

Trading Addictions

Posted by yankeld - 24 Feb 2010 04:21

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A theoretical discussion.

Often addictions arise out of filling a void. So one turns to something appealing to fill that void. Can one trade that addiction for another or would he just compound the problem.

For instance. Our shared addiction of inappropriate material. Can one swap that for a food addiction.

I for one would rather be addicted to food - kosher - that doesn't damage the neshama to the extent that this stuff does. Take chicken wings for example. I'd rather be addicted to chicken wings than znus.

Maybe I'll just redirect this post. What would you rather be addicted to? Afterall - we need to laugh at ourselves. Purim is coming. What would you rather be addicted to?! Pepsi or P\*\*N?

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by Tomim2B - 24 Feb 2010 04:58

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Laugh, laugh! But addiction is only a symptom of the fact that we don't know how to manage our emotions properly. Shifting into another addiction, not only won't it fix that problem, but it will make it worse. While giving you yet another means to artificially stimulate a pleasant feeling when things don't look good, the root of the problem - not having a mature and healthy way to deal with emotional instability - still remains.

In part of approaching health, an addict needs two things:

a. He has to know and understand that life is bound to throw him a curve ball somewhere down

the line, and that it's normal, natural, and healthy to experience an occasional "down" at times. It's the nature of addicts to expect to live in a constant euphoric state. When we feel things aren't "good" we try to "make them good" using a method of instant gratification. Instead of always trying to live in a "high", we can accept that there are lows too, and do our best to live with them. Then, when we free ourselves from the shackles of addiction and numbing ourselves is no longer the route we take, we'll automatically begin to feel again. Instead of quickly numbing any emotion we have, we'll allow these feelings to pass through us, and if they don't agree with us - being negative by nature - then we'll have to manage those emotions in a healthy type of way. Amongst the many positive, happy, and pleasant feelings that we'll be able to feel, there *will* also be negative and painful feelings. A healthy person feels both.

b. In managing those emotions, he knows that the only way to fill his emotional neediness in a way that it doesn't hurt us in the long-run (as addiction, which is founded by a need for "instant gratification", is focused in the "now!") and in a way which will bring him emotional maturity; is to fill his void with meaningful "values" in which he can get the same emotional simulation. In the beginning, he understands that the effect may not be as powerful as if he would have acted out, but he remains persistent. He knows that by leaning on his value system to fill his emotional emptiness with meaning, over the course of time he'll stable out. He identifies that leaning on addiction, as much as it *may* fill his void, it's only temporary, it isn't very real, and ultimately with habit it will lose its effect. Even though it will lose it's numbing effect, the compulsive drive will still remain, and the "user" will need to up his dose in order to get the same kind of high. What ends up happening; any one of two things: the addict either turns to another addiction to fill his need, or he increases his dosage in the addiction he's currently involved in - sinking deeper and deeper into a state of emotional immaturity (and outright danger). The only way to properly free one's self from addiction and become healthy, all addicts know; is to take a critical look at *all* compulsive behavior.

When a person cuts himself off from his habitual instant gratification, it's expected that he'll feel very empty inside. That's natural. It's up to him however to decide how he wants to respond to that feeling. Is he going to take another compulsive route which will reinforce his addiction, or will he say "no!" to all compulsion and take back what his addiction has stolen from him - "his life!" - ? That's the question...

2B

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by yankeld - 24 Feb 2010 05:06

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Excellent points. And I appreciate it. I knew someone was going to tell me at least some of that. Of course - exchanging it is only an exchange. The void still exists - you've just found an alternate or compounded the issue.

But I was really hoping for some humor. Sometimes we need to laugh at ourselves.

Take duct tape for example. I think I'd rather be addicted to making things out of duct tape. Make a gregger for purim out of duct tape. A mezuzah casing, perhaps even a cannon. True - it can start off safe but it can turn dangerous. You can use duct tape to make a cannon and that's dangerous. See - all addictions have fun parts. Simple pleasures like basic construction. But they too can turn on you - like making cannons.

Any more examples?

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by Tomim2B - 24 Feb 2010 05:15

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Yeah, you can do lots of cool things with duct tape!

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by shemirateinayim - 24 Feb 2010 05:58

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Tomim? did I play any part in this post?

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by Momo - 24 Feb 2010 06:29

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[Tomim2B wrote on 24 Feb 2010 04:58:](#)

b. In managing those emotions, he knows that the only way to fill his emotional neediness in a way that it doesn't hurt us in the long-run (as addiction, which is founded by a need for "instant gratification", is focused in the "now!") and in a way which will bring him emotional maturity; is to fill his void with meaningful "values" in which he can get the same emotional simulation. In the beginning, he understands that the effect may not be as powerful as if he would have acted out, but he remains persistent. He knows that by leaning on his value system to fill his emotional emptiness with meaning, over the course of time he'll stable out.

2B, what an amazing, amazing post. Thank you.

Can you explain how "meaningful values" fill the emotional emptiness that is felt when we don't fill it up with the addiction? That's a real problem for me.

Promising to stay sober is good until we feel let down and empty. Then the need to fill the empty hole is overwhelming.

Thanks.

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by Tomim2B - 24 Feb 2010 07:39

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[shemirateinayim wrote on 24 Feb 2010 05:58:](#)

Tomim? did I play any part in this post?

Sure did!

[Momo wrote on 24 Feb 2010 06:29:](#)

Can you explain how "meaningful values" fill the emotional emptiness that is felt when we don't fill it up with the addiction? That's a real problem for me.

