

Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?

Posted by boruch - 18 Mar 2009 21:25

[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 battleworn - 26 Mar 2009 14:54

All through the book there's one and only one definition of an addict that never changes. As I said, if you read it it again (the part after Yerachmiel gets married) with an open mind you'll see that in his opinion Yerachmiel was not an addict and therefore not a candidate for the 12 steps.

How could he NOT be? He was doing the worst things.

That's a wonderful question. But I suggest that you ask Yair, not me.

Helping someone not to reach absolute rock bottom does not mean that the person they are helping is not a candidate for the groups.

I'm sorry if you thought that that's what I meant. Now I'll try to be very clear. The R' Y' tells his group that all through his months of recovery, WHILE HE WAS HELPING YERACHMIEL, HE COULDN'T FATHOM WERE ON EARTH HE WOULD EVER FIND AN ADDICT. Until he realized that there's an alternate way to do the 12th step without finding an addict.

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

Posted by the.guard - 26 Mar 2009 15:06

You have had so far like 10 questions on the book. Can you make a list of them? If you don't want to call him about them, maybe I will...

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 26 Mar 2009 20:29

[guardureyes wrote on 26 Mar 2009 09:23:](#)

Boruch, your posts are always very informative and wise, but a little too long and a little too harsh and personal. Here is a repeat of what you just said, in a shorter fashion and without the harshness:

...

Thank you for sharing this. I sent your comments (my version of them, not yours :-) to the author of the letter and to Rabbi Twerski as well. We'll see what they say.

In AA they say Keep it Simple.

I thought the issue here was very obvious, but no, you think that concerned_yid has his opinion, Rabbi Twersky has his opinion and I have another opinion, **and I say, if Guard missed it totally then apparently it's not obvious at all.**

So let us start with a simple statement of facts.

The question was "Is SA for everyone?"

concerned_yid who is an SA member for three years made impassioned pleas as a member of SA and at least twice actually referenced SA beliefs specifically. He mentioned the First Step and he mentioned the 11th tradition about attraction as opposed to promotion.

Clearly he would have everyone reading his email believe that he has correctly represented SA teachings.

The truth is sadly very very different.

And we don't need to take my word for it. This is easily verifiable by anyone. But before we come to any conclusions on concerned_yid's email and phone call to you, let us just stick to the facts.

Let us start with the concerned_yid version of the First Step.

He wrote in the clearest terms,

[quote="concerned_yid]The first step says "we admitted that we were powerless" and "that our live had become unmanageable" ... Honestly speaking, most people on your site, Boruch Hashem are not there yet. They still have a job, were not caught by their spouse or boss, did not accumulate so much debt that bankruptcy is the only option, and are nor not having sleepless nights because they are so miserable with themselves, or became suicidal."[/quote]

The [SA brochure for the Newcomer](#) has a very different First Step.

But let us first get a little background from the [SA brochure for the Newcomer](#) on what SA is and who it is for:

[SA](#)**Is SA Like Group Therapy?**

[SA is not a form of sex therapy or group therapy. SA meetings are conducted by SA members](#)

using our meeting guidelines. There are no professional leaders at an SA meeting. [b]SA is a program of recovery from lust and sexual addiction based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous[/b]. Whatever problems we bring to SA, we share a common solution — the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of recovery practiced in fellowship on the foundation of sexual sobriety.

[b]How Can I Become A Member?[/b]

[b]All who believe they may have a problem with lust are welcome to attend SA closed meetings[/b] and may consider themselves members if they say they have a desire to stop lusting and become sexually sober.[/quote]

So what is this problem that SA refers to?

The SA pamphlet continues:

[quote= wrote:

I Admit I've Been Overdoing It With Sex. Can't I Just Cut Down a Little?

