

A Modest Proposal

Posted by chosemyshem - 24 Jun 2024 18:19

A'ight,

I want to suggest an idea for GYE that I believe some of you have been contemplating.

I think many, many people who have gotten clean credit that to connecting with other members. The connections go from phone calls without sharing a name, all the way to in person meetings. Many people have called it the most important step to getting clean, no matter the level of the struggle.

GYE doesn't currently really push that. There's the partner program, which is underused, unclear, and very hit or miss. There's Dov's phone call, which is not pushed, invitation only, and marketed as more of a step for people who are/may be addicts.

So currently the way this is recommended is by people posting on other people's threads suggesting that they reach out to recognized members. Which is great. But perhaps it's possible to work personal connection as more official element of the GYE program. And that's important because 1) it's a very helpful tool and helpful tools should be in the GYE program, and more importantly 2) people are more likely to actual do it if it's presented as "part of the program" and not just a recommendation from some rando on the forums.

Here's a suggestion as to how to work it in. [I don't know if anyone is familiar with Miriam Adahan's EMETT program, but this is loosely based on that concept and Dov's call.]

GYE should institute a vaad system. The broad outline is like this. Small groups of members would get together on a conference call for perhaps 45 minutes a week to study a text together, share about their application of the text, and schmooze a little. The groups would be moderated by a member, but the moderator is not a teacher. That's it.

Here are some of the details I've been thinking about.

Who would join: A big thing is safety. Members need to feel that they are sharing safely, and there needs to be some screening to ensure there's no predator joining a group. To that end, I think joining a vaad would be predicated on completing the F2F program, and perhaps a minimum forum post count. Ideally, it should also require the member to do an inventory and share it with the group moderator, but that may be too hard for many people. Groups should either be with all members using their real name, or no members using their real name (individual groups could maybe make that decision on their own).

Members could be on any level of the struggle. I'm not sure if it would make sense to segregate people out by age, area of struggle, marital status etc.?

Ideally, groups would be small (5-7 people) so everyone has a chance to talk in a short meeting. Also, large groups of people on a conference call gets very confusing very fast. New people could be added one by one to existing groups, or could form new groups. It would probably make sense for groups to be arranged by a central coordinator, because if they are self-arranged, many people would not work up the gumption to form or join a group. That being said, it's essential people feel comfortable in the group, so there should at least be an option to choose your own group.

The text: What the groups study and apply is actually less important than the actual connection and discussion. They could study the battle of the generation, a mussar sefer, the gye handbook or whatever. That being said, it would be amazing if we could find/put together a book specifically for the vaad (some excerpts from TBOTG, some of the white book, some classic posts, whatever. Just a thought).

The leader: The leader does not need to be someone experienced. They're there just to keep the group on track. More of a gabbai than a leader. Ideally, they would be established, clean members. Even better, they would get a little training on how to identify someone who needs a recommendation to SA or therapy or whatever.

Meeting schedule: A basic meeting would be a few minutes of reading and discussing the text. Following that every member would share something (a success, failure, struggle, whatever. Not generic advice or commentary). No advice should be given unless specifically requested - the goal is connection, not problem solving. Certainly no criticism should be dished out, however, praise is great. That's it. Short, sweet, and simple.

Some other points. Because it's individual small groups there's room for personalization. Groups could pick specific texts, times, even choose to be in person. The general format of connecting

is the ikkar. Also, because it's a "mussar vaad", it doesn't have the stigma of SA and people will be less deterred from joining (e.g. there's no way I personally could tell my wife I'm going to an SA meeting, but I could tell her I joined a new mussar vaad that I want to do in private.) And again, if it becomes part of the official "GYE program" people are more likely to join it. I think that it took me a very long time to pick up the phone and call someone. And if there had been an official program to do so, I would have likely done so a lot faster. And while people are embarrassed to share honestly, once you're on a call with 5 other guys sharing honestly it'll seem a lot less intimidating.

So what does the oilam think? Good idea? Bad idea? Would you join if you were a new (or old) member? Any suggestions, comments, tweaks, or critical comments?

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by eerie - 24 Jun 2024 18:37

You've given us a lot to chew over

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by chosemyshem - 24 Jun 2024 18:40

R' Erie it's only modest because I'm only following in the footsteps of the great www.gutenberg.org/files/1080/1080-h/1080-h.htm

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by Heeling - 24 Jun 2024 19:17

Very interesting idea and lots to think/talk about but I think there is potential that having a lot of small groups will kind of loose the GYE professional touch and guidance.

Sounds like a great idea, only I wouldn't call the proposal modest!

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by chosemyshem - 24 Jun 2024 19:49

[Heeling wrote on 24 Jun 2024 19:17:](#)

Very interesting idea and lots to think/talk about but I think there is potential that having a lot of small groups will kind of loose the GYE professional touch and guidance.

