

Emotional Escape

Posted by CourageousYid - 19 Aug 2024 17:37

Hello friends,

Posting this is certainly pushing myself out of my comfort zone despite the anonymity of the site. It takes a lot of courage to share your story and accept that you need help. My parents have always taught when there are certain avenues of support, like therapy or medication for those that need it, take full advantage. It can only help.

A very brief history: As a 24-year-old yeshiva and college student I am shocked and frustrated that I am still in the grasp of the *yetzer hara* after so many years. I grew up with a "normal" childhood filled with wonderful memories. My parents truly loved my siblings and I unconditionally. They weren't perfect. But no one is.

I was an *ernste* kid, always respectful and kind, and had the praise of all my Rabbeim since Grade 1. Although I was athletic and a good student, I got bullied in High School and part of elementary school from insensitive friends. In fact, my *mashgiach* was shocked to discover that I was struggling with self-esteem and self-worth. Being a sensitive kid, my friends "teasing" definitely impacted me more than most. Everyone tells me what a great kid I am. How I am the "whole package". I never truly believed them. For years I felt like an imposter, playing a part. I felt inauthentic and insecure. I fell into a depression in Beis Medrash during COVID. That was not an easy time for anyone. Unfortunately, during that time, my parents' marriage was severely tested, and they separated and divorced last year. This was an absolute shock to my family and community who did not see this coming. We were the LAST family to have divorced parents. In fact, my parents would frequently say at the dinner table how lucky we are that we have a family who loves each other. Although I am "older" and no longer a child, it is very painful and hard to process emotionally. I do thank Hashem that I grew up in a stable home filled with warm memories.

I think it's important to give context to my history to appreciate my struggle with P&M. I do not consider myself an addict but use P&M as an escape from uncomfortable emotions. Just to get a little respite from all that pain. I would like to be clear. I am no longer depressed BH and have built a real connection to Torah after many years of hard work in Yeshiva. I have been working with a fantastic therapist for many years who has helped me appreciate my value. Yet I find myself after a few days of abstaining from P&M, getting overwhelmingly sad. I'm in this strange cycle where I am motivated to stop and then give in days later, not necessarily because I have a strong sexual desire, but because I am sad and want relief.

I would like to know if other people find themselves in a similar position. Not always using P&M to fulfill a desire, but to escape for a few moments from paralyzing thoughts and feelings. And when I do get really sad after those few days with no P&M, what do I do? I feel completely stuck. I simply don't know how to cope.

Sincerely,

A CourageousYid

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Re: Emotional Escape
Posted by chosemyschem - 19 Aug 2024 17:43

A courageous Yid indeed! Thank you for the post.

Someone here has a line in their signature "Pornography is a bad answer to a good question". Most of us here can relate to "using our penis as a pacifier" and using lust as our favorite escape.

Stick around. You'll see that it's possible to get clean and live life (pleasant or not) without lust.

Check out some of the excellent tools on the website such as the Flight to Freedom program for some excellent mindfulness tools and exercises to help you in the struggle, the book the Battle of the Generation to reframe the struggle and find the joy in staying clean. Links are in my signature.

Finally, the greatest resource here is the chevra. When you feel comfortable, find someone whose posts speak to you and reach out. Make a friend or two.

Hatzlacha!

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Re: Emotional Escape

Posted by jmyers99 - 19 Aug 2024 18:17

hey man, similar story here - I'm also 24 years old and struggling. Slight differences - my parents divorced when I was 10 and I found it at 10. I'm also a BT of four years now BH but yeah, similar story.

I also cave every few weeks when I'm feeling incredibly tired, stressed, nervous, overwhelmed, lonely etc. I'm working with my therapist on self-love and self care so I can really love myself instead of turning to artificial sources.

You're definitely not alone. Keep fighting brother, Hashem loves you!

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Re: Emotional Escape

Posted by vehkam - 19 Aug 2024 18:46

welcome to the forums and thank you for sharing your story. Many people use p&m as an escape. Probably most. To answer your question first, it is important for you to make a list of things that you can do to replace this unhealthy escape. Some of the common goto activities are exercise, learning, any hobby that you enjoy, listening to music, calling a friend etc... Really anything that can help make you feel good. When all else fails it can even be ice cream.

The important thing is to be ready with these other escapes so that you can break the pattern of turning to p&m. once the pattern is broken it is much easier to stay away from it.

best wishes for tremendous success

vehkam

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Re: Emotional Escape

Posted by CourageousYid - 19 Aug 2024 18:53

Thanks brother. It's nice to know I'm not alone.

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Re: Emotional Escape

Posted by vekiveisilo - 20 Aug 2024 03:20

You truly are a courageous Yid!!

I definitely relate to your position. I have struggled a lot with deflating feelings and self-doubt and low self-worth, mainly with regards to hatzlacha in learning, and unfortunately often my response was to distract myself with problematic behaviors. I really feel your pain! I don't know if I have a good eitzah, I really wish I did, but I do have some thoughts to share:

1) Lemaiseh, even though in the moment giving in is pleasurable and an escape, I think afterwards it doesn't feel very good. It always left me feeling worse than before - not only am I not matzliach in learning, I also can't control myself and abstain from a terrible aveirah?! So it might be of some help (if your experience is the same) to think about that when the urge comes, that it won't really help in the long term.

2) The beginning is admittedly very very difficult, but if you can manage to break the habit - the instinctive recourse to P&M whenever you're feeling down - it will become easier and you won't feel the urge to do it as much even when times are hard and you're not feeling great.

3) Just realizing that the urge is coming not from lust but rather from sad feelings can make it easier. Admittedly, you obviously do realize that, as you wrote so eloquently, but perhaps thinking about it and focusing on it b'shaas maiseh could be of some help. Another aspect of this is that often we can get overwhelmed by our emotions pulling us in different directions and lose clarity about what it is we really want. It helps sometimes to acknowledge all the different desires affecting us (e.g., I realize I'm not feeling very good about myself right now and that is making me want to escape with x, I acknowledge that I do want to do it and it will calm me down

and give me that release I so badly need. At the same time, I know that it is not the right thing to do, and I know it will not lead to lasting fulfillment or happiness in the long term.), as this can let us regain clarity about the different options and their pros and cons, allowing us to make a calm decision. Not easy (and I hope it made sense), but it has worked for me.

4) When difficult emotions are the root of an urge, it can help to speak out those feelings (not necessarily the urge itself) with someone else. It restores our equilibrium and calms us down. This is also admittedly difficult, and I don't know if you have someone with whom you can speak about such feelings, but there are many wonderful Yidden here on the forum who are more than willing to listen and offer their help - consider reaching out to them! It's not easy, but I know for myself that connection to other people was something that changed my life and made my struggle so much easier.

Imo anochi b'tzarah and rooting for your success,

Yekusiel

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Re: Emotional Escape
Posted by 1-12steps - 20 Aug 2024 18:17

Welcome!

Your story touched me in many ways

Practically, i could go on for hours and hours giving you tips and background, but GYE has came really far in the last few years and i HIGHLY RECCOMEND going through their official literature and IMPLEMENTING!!!

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