SA is for those who have lost control of this area of their lives. **We come to SA because we cannot stop, whatever our forms of sexual behavior might be. We no longer have the ability to choose to stop**

The problem is a loss of control over sex. That problem is **overdoing it and being unable to stop.**

And in case that is not already clear enough, it does not get any clearer than this explanation of how the First Step is understood in SA:

SA[b]How Can I Tell If I'm Addicted?[/b]

[b]You have to come to the realization for yourself. Recognizing our own powerlessness is what we call "working the First Step." As the First Step states, "We admitted we were powerless over lust—that our lives had become unmanageable." It takes time and often a lot of pain to admit we are defeated. Sooner or later, we say something like, "I give up!"[/b] or [b]"I need help!"[/b] or [b]"I can't do this by myself any more!"[/b]

[b]

Each of these statements is an admission of powerlessness.[/b][/quote]

[b]And right there is the SA definition of powerless and unmanageable.[/b] And just to make sure the newcomer knows how powerless and unmanageable his life has already become the brochure continues with a test list of symptoms:

[quote= wrote:

Test Yourself

Have you thought of getting help for your sexual thinking or behavior, or have others suggested that you do so?

Have you tried to control or decrease sexual thoughts or behaviors and failed to do so?

Do your sexual thoughts or behaviors interfere with your relations with your spouse or your responsibilities to others?

Despite negative consequences of your sexual behaviors—humiliations, lies, diseases, jobs lost, arrests, divorces, or immoral acts—have you continued those behaviors?

Have you ever been told you were a sexual addict or been arrested for a sex crime?

That is the problem and the addiction. What does SA suggest as the solution?

This is what they write immediately following the above list of test symptoms:

SA**I Know I Cannot Stop on my Own. I've Tried Before And It Did Not Work. Are You Saying It Is Actually Possible?**

Yes, it is possible. There are sober members of SA all over the world, both single and married. Together we can get sober and stay sober in SA, as we work the program one day at a time.

What Do I Have To Do To Get Sober?

While there are no absolutes in the SA program, we can share with you what we know about getting sober. We go to meetings; we work the Steps; we use the literature (both SA and AA); we have sponsors to whom we talk on a regular basis. Many of us have come to trust in a Higher Power who keeps us sober.

What next? Do we need to wait until we are suicidal? Does the solution only work for people who have hit rock bottom? Here is what they say next:

quote= wrote:

Okay -- I'm Willing to Give It a Try. What Do I Do Next?

- Contact SA. Check your directory for a local number or contact the SA International Central Office.
- Go to SA meetings, meetings and more meetings.

- Talk to sober sexaholics and ask them how they got sober.
- Use our program literature: brochures, Sexaholics Anonymous, Recovery Continues, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Read our fellowship newsletter Essay.
- Get a sponsor. This is someone whose sobriety is attractive to you. Call your sponsor on a regular basis—every day if possible. Ask for suggestions.
- WORK THE STEPS. Your sponsor will show you how.
- Get a list of telephone numbers. Start calling other members to surrender your sexual and lust temptations and to make a contact whenever you feel anxious or panicky.
- Pray. In the morning, ask your Higher Power to keep you sober “just for today.” Say “thank you” at night for your day of sexual sobriety. Pray whenever you get hit with lust.
- Practice our program slogans:

First things first

Easy does it

One day at a time

Let go and let God

Keep it simple

Remember we were all newcomers once, and felt as you do today. Reach out and ask for help.

So much for concerned_yid's claims. They are false. Every one of them.

And, before we come to any conclusions, let us establish the facts clearly:

Fact: concerned_yid has totally misrepresented SA's definition of addiction and SA's

definition of the First Step.

Now to his claim about the 11th tradition of attraction and not promotion means that you should not post the 12 steps or link to SA because online information about SA would be promotion.

Well, here is SA's [website](#).

And here is their online list of [12 steps](#), linked by the way prominently on the sidebar of their homepage.

But the claim is false for many other reasons.

