

Need help with my teenage son

Posted by boismom - 14 May 2009 13:42

Hello and forgive me for intruding as I am only a teen's mother and this isn't really my "space" but I don't know where else to turn and I need help and advice to help my son with this terrible addiction.

He is almost 16 and has been having trouble with this on and off for several years but lately it is getting worse. Sometimes he admits it's a "problem" that he wants to try to get over and sometimes he laughs it off and says he's just like any other kid, that 85% of boys his age watch this stuff. At one point I got him to look at this site and this forum and that seemed to sober him up for a few weeks but then I started finding the videos again. He says he can't go cold turkey and the videos are like a nicotine patch. I said there's no acceptable level of this. He also blamed me for his relapse saying I hadn't loosened up any of my restrictions on him when he was sober so why should he bother. I feel I am living with an addict and can't "loosen up" for a second.

We are locked in a daily game of cat and mouse. When he is at school or asleep I ransack his room and look at flash drives, memory sticks, and anything else he can save data on. My husband's office serves as the storage facility for all his confiscated things. Today I found video files on his non-video ipod stashed away in the "Calendar" file. They had been downloaded a few weeks ago. When I said I thought he had given up that stuff he said "Oh, those were just in case...". (huh?!?) To me, his need to have a flashdrive full of videos at any time indicates this is a pretty serious addiction. Other kids might look at this stuff when opportunity arises but he goes out of his way to hoard them. We have pretty good filters on our home computers (I think) but it seems every other kid in school has a laptop and there's wifi everywhere. His PSP internet browser is locked and he doesn't have the password, so he bought himself a new PSP which we had to confiscate. I end up taking away a lot of his electronics but I'm afraid if he has no way to amuse and distract himself he'll get worse. The compromise is to let him have it but to be constantly vigilant. This is exhausting physically and emotionally. We have considered and continue to consider finding him another place to live but don't know what institution or family would put up with this behavior.

This is not his only problem by far. He has been receiving mental health and educational interventions since he was a little kid. I'm not looking for advice and help for all of his issues, just to explain where things stand. He can be very chutzpahdik and his connection to yiddishkeit is very tentative right now. So trying to appeal to his sense of yiras shamayim or kibbud av v'em is difficult. I've tried. I've even tried to explain for a purely secular viewpoint how pernicious this addiction is but he laughs it off, "Oh, everybody does it." From his perspective all the restrictions of Torah and his family's rules are keeping him from living a "normal" life which includes watching whatever he feels like. I'd like to think his neshama still hears me deep down

but I don't know...I guess on the bright side he's not living a "double life" or acting like a hypocrite.

We are thinking about finding him another school. Right now he is in a Modern Orthodox day school type place where there is a lot of internet access. I'm afraid that switching him to a more black hat type of place with less emphasis on internet will lead him to rebel even more because he really won't fit in there and will miss his friends. And he'll find this stuff, somehow, maybe. Also, I'm not sure whether to give him back his PSP which I took away last week after finding the memory stick with bad videos on it. The PSP's ability to display video makes it very attractive as a private viewing booth. On the other hand he uses it to just have fun playing games and letting off steam after a long day at school. He has ADD and without something to distract himself he gets bored which leads to more problematic behavior, eg on the school bus. Does anyone know of a way to jigger a PSP so he can't use a memory stick?

I'm also not sure how much of this information to share with his friends' families. I know of least two occasions when he watched videos with friends, once in my very own house when he invited a friend for a sleepover. I feel like he has a sickness and it's contagious and I'm afraid for the other kids. On the other hand I don't want him to lose all his friends and become a social outcast. I know at least one of his friends has tried to encourage him away from this shtuss.

Would like some advice on these issues and just general chizuk. If you can remember to your own adolescence and what your parents did or didn't do that worked or didn't work would be appreciated. I don't know how much he can really help it and I shouldn't get angry but I still do. Also if you know of any groups or therapists in the NYC area, specifically Queens, Manhattan or the Five Towns, please let me know. I know about SA but I think that's really geared more for spouses.

Thanks again.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by jack - 14 May 2009 14:23

dear mom, there are many organizations today that can help you.there is priority one with rabbi shaya cohen, project extreme, and maybe some others that i'm not familiar with.you definitely need professional help.there are many things we cannot do on our own.for my kids if there is a

problem i always seek out professionals who are also outside my family so that they are not so connected. being that you are so connected because it is your own son, you may not be able to see the challenge (i dont like the word problem) objectively.

wishing you the best, jack

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by the.guard - 14 May 2009 17:13

Dear Mom, we truly feel your pain. Like Jack said above, professional help is advisable. Possibly Rabbi Horowitz, at www.rabbihorowitz.com/. (There are times when you can speak to him by phone)..