I hear that. Though the GYE guidance is loose, it's important the forums are moderated. I agree that there's potential harm from these groups, but the potential gains are significantly greater. And the potential for harm can be lessened by having a moderator for each group and gently vetting members before adding them to a group.

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by frank.lee - 24 Jun 2024 22:52

Sounds great, something to think over.

An added benefit can be that with a system set up, people do not need to set up a google voice or whatever to call with their ID blocked, as we are each calling in, not calling others...

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by richtig - 24 Jun 2024 23:17

First of all, thank you for taking the time to write out this great idea!

Second, I happened to have been in touch with a few chevra today who have also been in touch with each other, and I imagine there are other people here who have been in touch with different "shnits", to use a common term. For starters, maybe people who are already in touch

individually can start something and let us know how it goes

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by Muttel - 24 Jun 2024 23:44

I love the idea chosemyshem!!

Although I'm the type to reach out to many others (10 and counting!), I recognize that not everyone is that way, and this may be the only way for some to cultivate their connection to others, thereby enabling their saving grace.

To address the potential downside in losing professional touches or what not; this idea is *in addition to reaching to the greats on the forum, not supplanting it.*

This adds a facet to the system, for even someone as precocious as myself would immensely benefit from ideas generated in a group setting. It changes up the tools, and working off a text has ancillary benefits too.

Love the idea, and I think we need a Nachshon from GYE leadership to jumpstart this!!

btw chevra, chosemyshem is a great, thoughtful, insightful, kind, and brilliant person to talk to, just sayin'

KOMT!

Muttel

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by Heeling - 25 Jun 2024 01:58

[chosemyschem wrote on 24 Jun 2024 19:49:](#)

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Just a follow-up on my post and after a meeting with the mastermind of this idea (can we do it in person next time...?)

I think this is a wonderful idea. While many people including myself can benefit from such a thing, I think that there is potential for harm in the sense that some people join GYE not necessarily with a clear image of what GYE is or why they joined, with some dear people having little will to change and along the way, they schlep along others. So having people who wrote some posts about their challenges or desires and then have them join a group they can meet people who they can persuade deeper into the mud. The solution for that is a good vetting system but the downside to that is that people might get scared off, I'm not so worried about that, because I think that if someone is ready to take the plunge to go non-anonymous then they will be fine with the vetting process but I understand if other think otherwise.

Also, I think that the moderators from these groups should have meetings where they meet with an assigned GYE moderator, in other words, there should be groups of every five or so moderators and they should have a GYE moderator on top of them. Plus if some meetings will be taking place online they can be recorded so GYE can review them.

I know I sound a bit extreme but I think it is something that we can work out to be an easy and calm process for everybody yet at the same time make it safe for those who are vulnerable to being schlepped into the opposite direction.

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Re: A Modest Proposal

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The suggestions may or may not be extreme, but the concern is valid in any case.

I heard that in drug and alcohol groups (not sure about aa and na specifically) with all the sharing that goes on, there is a no tolerance policy for "glorifying" substances. Maybe we can have a similar policy in our groups. And since they will presumably be on zoom, if someone gets out of hand, it can be easily handled.

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by horizon - 25 Jun 2024 03:46

I'll join those who've said that a key factor in gye is the ability to connect to others, discuss things one has been holding inside for who knows how long, be understood by someone who's been there done that, and as a side benefit receive a tip or two.

that being said, @choosemyshem you have a great point that it can be very beneficial if this would be something readily available on the site, and not that a newcomer should feel like he's being solicited to call someone. (the actual way i felt the first time i called someone. he happened to be genuine and well meaning, but came across weird. if anybody's wondering if i'm referring to them, the person i'm talking about hasn't been active here in a while)

as far as groups go, i don't have experience w this so i don't really know what it would be like. in a way i think there might actually be a maala in just regular one on one conversations cuz i'ts not a whole official recovery group (or mussar vaad), i'ts just a regular normal person, dealing w a regular human struggle, talking to a (usually) regular choshuve normal friend and getting what a friend gives best.

thanks for bringing up this great idea!

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 25 Jun 2024 05:04

Super idea. Let's get started!

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by chaimoigen - 25 Jun 2024 05:12

I'm in!!

I'll still have spotty attendance for a coupla weeks though.

i think the general idea is great.

One Haara: I do think that part of the power of calling and meeting folks is the vulnerability inherent in actually making contact with a real person, one on one, even if at first (or second) you don't give him your real name. I think this Vaad idea , while incredibly valuable, may dilute that power a bit.

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by yiftach - 25 Jun 2024 06:48

Go for it!!!

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Re: A Modest Proposal

Posted by amevakesh - 25 Jun 2024 14:19

Love it! I'm in. Thank you for this fantastic idea!

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