The first is that it is a total distortion of the meaning of the Tradition. Alcoholics Anonymous has always given interviews to the media. They were successful after in 1939 the Chicago Plain Dealer ran a series of [articles](#) on them. The wording of the Tradition itself makes it clear that they are into promoting AA activities to the media. This is how the [tradition](#) begins:

[SA\]](#)

[Our \[b\]public relations policy\[/b\] is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of \[b\]press, radio, films, and TV\[/b\].\[/quote\]](#)

[So if there is a Tradition about publicity to the media what does attraction and not promotion mean?](#)

[The 11th Tradition as explained](#)

[\[url=http://www.aagrapevine.org/stepsTrads/checklist.php\]here\[url\] by AA publications means this.](#)

[\[quote= wrote:](#)

"Do I sometimes promote AA so fanatically that I make it seem unattractive?"

Needless to say, linking to the SA website and posting the 12 steps are very far from being in any breach of SA Tradition.

Even more to the point, SA Traditions are only binding on SA groups not on GUE.

Fact: concerned_yid has totally misrepresented SA's 11th Tradition.

These are the facts.

For now.

I will comment later on their significance.

Suffice it to say for now that concerned_yid's writings are a total fabrication and misrepresentation of SA and they should be removed from this site ASAP.

I will post more later.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 26 Mar 2009 22:07

Thank you Boruch for clarifying that. I am waiting to hear from Rabbi Tweski.

By the way, when I wrote:

You have had so far like 10 questions on the book. Can you make a list of them? If you don't want to call him about them, maybe I will...

I was talking to Battleworn about the Book by Yair Shochat. Sorry if this wasn't clear.

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

Posted by Elya K - 26 Mar 2009 22:27

Our addiction tells us to latch on to anything which is easy and simpler than the 12 steps that is going to pull us out of hell. Now we're using expert Rabbis out of context to excuse us from the one thing that is going to help us. Oh! You're making the Y'H so happy.

Let me see if I understand all of you. You're looking at porn, looking at women on the street, etc.

BUT G-D forbid you should go to a safe place where there might be a woman. OMG that's OSSUR, right?

I mean you might actually learn from another human being, even if she is a woman that they have feelings too. And how they feel when they're looked at, googled, at, whistled at and made into sex objects on screen and off screen.

There are reasons why hundreds of thousands of alcoholics have become sober, even Jewish ones, through the 12 steps, because they work, and to use Rabbi T. as an excuse means to me you're not interested in getting sober or into recovery... and that makes me very sad.

This post is not meant for anyone in particular.... just my thoughts in general.

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

Posted by the.guard - 26 Mar 2009 22:47

Elya, you're 100% right for someone who is sincere. But the question at hand is "what constitutes sincerity?"

Because someone who is **not** serious can:

- 1) compromise the anonymity of other members
- 2) learn worse things from the stories he hears
- 3) use the groups as a spring board for meeting up with other "not serious" or vulnerable members of the opposite sex.

Now personally it seems to make sense what Boruch writes, based on the SA literature, that anyone who wants to stop lusting IS SERIOUS. Period.

But since Rabbi Twerski suggested starting with the phone calls and other tools on our site to weed out those who are NOT serious before suggesting the groups to them, I am waiting to hear from him... After all, what he says makes sense too. I don't know if Boruch or you disagree with Rabbi Twerski at all.

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

Posted by boruch - 27 Mar 2009 01:54

[guardureyes wrote on 26 Mar 2009 22:47:](#)

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First I have another confession to make, yes I know this is a little grating to hear confessions the whole time, but welcome to life in the 'crazy house'. I have been really up tight about this, and I had to stop posting earlier just to make it in time for my SA meeting tonight. I knew that at least something would be good about the meeting because I had earned my 60 day chip --- today is day 66. But it was even better.

Andy, my original sponsor, a real type A, and hard-driven guy, asked that they make a reading from the [personal stories of AA](#) beginning page 417, 1st sentence, 1st paragraph:

[AA\]And acceptance is the answer to \[i\]all\[/i\] my problems today.\[/quote\]](#)

[And I realized, as I was hearing the reading about acceptance, as it went around the room, and as I read my paragraph, I discovered how absolutely furious I was about the way concerned yid had tried to wrote:](#)

seems[/i] to be very sincere and have a lot of good experience."