See this link on his site: www.rabbihorowitz.com/PYes/MGFiles/CPQ.cfm?id=1081

And perhaps this one too: www.rabbihorowitz.com/PYes/MGFiles/CPQ.cfm?id=1138

You might find that [this thread](#) on our forum may talk to your son.

Just recently, someone posted on the forum the following to a Bochor:

When I was your age, I too struggled with this addiction, and I sought help from my Rabbonim / Masgiach and was given completely misguided advice.

I am now married in my early 30's with children, my wife has been through pure hell as a result of my acting out, and if I do not stop I will loose my children too.

Whenever I see or hear of Bochorim struggling with this issue, I want to shake them and scream at them to get into recovery at an early age. When I was 17 my m/o was masturbating and porn mags, but as you know, this illness is progressive and by the time I was in my mid 20's I was doing things that in my wildest dreams I never thought I would do. If you still think that you are

not so bad and that you have not done a certain behavior yet, you should know that "yet" stands for "you're eligible too". Please, please, I beg you to take recovery seriously leave no stone unturned in finding a solution that works for you. Spare yourself and your future wife & kids, years of hell and recovery.

May G-d be with you.

London

On our website and forum, we generally try to help those who WANT to be helped. Dealing with a teenage son who doesn't want to be helped is a whole different ball game, and we truly feel your pain and frustration.

Perhaps if your son reads our latest Handbooks he will understand what he is up against, and how this is a disease which only gets worse and worse, and leads to endless pain and suffering down the line...

Right click on the links below and select "Save Link/Target As" to download the handbooks to your computer.

1) [The GuardYourEyes Handbook](#)

This Handbook details 18 suggested tools and techniques, in progressive order, beginning with the most basic and fundamental approaches to dealing with this addiction, and continuing down through increasingly earnest and powerful methods. For the first time, we can gauge our level of addiction and find the appropriate tools for our particular situation. And no matter what level our addiction may have advanced to, we will be able to find the right tools to break free in this handbook!

2) [The GuardYourEyes Attitude](#)

The Attitude Handbook details 30 basic principles to help us maintain the proper attitude and perspective on this struggle. Here are some examples: Understanding what we are up against, what it is that Hashem wants from us, how we can use this struggle for tremendous growth, how we can deal with bad thoughts, discovering how to redirect the power of our souls, understanding that every little bit counts, learning how to bounce back up after a fall, and so on

and so forth...

Print out these handbooks for him and ask him to read them. Maybe even make a deal with him, that if he reads the handbooks from beginning to end, you will stop playing cat and mouse with him, and let him make his own choices.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by aaron4 - 14 May 2009 17:29

Dear Mom,

Your situation breaks my heart and I am not qualified to address your concerns nor do I have answers to your very understandable questions. However having gone through adolescence with this problem, I can share a few thoughts.

First, unfortunately I can assure you that your concerns are absolutely on the mark. Although I'm sure you're not happy to hear that, the good news is that he has you for a mother, you know what's going on and are not embarrassed or too timid to broach the subject. From the sound of things, this is not a "stage" of adolescence that will simply pass with time, nor is the claim that "everyone does this stuff" proof that it's ok. At the same time, an all out assault will probably backfire so professional guidance is your best bet, as Jack and the site administrator advised. This is the short term.

What I and many others on this site are (unfortunately) better able to explain is the long term answer. As you probably suspect, it is not winning the game of cat and mouse, rather it must come from within. Your son needs to internalize positive values and recognize the harm inherent in this type of behavior. Reading some of the stories on this site, reading the Handbook and seeing where this can lead should help. However no one is here because their mother suggested they do a little reading – they're here because they want to heal themselves, sincerely and honestly. For your son, it's important to understand that the behavior is simply a defense mechanism for whatever might be causing him stress and discomfort (whether justified or not). These issues are the cause, the negative behavior is just a symptom. Address the cause with professional help and often the symptoms will go away by themselves.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Binyomin5766 - 14 May 2009 17:48

