. If it's a news site, I again consider why I want to read certain articles. If it's because the site or article discusses inappropriate topics (fashion or "news items" relating to immoral behavior), or even if it might discuss them and the Y"H wants me to find out for sure, then I **don't click**. In general, I limit the sites I visit to a small list and question anytime I feel the need to visit a site that is not on the list.

When in the street I have a number of different methods depending on the situation, but 3 of the most common thoughts that I've been working on making "second nature" are:

1) Remember that what you see is the outermost layer only. Just a bit deeper is a bunch of gory blood and bones that you'd run from in horror.

2) Try to link the pleasurable sensation of inappropriate thoughts and fantasies to the devastating emotional pain I experienced when I revealed my addiction to my wife. Since I **must** tell her if I fall and she has reminded my nicely many times that she understands me but would be very hurt if I had something to report, there is an immediate link between the fall and the painful consequence, even more immediate than the inevitable depressing feelings that used to follow a fall. Although it's still a 2 step process (pleasure followed by memory of pain), I'd like to get to the point where the **only** sensation is the memory of pain.

3) An oldie but goody...just get through today. I can do it just for today.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 19:01

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So in fact, GUE gets credit not only for helping to make us human but also for the Tzadikim that will undoubtedly emerge!

You hit it on the nail, Ahron. And that's what I wrote:

I do believe that we on this site have the potential to reach that. Especially since the strength and knowledge that one gains by breaking free of the addiction can be used to continue to rocket upwards to the highest highs.

But, I think I'll leave the TzadikGamur.com site to Battleworn. Even though it **could be** considered a "child-site" of guardureyes.com - for the reason you just wrote, I can only handle one website at a time :D

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 19:04

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Wonderful tips from Ahron. It would make a great Chizuk e-mail one day. Keep posting new ideas as you think of them!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by boruch - 24 Mar 2009 19:13

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[aaron4 wrote on 24 Mar 2009 18:30:](#)

Boruch,

I agree with every word you said. Addicts and ex-addicts can never make the mistake of thinking they're "cured" and are now beyond the basics. Walking on the street quickly reminds you otherwise and brings you back to "working the steps" every day. However for some of us (myself included), those steps are not "The 12 Steps". Rather they're a combination of thoughts and actions (or inactions) tailored to the situation, many of which have been described in chizuk e-mails and on the various sections of GUE. At a later time I'll try to detail some of the practical steps that work for me since you like to hear details (I do too). Since this has been working now for almost 8 months, I'd like to keep working these steps. However if they fail (C"V) I **will** go to a 12 step meeting. So don't mistake my "12 steps are not for everyone" assertion as a dismissal of the need for basic chizuk of yesodos or schmuessen for poshutte yidden. In fact, I'm still working on the "basics". I haven't even gone through them once, let alone moved onto deeper learning.

OK, so here is what I am thinking, that may bring us all into agreement. **If we all agree that we are not beyond the basics, then we are all ready to learn from each others' basics.**

**And in fact, sharing our basics with each other is certainly well within the tachlis of step 12, helping others gain sobriety.**

So that said, there is certainly a difference between the addict who is still actively being nichshal and the addict who is not. If you are not currently being nichshal the 12 step groups are neither an emergency nor necessity.

**As for the basic mussar for aspiring poshutte yidden like myself, that we could all gain**

**from the 12 steps, *I cannot tell you what mussar you would be able to gain from them.* All I can do is share with you, and anyone on this site who would be curious, the mussar that I am learning from the 12 steps.**

I am more than willing to do so in a series of posts, in the right place on the forum, that goes through the steps, one by one, in an as easy as possible and pleasant format, without lecturing and moralizing. My goal would be to both try and present them the way I understand them as basic and simple Rotzon Hashem and also to describe in a very basic and simple way how I am trying to implement them practically.

If anyone wants to read them, that is fine. If not that is also fine. At least I will be thinking of everyone else, and if in the end only I read it, there will certainly be a lot that I could learn from my own writing.

I heard a tape of Rav Avigdor Miller Zt'l in which he laughingly quoted the Satmar Rov as saying that Rabbonim who write seforim would do very well if they learned from their own seforim.

So, I will write for myself, and if anyone is interested in joining my journey through the steps they are welcome to come on board.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by aaron4 - 24 Mar 2009 19:27

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Sign me up, Boruch!

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 19:47

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Boruch, I am looking forward to seeing it. You can put it for now in the "What Works For Me" Board.

If it's good, and I'm sure it will be if it's from you, I will put it up on our site bl'n, on the "12-Step section".

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?  
Posted by the.guard - 24 Mar 2009 23:31

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Rabbi Twersky ... is not an addict, he doesn't know a lot about the groups

Boruch, from what I understand, Rabbi Twerski is/was the head of one of the largest Alcohol rehab centers in the U.S and he has extensive and intimate knowlege on the groups and steps, having helped thousands of people through them. That is one of the biggest reasons that his guidance to us is so precious.

Funny we just discussed this today, I just happened upon [a nice article](#) in aish.com by Rabbi Twerski on addiction. And at the bottom it says:

**About the author:**

**Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski**

The founder and medical director of [Gateway Rehabilitation Center](#) in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, Dr. Twerski is one of the country's leading experts on alcohol and drug rehabilitation. He is the author of numerous books, including "[The Sun Will Shine Again](#)." .