The reason both you and Rabbi Twersky took him seriously was his earnestness and his familiarity with SA. Neither you nor Rabbi Twersky have any first-hand knowledge of SA and here was someone with 3 years of first hand experience. Obviously both of you would take him seriously.

What we now know beyond any doubt whatsoever, regardless of his motives which are for the Eibishter to judge and not me, that:

1) He is not a reliable source of information. His information on the First Step and 11th Tradition are so far off base that I am reminded of Rashi on Chumash, about the Avodo Zoros hakrovim,

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From what we know is incorrect, that is his claims on the First Step and 11th Tradition, you can discern the story with the rest, in other words, you know just how unreliable are his claims of knowing sincere people who did not hit rock bottom, disclosing anonymity.

2) He is very very far from being objective.

As such it is clear to me that we were fooled by *his sincerity to preserve his anonymity* into believing that he was overall a reliable and valuable source of information, and now at the very least it turns out that we cannot take anything he says at face value.

If it were my site and my question to Rabbi Twersky, inspired by someone who had represented himself as knowing exactly what he is talking about and it turned out that he was not reliable, and I realized that obviously at the very least, he had a big agenda and a lot at stake, and I had assurances from someone else who knew the program at first-hand, who was ready and able to demonstrate the validity of everything he is saying, I would not hesitate to remove the question from the site and dismiss the whole issue.

But it is not my site, it was not my question, I have said what I have to say, and I am going to "Let go and Let G-d"

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 27 Mar 2009 02:24

[guardureyes wrote on 26 Mar 2009 22:07:](#)

By the way, when I wrote:

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I was talking to Battleworn about the Book by Yair Shochat. Sorry if this wasn't clear.

That wasn't the problem at all, you were very clear. The problem was that I was so angry when I posted, earlier, that I quoted the wrong post from you.

I went back just now and fixed it up to make it more obvious to anyone reading the thread. If you look back at it, you'll understand a little more what I meant at the time.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 27 Mar 2009 04:19

[Elya wrote on 26 Mar 2009 22:27:](#)

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There are reasons why hundreds of thousands of alcoholics have become sober, even Jewish ones, through the 12 steps, because they work, and to use Rabbi T. as an excuse means to me you're not interested in getting sober or into recovery... and that makes me very sad.

This post is not meant for anyone in particular.... just my thoughts in general.

The bottom line is that the guy who wrote the email caused all of this. He claimed that 3 years of experience had taught him that etc. etc. etc. and being someone who *seemed* to know what he was talking about everyone was quite justified in believing him. Of course he had his own agenda, and we have been there and done that...

I have done what I can (plus I am about to do a little more in my next post) and at this point *I am going to invoke AA's infamous Rule 62 on myself.*

[quote="Bill W. 12 Steps & 12 Traditions, page 149]

"Then he did something else that was to become an A.A. classic. It all went on a little card about golf-score size. The cover read: "Middleton Group #1. Rule #62." Once the card was unfolded, a single pungent sentence leaped to the eye:"Don't take yourself too seriously."[/quote]

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 27 Mar 2009 04:44

[battleworn wrote on 26 Mar 2009 13:54:](#)

As far as the definition of an addict and who's ready for the groups, Yair Shochet also holds like concerned_yid. Boruch, can you provide solid proof that they're wrong?

No problem at all battleworn. No need to ponder any of concerned_yid's claims or even argue over the meaning of yair shochet and what he "holds".

When you "Let Go and Let G-d" you can get big siyatta dishmaya. Look at the metzia I just found, it is the most absolute proof you can get on the meaning of the First Step.

I have already posted here from the SA manual for newcomers, but now I just discovered here **our very issue discussed in beautiful clarity and detail by the originator of the 12 steps himself**, in his essays entitled, 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, here discussing the First Step,

[Bill W. 12 Steps and 12 Traditions p. 22](#)**[size=2][b]**[In A.A.'s pioneering time, none but the most desperate cases could swallow and digest this unpalatable truth. Even these wrote:](#)

Alcoholics who still had their health, their families, their jobs, and even two cars in the garage, began to recognize their alcoholism.[/i] As this trend grew, they were joined by young people who were scarcely more than potential alcoholics. *They were spared that last ten or fifteen years of literal hell the rest of us had gone through.* Since Step One requires an admission that

our lives have become unmanageable, how could people such as these take this Step?