As one who began his addiction when he was 12 or 13 and has spent nearly 30 years struggling with it, I have to agree with the others. Your son, sadly, is in very deep. When I began my addiction, pornography was not easily available. I shudder to think where I would have ended up if it were so accessible when I was a teen. Unfortunately, I also have to agree with Aaron; for real, lasting change to take hold in your son's life, he must be fully persuaded of the need to change and be willing to take whatever steps necessary to effect that change. I agree that someone professional is needed, if for no other reason than he should hear the dangers of what he is doing from someone "outside" the conflict that seems to exist between him and you.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by jack - 14 May 2009 18:45

dear mom, it's me again. i just want to tell you to listen to what guardureyes said - have your son read the stories on this forum and let him see for himself where it can lead. print out the stories and have him read them, maybe if he sees where this can lead he will come around. i showed a few stories to my son. please, do it soon, you don't want him to be like me and wait till 50 to get healed. jack

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by me - 14 May 2009 20:11

After you have your son read the stories of the shattered lives, both from the view of the family, and of the addict, this may help him...at least on some level. He must understand that this is not just "some fun", but something very very dangerous where he will lose all control over his life. You may wish to point out that he is already at this stage...having lost control, and he is now an Eved. Point out that the people in these "true" horrific stories are people who are older than, him. more mature than him. more learned, and capable than him, and we see what has happened. This proves that this is an uncontrollable disease. Ask your son, "if you see someone jump off of the bridge, and drown...will you believe that this is not for you, and to be avoided at all costs?" Wouldn't you want to learn from other's mistakes, and misfortunes." Well, just reflect on these very true horror stories of destroyed lives.

Ask your son point blank...after he reads these stories, "Tell the truth...does it sound like these people who did exactly what you are doing...are happy with their lives?"

The most important thing though is....do not lose your connection with your son. You can't completely control him, and this will not help. It will only make things worse, and possibly cause distance between you and him. You must make sure that you do NOT lose his trust, and while being strong concerning the damage he is causing himself, at the same time continue to show that this stems from your "motherly love".

In the end, he will have to make the choice. If you continue to daven, and keep the lines of communication open with him, there is a good chance that he WILL come back.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Dov - 14 May 2009 20:40

Boys mom - I have "different" teenagers, too, and I have a lot of sympathy for you. Please consider these ideas. Appealing to Torah values, as you said, isn't working. Which means it won't and is a bad idea to do at all. Based on the way it was for me, *he is probably deeply and privately struggling religiously with his problem already*. For everyone I know in "this business" that is how it was. A constant quiet struggle with yiddishkeit, or just the conscience. And it hurts terribly. People attracted to this and all addictions are often spiritually sensitive people who feel a misconnection or a whole in them that they simply cannot tolerate. They fill it with whatever works for them. He found something that works and you cannot convince him it doesn't. He knows that it does. For now. One day it won't, though. He probably is a tortured soul in that respect. Nonetheless, having pity on him and giving him more space is clearly not the answer to any of his problems. You are right that S-Anon is primarily for spouses, but have you looked into it and talked w/other moms in SA? They may have something helpful 4u.

To close:

When we had a problem with our son, the greatest gift that grew out of it yet, was my wife and I growing closer from it. The therapist we went to advised us that the most important thing we can do to help the problem was making sure my wife and I are on **the exact same page**. Many tzadikim (the Steipler, ZT"L etc.) say that sholom bayis is the pivotal aspect of childraising.

We never understood it quite this way before, though. It sounds as though you and your husband do not have any problems and are doing this together well. However, are you sure the two of you see eye to eye on the way to approach your boy? Do you share a similar attitude on the degree of guilt you bear/do not bear? Can you talk together about just this point and be sure you are not sending mixed messages between you, one parent implying one thing and the other

something very different? Please consider this. If it makes no difference to him, it'll certainly improve your relationship and the shalom bayis for the other children and everyone else. It rubs off, eventually.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by London - 15 May 2009 14:34

Dear mom

Your son is doing the exact same this I was doing as a teenager, I remember my Dad finding one of my mags and burning it on the stove, I was not really too interested in what he had to say to me either and his preaching fell on deaf ears.

However from my own experience and that of meeting many other people in recovery for addiction, there is a common denominator of sexual abuse at a young age. I was sexually abused by an older boy at school when I was 8, I only realised when I was 15 what had happened to me and that's when my acting out deteriorated further from masturbation. I was so angry and disgusted with my self and full of rage and hatred towards the person who abused me but felt I could not tell anyone. Further your son is suffering as well as you, and is in a cycle of destruction that he does not know how to get out of. When he first found his "friend" called "lust" it provided him some relief from the inner turmoil in him, however as with all addictions 2 things start to happen. Firstly the need to get more of the drug and the same effect will propel him to look for greater hits. Secondly every time he acts out he will be filled with guilt, shame and self hatred towards himself, and at the moment the only way he knows how to get rid of this pain is to act out again and again..... And you as a mother (and in most cases wives) are powerless to stop him.