Let me give you an example:

Two children who pride and value themselves by their grades have taken a test. Both of these children have never gotten anything less than an "A+" until this day. Now though, for the very first time in their lives, they've done very poorly on an exam. Their papers were turned back to them and they're devastated by the results.

Each of these children respond in their own unique way. The first child, having many values to lean on, he's able to find emotional balance without struggling too hard. He was raised under the loving care of his parents, so they are there for him. His brothers and sisters also give their loving support. This child values the relationships he has with his friends, so he's able to reach out to them and share his emotional pain with them. In addition, because he was educated by his parents to find value in a more altruistic form of living life, he's able to "get out there" and focus on the needs of others even though he's hurting. To top it off, this child has hobbies and one of which is sports. While his grades were really important to him, that was just a single one of his many values. Even though he may be going through an unbelievable amount of stress, he's got plenty holding him up.

Let's take the other child now: He comes from a broken and abusive home. He's struggling to maintain a relationship with his family and he's very detached from them. He doesn't feel trusting enough to make himself vulnerable to them so he can get their support. He's been shown all his life by their abusive natures that that isn't the safest ground to tread on. Then comes his friends... Well, he doesn't have any. He's never invested himself in any relationships,

and now, there's no-one there for him. Because he comes from a home which displays only selfishness, he isn't able to "get out of himself" and focus on others either. It's just him, focusing on the one thing that's important to him - his grade, his failure.

While all this time this child was able to use his grades to find comfort from his stressful situation at home, here he is with nothing to find comfort in. That is, except in the comfort he can get from eating food. Having nothing to fall back on to help him ease his pain, he begins to eat comfort foods and other types of junk. When he finds that this does indeed work to ease his pain and bring him comfort, he uses this method more and more.

There comes a point where this child binges on food, and it no longer brings him the same kind of emotional satisfaction that it used to earlier bring him. Imagine: if a person uses music to ease his emotional pain, how long can he listen to a certain song over and over till it loses the impact. There comes a time where food isn't enough. What once brought him emotional comfort, does no more. At this point though, after several months of eating this way the child has gained quite a bit of weight. Now he's bullied school for being the "fat kid". What once brought him emotional satisfaction, now only brings him emotional pain. His "comfort" became his "problem"! He's slipped into "compulsive eating" mode though, which has brought him additional stress. Now he's got a problem on his hands, one that's very difficult to pull away from, aside from him being filled with an ever increasing guilt and shame every time he indulges again. Weighed down by this further degree of emotional imbalance and not being able to cope with it using food alone, this child is forced to either "up his dosage" or turn to another "drug" to stimulate those same feelings of comfort. Here, he's creating a vicious addictive cycle.

In combating addiction, we're looking not just for "recovery" but for "health". When we shift into a healthy mode, we learn to *manage* our emotions. That means that we're no longer looking for the instant gratification "quick fix". Instead of just focusing on the moment, we look at the life ahead of us and the life we want to live. We consciously make our decisions; decisions that will lead us to a better future. How do we do this? By focusing on our values! When we structure our lives within a solid framework - and "values" are firm, balanced, and solid - we'll always have another leg to lean on when things are tough.

It's true that in the beginning a person won't feel the same type of "comfort" that he's felt when acting out to fill that void. But this is about emotional balance - something that acting out will never give him! While the effect of acting out has seemed to work until this point, it only works in the *present* and nothing ever remains but guilt, shame, and further addiction. Emotional stability there isn't! As long as he continues to numb himself to any emotion which is unpleasant, he's working away from emotional stability. He can't continue to numb his emotions forever. There comes a point where the painful emotion becomes greater than any comfort you can artificially stimulate. The only way to get true emotional stability is to focus on "living life" - living your life

based on values - actualizing yourself. Over time, the emptiness will get less and less - and this time it's for real!

2B

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Re: Trading Addictions  
Posted by Momo - 24 Feb 2010 07:44

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Re: Trading Addictions  
Posted by imtrying25 - 24 Feb 2010 11:42

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me??

Or is my nose just playing tricks on

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Re: Trading Addictions  
Posted by briut - 24 Feb 2010 11:53  
Thank you. I'm very grateful, and at a loss for words.

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[Momo wrote on 24 Feb 2010 07:44:](#)

Tomim2B:

Thank you from me, also.

Your post hit a nerve I've been trying to avoid for many weeks of rather compulsive postings.

I just hate the thought of having to face that nerve.

Hate it hate it hate it.

Which means that it's the nerve I need to turn to now.

Without a doubt.

Ouch.

But, thanks.

I say this so that you (and OP!) will understand that posts can sometimes have value beyond their original intent.

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by Momo - 24 Feb 2010 11:55

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[imtrying25 wrote on 24 Feb 2010 11:42:](#)

me??

Or is my nose just playing tricks on

I thought it was your new cologne, but I didn't want to say anything. :D

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Re: Trading Addictions

Posted by imtrying25 - 24 Feb 2010 12:06

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[Momo wrote on 24 Feb 2010 11:55:](#)

[imtrying25 wrote on 24 Feb 2010 11:42:](#)

me?? Or is my nose just playing tricks on

I thought it was your new cologne, but I didn't want to say anything. :D

Yeah that makes sense. Ive noticed the smell wherever i was going .....hmmmmmmmm..... you

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Am i smelling a full fledge return from the Tomim man??