[b]It was obviously necessary to raise the bottom the rest of us had hit to the point where it would hit them. By going back in our own drinking histories, we could show that years before we realized it we were out of control, that our drinking even then was no mere habit, that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression. To the doubters we could say, "Perhaps you're not an alcoholic after all. Why don't you try some more controlled drinking, bearing in mind meanwhile what we have told you about alcoholism?" This attitude brought immediate and practical results. It was then discovered that when one alcoholic had planted in the mind of another the true nature of his malady, that person could never be the same again. Following every spree, he would say to himself, "Maybe those A.A.'s were right . . ." After a few such experiences, often years before the onset of extreme difficulties, he would return to us convinced. He had hit bottom as truly as any of us.

That should settle this argument once and for all.

So, it is time to move forward. Let the calling of the GUE Forums be to raise the rock-bottom so that it's within reach of not only all the addicts here but, as the originator of the 12 steps himself wrote, even "young people who were scarcely more than potential 'holics."

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by boruch - 27 Mar 2009 07:27

Guard,

The [12 Steps and 12 Traditions](#) essays by Bill W. are so clear in resolving questions of meaning, let's go back to what concerned_yid wrote about the 11th Tradition:

[quote="concerned_yid]Do not mention SA or 12 steps. This is one of the SA traditions "we grow by attraction rather than promotion". [/quote]

and compare it with what is in the [12&12](#):

[quote="Bill W 12 Steps and 12 Traditions p. 181"]Let's see how these two contrasting ideas— attraction and promotion— work out. A political party wishes to win an election, so it advertises the virtues of its leadership to draw votes. A worthy charity wants to raise money; forthwith, its letterhead shows the name of every distinguished person whose support can be obtained. Much of the political, economic, and religious life of the world is dependent upon publicized leadership. People who symbolize causes and ideas fill a deep human need. We of A.A. do not question that. But we do have to soberly face the fact that being in the public eye is hazardous, especially for us. By temperament, nearly every one of us had been an irrepressible promoter, and the prospect of a society composed almost entirely of promoters was frightening. Considering this explosive factor, we knew we had to exercise self-restraint. The way this restraint paid off was startling. It resulted in more favorable publicity of Alcoholics Anonymous than could possibly have been obtained through all the arts and abilities of A.A.'s best press agents. [b]Obviously, A.A. had to be publicized somehow, so we resorted to the idea that it would be far better to let our friends do this for us.

Precisely that has happened, to an unbelievable extent. Veteran newsmen, trained doubters that they are, have gone all out to carry A.A.'s message. To them, we are something more than the source of good stories. On almost every newsfront, the men and women of the press have attached themselves

to us as friends.

In the beginning, the press could not understand our refusal of all personal publicity. They were genuinely baffled by our insistence upon anonymity. Then they got the point. Here was something rare in the world— a society which said it wished to publicize its principles and its work, but not its individual members. The press was delighted with this attitude. Ever since, these friends have reported A.A.

with an enthusiasm which the most ardent members would find hard to match.[/b][/quote]

So in fact, reading the literature we can clarify that the 11th Tradition is that AA/SA [i]do not promote themselves[/i], they rely on friends like the media, and friends like GUE to promote them!!!