And it's a nice article too. Rabbi Twerski discusses there - like Boruch was saying today, how addictions make us act lower than animals. And I quote:

***The ultimate distinction between man and animals is not that man is more intelligent, but that animals are creatures that have no choice over their behavior. They must do whatever their bodies demand. They cannot choose what they should do. Man has the ability of self-control, to choose one's behavior, even in defiance of physical urges.***

***If a person loses one's ability to choose and is dominated by urges one cannot control, one is indeed an addict. Losing the ability to choose is losing the uniqueness of being a human being, and robs one of the dignity of being human. We pride ourselves on liberty and view slavery as evil because it dehumanizes a person. And that is exactly what happens when we relinquish our ability to choose.***

***Addicts may indeed have psychological problems, but these cannot be effectively addressed as long as the addiction is active. Control of the addiction is rarely achieved solely by psychotherapy. Participation in a support group comprised of people who have successfully overcome their addiction, such as the 12-step groups, is vital. Psychotherapy is a valuable adjunct.***

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?  
Posted by boruch - 25 Mar 2009 03:33

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[guardureyes wrote on 24 Mar 2009 23:31:](#)

Rabbi Twersky ... is not an addict, he doesn't know a lot about the groups

Guard,

I just noticed two posts on this thread that I had not seen at all, one of them being the one that included your comment above. You misunderstood my comment totally, not having ever been to a group yourself.

The 'S' & 'A' groups such as SA and SLAA, and indeed all 'A' groups, such as AA, NA, OA have closed meetings that are only open to addicts sharing the addiction of the group. As such, assuming that Rabbi Twersky himself is not an addict, which is a reasonable assumption, he has never actually attended a real meeting. What these 'A' groups do for professionals is have open meetings with speakers describing what the program is. That is nothing like actually attending a meeting.

Here is what I can tell you as an addict who has attended SA meetings and has both heard from others and read about SLAA meetings.

1) Very few women, if any at all, attend SA meetings. This is because SA defines addiction as addiction to lust whereas SLAA defines addiction to relationships and behaviors. Women tend naturally to view everything within the spectrum of relationships and so as a rule they all go to SLAA where the focus is on the relationships. Additionally the men in SA are usually traditional and female immorality has more of a stigma attached to it than male immorality which makes women feel uncomfortable in SA.

2) SLAA is very liberal, in that it sees homosexual and extra-marital relationships as consistent with sobriety, for that matter, sobriety within SLAA is whatever you decide it to be. By nature this is more attractive to liberal and non-religious people.

3) SA is very conservative, compared with SLAA. Marriage is defined as being between one man and one woman, sobriety is no extra-marital sex including no masturbation (they call that sex with self), progressive victory over lust means overcoming lustful activity such as viewing images and addiction is to lust not relationships or behaviors. The nature of SA is such that it tends to attract conservative, traditional and religious men.

For the above reasons it is self-evident that frum Yidden would and should want to overwhelmingly choose SA over SLAA.

This is advice that has amazingly been glaringly omitted from this site and many pixels have been devoted to potential problems that it is claimed could occur at group meetings that would not occur at SA meetings due to the unlikelihood of female attendance and the very traditional nature of the groups.

Rabbi Twersky may not know this because:

1) As above, he is not an addict and is therefore by the anonymity definition not allowed to attend any regular meetings. Non-addicted professionals can only attend open meetings which are not meetings at all but just speeches about meetings.

2) SLAA has a very high profile among psychologists because of the psychological element of the focus on addiction to relationships and because as a rule psychologists are very liberal. For this reason the profession is far more aware of SLAA than of SA.

3) Since Rabbi Twersky's practice is not in a major charedi population center he has less awareness than practitioners in major charedi population centers. Just for example my therapist told me in no uncertain terms to keep well away from SLAA. His unspoken advice was ***shomer nafsho yirchak meihem***.

So, everyone has their areas of expertise. Rabbi Twersky has tremendous experience in treating addiction, but he is not an addict, has never attended a real 'S' and 'A' meeting, and for whatever reason, that is not his area of expertise and he is certainly not the right address for advice on which 'S' and 'A' group to pick.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?  
Posted by the.guard - 25 Mar 2009 07:28

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Ok, I misunderstood you. I thought you meant he doesn't know a lot about the 12 steps. And on that issue, I am certain he knows them intimately. As far as which groups to attend for a sex addict, he may not know all the differences between SA and SLAA. Maybe I should point it out



to him.

BTW Boruch, did you ever read [this page](#)? I thought you'd find it interesting.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by battleworn - 25 Mar 2009 10:48

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#### Quote

Rabeinu Guard, I must say that you have no idea what it's all about. Going to R' Tvi Meir is a complete way of life (for those that are serious). For example, once someone is ready for the next step, there's a whole chaburah system which can turn any serious person in to a Tzadik Gomur.

Honestly, I WISH I was holding there. You know Battleworn, you should start a website called "TzadikGamur.com". But guardureyes.com is for people struggling with a vicious cycle of addiction to lust. How does "Tzadik Gamur" even come into the picture at that point? We are miles away from that. We were acting like sub-humans. We need to become HUMAN again, and then we can think about being a YID. And after that, we can begin to explore how to become a Tzadik Gamur.

I'm sorry, but again you missed the point. I was just mentioning the chabura system to give you an idea how I'm not just talking about hearing droshos. That's why I said "FOR EXAMPLE ONCE SOME ONE IS READY FOR THE NEXT STEP..."

The bottom line is this:

But for someone that is looking to grow, he can take you from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high.

Do you know what the lowest of the low means???

Or maybe you're doing this on purpose?

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