My wife has been to S-Anon meetings and learned some very important lessons in helping her cope with my - the 3C's she did not Cause my addiction, neither can she control it, and she certainly cannot cure it. Further looking for your son's stash is very similar to the stories in the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book of wives looking for their husbands hidden bottles.

It would be very helpful for you to read the AA Big Book which has many chapters devoted to the suffering family and how they should cope, what they should and should not do. Further you may find support and identification from S-Anon.

I would be only to happy to talk to your son on the telephone and tell him my story how my addiction progressed and almost ruined my life to try and encourage him to seek help, you can contact me via email binyomin25@hotmail.com

Be strong and do not blame yourself.

Hatzlocho

London

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by DesertLion - 16 May 2009 14:57

Dear Mother,

I remember putting my mum through hell when I finally told her about my problems a few years ago. Looking back, it was a blessing in disguise because I know that I couldn't have made it out of that hell on earth alone.

In retrospect, I wish my mother had caught me in the act or had at least suspected me years before I told her myself. When I finally confessed, it was only because I had hit rock bottom and my position seemed totally hopeless. For a long time, I even wanted to commit suicide to escape my suffering.

The fact that you know that you know your son needs help and has problems is a cause for hope. Especially since he has not hit rock bottom. The great amount of pain that you both feel now may be better than unbearable suffering further down the line.

It wasn't long ago that I was a teenager and I remember that one of the main reasons that I 'acted out' was because I was looking for an escape from the boredom of everyday life. Perhaps your son is feeling a deep spiritual void inside himself, similar to what I used to feel. It is easy to say now, but had I found healthy outlets for my energy like sport, music, reading and good

friends, I am certain I would have been satisfied with life and would not have needed a temporary fix for my problems.

Also, I know that had I truly known the consequences of my actions, then I would never have started out on the road that I did. Maybe reading some of the stories on the website that GUE suggested would help your son realise what he is doing to himself.

Oh and GUE once sent me this video link:

www.theyeshivaworld.com/video_viewer.php?player=g&clip=-7332930594849349840&hl=en

It's about a man who used to 'act out' and live a so-called 'normal life', who died but was then revived. Your son may find it interesting.

Take care and best wishes to both you and your son.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by the.guard - 16 May 2009 19:04

As mentioned by London above, abuse can often lead to acting out later in life. For those who were abused as children, see #2 - A & B on [this page](#).

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by Ezra512 - 17 May 2009 05:06

B"H

I commend you on your perseverance to help your son, I can understand this is a very difficult subject. I am 17 and come from a more Modern background and have struggled with these

problems for six years. I would be willing to offer talking to or doing anything that you think could help.

Ezra

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by chasid - 17 May 2009 14:25

Maybe you should determine what his problem is. Sexual? Enjoys arousal? Lust? Needs physical pleasure? Or is it really an addiction to pornography?

From what you say it sounds like it may be the last one. You can only tackle pornography if the problem is pornography. Not if it is a product of something else.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by perfectnose - 17 May 2009 18:04

I can only talk from my experience and sometimes addiction to porn is caused by other issues like depression, low self esteem ect. Then you get into a vicious cycle. I know that in my teenage years I would have done anything to get helped, and I am surprised that your son knows that you know about his issues and he still tries to evade you. This makes me think that there is other issues involved.

then again this can be in the category of fools talk.

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Re: Need help with my teenage son
Posted by boismom - 21 May 2009 15:36

Hi again. Sorry I haven't checked in for a while but I read every response and have been

thinking about all your words of advice, insight, and support and I really appreciate your taking the time to share your thoughts with me.

Things are getting worse and we are more in need of intervention but my son is fighting me. His schoolwork and behavior are deteriorating and the descent into porn is just a piece of that. I feel like I am watching a child waste away under a ravaging, incurable disease.

He agreed to go to visit a new yeshiva then backed out at the last minute. He agreed to see a new therapist in a week but I don't know if he'll back out of that as well. the links from Rabbi Horowitz's site were very helpful and gave me some more ideas and resources. The therapist we are supposed to see is very experienced with at-risk youth so hopefully he can be of some help even if my son won't attend. Thank you to those who offered to contact my son directly. I will have to think about the right time and way to do that. Right now he is just full of anger and scorn and I don't know if it will be helpful.

Thanks again. I'm trying to continue to be hopeful.

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