[b]So the 11th Tradition actually means that SA is relying on you, Guard, as a non-SA friend to publicize their good work.[/b]

Guard, this is so helpful for clarity that I am going to email you a copy of
[url=http://www.rnnk.org/RNNK/swf/AM12X12.pdf]12&12[/url]

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 27 Mar 2009 08:23

I have read this thread with interest and I would like to offer my balanced approach to the latest issue. The latest issue that I am referring to is the validity of concerned_yid's points and whether his letter should be removed from the site. Before I begin, I would like to state that I am a fan of the 12 steps. I have been using the 12 steps before boruch came into my life. I had spoken on the phone with R' Shochet about the 12 steps. You can read about how the 12 steps had helped me [in this post to shomer](#). While I did not agree with every point, it gave me a framework for growth. You can read my own thread where I mention how I used the 12 steps. I acknowledge the fact that having never gone to the groups, my experience and understanding is different than those who have gone. I also acknowledge that I am nowhere near versed in the principles as boruch is. I used the steps more as a springboard than an exact manual.

Baruch made the point that everyone on this site does fit into step 1. I wholeheartedly agree with this. In fact, I really believe that it was that first step that gave me my boost and encouragement for growth. The words "powerless" and "unmanageable" are somewhat subjective. Each one of us (I imagine) fits into this somehow. Obviously, there are degrees. If we were not powerless, none of us would ever have done these aveiros. So to say that many on this site do not relate to the first step is not true. And so I agree with boruch on this point.

However, I do think that we still need to take concerned_yid's experience into account. Let us focus on the forest not the trees. His point was not to explain the 12 steps. And his point was not really about whether the 12 steps was for the people on this site. His main point was that in his THREE year experience, he has seen many people fall further because of the groups and we should be careful who to send to the groups. I do not think we can ignore that fact. Maybe we should edit the one line where he says that most on this site do not fit into step 1. Boruch, I appreciate the fact that you take this issue seriously. And I happen to agree with much of what you said. And I think your criteria is very helpful. But I also believe the words of concerned_yid are also helpful. One does not negate the other. His main point still remains that the groups are not for everyone. He has been there 3 years not just 60 days. He is stating a real observation. Your point was to clarify who in fact they are for. You agree with him. I think your addition to that page will be very helpful to all sincere readers. People should be aware of the

potential dangers and potential greatness. People need to be aware that the wrong group can be devastating. People should be aware that there are mixed groups and separate ones. That there is a difference between SA and SLAA. People need to be aware of the different types of people. That there is a difference between total rock bottom and not rock bottom. That there is a difference between a person coming out of internal desire for growth as opposed to coercion or fear. People should be aware that some have fallen when going for the wrong reasons. And many have grown when going for the correct reason. I hope the point is clear.

Baruch, my dear friend, I am sure that if you continue to explain your wonderful and inspirational experiences, you will indeed attract (not promote) those who this system is appropriate for; the same way you attracted shomer. Many on this site are yearning for freedom. They are yearning for a closeness with Hashem. They are yearning to realize their own selves. But they just cannot figure out **how** to do that. You can help them. By you describing your experiences, I am sure there will be those who will read it and say, "Ah, this man describes exactly what I am looking for. If it worked for him, I might as well give it a try". Even if you changed only one person's life, all your efforts are worth it.

May you continue being an inspiration for all.

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Re: Think you can do it without the 12-Steps?
Posted by the.guard - 27 Mar 2009 11:14

Yaakov, thank you for saying exactly what I was thinking!

Boruch,

1) These long posts of yours are very informative and enlightening, and I have noted down by me much of what you have written for future reference. BUT I think you are missing the issue at hand. The issue at hand is what Yaakov wrote and what I posted in reply #66. No more and no less.

2) I have to disagree with you on one thing. Again and again you claim that concerned_yid has self-serving interests and that he has a big agenda and a lot at stake, etc. etc. What if you

would find out that is completely false? I am 99% sure that he is not worried about HIMSELF. Do you really think he is afraid that we're going to send so many people to SA that many insincere people will end up coming to the very group he goes to (out of thousands in the U.S) and that one of them will spill the beans about him? I find this very unlikely, and yet in the last 10 posts of yours you have been stating this as FACT, again and again. That is what I meant when I said your posts are too harsh. You keep taking him apart, limb by limb, when I believe in fact that he is very sincere. And to prove my point, if he wasn't sincere - how could SA have worked for him so well? (BTW. Rabbi Twerski is the one who sent him to the groups about 3 years ago...) Also, if he wasn't sincere, why did he try getting everyone to go to the groups himself? He used to post on our forum. He called himself "Kookoo" and you can read **all his posts** by clicking on [this link](#). As a punishment for being so harsh on him, I am sentencing you (There are two pages of his comments, you can access them both by pressing on the numbers at the top of the page). Then come back to me and tell me what you think about him. And I quote one of his posts here:

It appears to me they you are still trying to control and enjoy it. You think that you can do it your way. Until you will not driven to the point of despair by your own actions and thinking, as long as you think that there is another way, there is no chance for recovery. It is like a cancer patient taking vitamins instead of chemo.

The twelve steps is a change of attitude, a new way of life. Living only with Hashem 24/7. Accepting our limitations, knowing our vulnerabilities, admitting our wrongs, and living a life that demands rigorous honesty, is all part of this new way of life.
to read ALL his posts

I don't overcome it, Hashem does it for me. If you want to know more about how it works go to aa.org and look for a an open meeting in your area. Go there and listen in, and see how you can relate to them. When you will be ready accept that you have incurable mental disease and admit that you have no other option but to work the twelve steps of recovery, I will be glad to introduce you to a meeting in your area.

3) Boruch, I LOVED your post reply #70 where you write: ***Let the calling of the GUE Forums be to raise the rock-bottom so that it's within reach of not only all the addicts here but, as the originator of the 12 steps himself wrote, even "young people who were scarcely more than potential 'holics."*** . I agree that should indeed be our MOTTO!! Thank you!

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

Posted by boruch - 27 Mar 2009 11:50

[Ykv_schwartz wrote on 27 Mar 2009 08:23:](#)

However, I do think that we still need to take concerned_yid's experience into account. Let us focus on the forest not the trees. His point was not to explain the 12 steps. And his point was not really about whether the 12 steps was for the people on this site. His main point was that in his THREE year experience , he has seen may people fall further because of the groups and we should be careful who to send to the groups. I do not think we can ignore that fact.

I think that it is very clear that concerned_yid has a lot of concern over the anonymity issue and was very vague about who fell and under what circumstances.

I think that it was also very clear that concerned_yid was very clear that he only wanted the SA information removed so that there would not be a big influx to frum groups, which concerned him. So SLAA and SAA are not his issue, even though they should be ours and we should definitely steer people to SA, concerned_yid notwithstanding.

From my experience, with SA it is totally inconceivable that anyone who is serious in any way would drop out and fall in the way that concerned_yid describes. concerned_yid himself does not even suggest that this would or could happen. The real reason that people do drop out and fall is something that he did not address specifically, but which I have been told by someone who attends frum groups. Almost all the Frum people in SA come into SA under duress. That is the reason why there is a significant turnover, exactly as concerned_yid has described.

And that is all totally irrelevant to the question of people coming in from this forum. Even in Guard's more evangelical moments he was never coercing anyone. If you want to know why concerned_yid would raise an ungrounded objection, we know why, he is very concerned about the anonymity issue and we know of two other ungrounded objections that he raised, that of the First Step and that of the 11th Tradition.

What he describes of people falling out entirely of groups is very well accounted for by the

demographics of the Frum groups and any suggestion that this is any way a concern for serious people is in my opinion nothing short of ridiculous.

[Ykv_schwartz wrote on 27 Mar 2009 08:23:](#)

He has been there 3 years not just 60 days. He is stating a real observation. Your point was to clarify who in fact they are for. You agree with him.

No, I disagree with him entirely. I am convinced that his observations are irrelevant to our forum. He is talking about an entirely different type of "case".

[Ykv_schwartz wrote on 27 Mar 2009 08:23:](#)

People need to be aware of the different types of people. That there is a difference between total rock bottom and not rock bottom.

I do believe that, once and for all, we really have to take all the mystery and mythology out of this, because concerned_yid has unwittingly created such confusion for so long that we are not looking at this the way we ought to, with basic common sense and sechel hayoshor.

We need to recognize what we already know. In order not to compromise someone's anonymity you do not need to be rock-bottom. In order not to leave the fellowship and go off the deep-end you do not need to be rock-bottom. You just need to be half a mentsch. The people that concerned_yid described were not even that.

And this talk of rock-bottom and not rock-bottom is totally irrelevant as a pre-requisite for joining the groups. It is only relevant for how you take the First Step and many SA members do not take the First Step until they have been with the fellowship for a month and often more. So, it's just another red-herring raised by someone who is very concerned about a particular issue and who we know has not been reliable in his description of basic aspects of the program.

[Ykv_schwartz wrote on 27 Mar 2009 08:23:](#)

That there is a difference between a person coming out of internal desire for growth as opposed to coercion or fear. People should be aware that some have fallen when going for the wrong reasons.

Guard rephrased my original post in a way that made no sense at all, but I had more important things to worry about than correct him on it. But now you mention it, it is worth stating what should, in my opinion, be entirely obvious.

Anyone being coerced to go to SA is not going there because we sent them!!! There is nothing for them to be aware of if they are anyway being forced to go. We have nothing at all to say to people being forced. And anyone not being forced does not need to know what would happen to them if he would be forced. The relevance of people being forced, is that those are the people that concerned_yid is talking about, which of course has no relevance to us.

The bottom line is that concerned_yid could have been in the groups for as long as 120 years, or even 240 years and if he would tells us that decent people would out others because they had not gone rock-bottom, we would know that he is mistaken. When he tells us that he has seen many people fall, we know exactly what type of people he is talking about. He is talking about the people who make up the Frum groups, people there against their will. And the ones he is describing are the lowest of the low. They do not even have basic decency.

There is very little of any value that concerned_yid has offered us, despite all of his years in the groups, other than his initial justifiable concern that we should not be sending people when they are not yet ready.

The problem is that he has created a lot of confusion about who is not ready.

We should not be creating a mystery here. He has claimed that you have to be rock-bottom, this is totally untrue, all that is needed is some decency and seriousness. He has claimed that you have to be suicidal, this is nonsense. In short concerned_yid has added a lot of heat to these forums and a lot less light. And in so doing, even if it was with the best of intentions, he has

nevertheless potentially turned away people who could have gained.

So if he has not given us reliable guidance, we have to be sensible ourselves. We have to know that if someone is serious enough about becoming part of a program that requires turning with deep sincerity to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and requires a spiritual house-cleaning, and if they are ready to commit to protecting the anonymity of everyone in the fellowship, then there is no reason to suspect any adverse outcome, I agree with Elya totally on this, and I do not believe that we would even be sweating this at all if concerned_yid's ideas had not had so much time to settle into the group consciousness on this forum for so long. To me there is absolutely no excuse whatsoever to try and push someone who is genuinely ready by sensible standards into a phone group.

[Ykv_schwartz wrote on 27 Mar 2009 08:23:](#)

Baruch, my dear friend, I am sure that if you continue to explain your wonderful and inspirational experiences, you will indeed attract (not promote) those who this system is appropriate for; the same way you attracted shomer. Many on this site are yearning for freedom. They are yearning for a closeness with Hashem. They are yearning to realize their own selves. But they just cannot figure out **how** to do that. You can help them. By you describing your experiences, I am sure there will be those who will read it and say, "Ah, this man describes exactly what I am looking for. If it worked for him, I might as well give it a try". Even if you changed only one person's life, all your efforts are worth it.

May you continue being an inspiration for all.

Yaakov, may you have tremendous hatzlocho in your path, and I will share with you some words from the AA book:

[quote="Alcoholics Anonymous Chapter 7 Working with Others p.95] If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly. Let it go at that.[/quote]

So you don't even have to worry that I will be tempted again to try and evangelize you. That said, it is more than a question of friendship, regardless of the external structure of our paths, I am convinced that there is much more similarity in content and tochen in our paths than there is difference, and one way or another we can gain a lot of chizuk and inspiration from each other.

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