

Sporadic failures

Posted by Levtahor - 31 Oct 2008 01:54

I'm really excited to have discovered this site - wish something like this had been around five years ago! (I'm sure both of those are common sentiments.)

The short version of my story is that I've been struggling with the problem since around my Bar Mitzvah (about 10 years ago). Being the computer expert in my house I was able to have free reign of the computer, and I took some pretty horrible advantage of it. I went through phases of staying 'clean' (when I was about 16 I started a daily diary-style log, and created a program that counted weeks, days, hours, minutes, seconds, of staying clean, which was an effective tool for a while.), and then failing multiple times in a row. As a good hard working, and disciplined student (B"H) my double life tore me apart, but it took a long time until I finally felt I had it under control to a significant degree. I found other 'softer' time-wasters, like relatively innocuous films and tv shows to download and watch - although that too was at odds with my sterling reputation in school. In my final year of high school I got involved with an early Frum blogging-style group (before there was even such a word), and formed a number of online friendships including some girls, which I think helped keep me clean, and very much helped me stop objectifying women. I certainly wasn't very good at limiting my online time then (often staying up to inordinately crazy hours of the night), but I barely had any Ta'avah to seek out p.

About five years ago I left home for Yeshiva, where I again had no problem (much more limited computer access). Coming home for Bein haZmanim, I was fine - my online friends were still around and I often stayed up to ridiculous hours, but I was clean (Quote from my log: "Seconds: 58,594,770 (Do I still need these for any reason? Life has certainly moved on, and I certainly think up... "). However at some point, I slipped - not the first time I was home, but I think the next one (there's a strong correlation to the fact my other online outlets - my IM acquaintances - had for the most part moved on in life to other things), and since then *every* time I've been home for Bein haZmanim I've failed - sometimes earlier, sometimes later. (This Sukkos, it was really only on my last day home that I ended up staying up past 5am browsing everywhere I shouldn't - it was during that session that I first stumbled across this site, though at that point I was too far gone to pull out). The problem isn't directly related to the availability of a computer either, because for the past year I've had a laptop in Yeshiva, and whilst in Yeshiva itself, I haven't really had a problem. (With some minor exceptions - I'm actually on my guard right now, that I might be prone to acting out, as a kind of residual from my Bein haZmanim failure.)

I think this issue has wrecked my self-esteem and confidence in multiple areas - something I'm especially noticing as I begin Shidduchim. My main problem though, is how to tackle it during the time when it's not a direct danger. The after-effects are definitely around for at least a few weeks or more after falling (with terrible images popping into my mind during Davening, learning, etc.), but generally BH I don't feel any real Ta'avah to go where I shouldn't when I'm

online (though I do recognise a problem I have with staying online for longer than I should). At one point I went so far as to reveal the problem to my parents (over the phone, one Elul Zman), but I don't think they realised the gravity or the depth of the issue - they understood it more as a problem haunting me from my past (which I suppose I keep hoping it is), then as something I need help with now. Any advice would be much appreciated. I would be happy to be an accountability partner, and could probably do with one myself, although again, as mentioned my main challenging times are during Bein haZmanim, (or other times that I am in a more isolated out-of-Yeshiva setting for more than a weekend or so).

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by MW - 31 Oct 2008 02:44

In my opinion you should get rid of your laptop and if you have a choice install a filter on your home computer. You should not be browsing your home computer at all during bein hazmanim or find a way to make sure that your browsing is public at home.

It you don't stop your activities now you are on your way to becoming a full blown addict and trust me you don't want to go there. It seems that you were able to control yourself well under certain circumstances, and you need to keep those circumstances in place all the time, Filtered, monitored or better yet no computer access.

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by the.guard - 01 Nov 2008 21:35

Dear Lev Tahor,

Welcome to our forum and site. You have come to the right place.

The first thing you need to know is that the phenomenon you are dealing with is not because you have huge desires and can't seem to be able to deal with them. Rather, you are dealing with an "addiction". It is important to understand this because, as an addiction, it can be dealt with in many tried and proven ways and methods. You may say that you don't believe you are

really addicted. The definition of an addiction is any behavior that a person tries to stop many times and he knows that it goes against what he believes and what he wants for himself, yet he keeps falling back to it.

The fact you were able to stay clean for long periods shows you have strength and you won't be able live with yourself comfortably ever again if you don't break free of this all the way.

I believe you can learn a lot from the story and the answers that were just posted on [THIS THREAD](#) in the forum (click on the words "THIS THREAD"). Read carefully the story and the replies. I just finished posting a long reply there, and I believe much of what I wrote there applies to your case as well - although thankfully you haven't gotten as addicted as he yet. But you will soon, if you don't stop now. Addictive behaviors are downward spirals. A person loses control more and more, if they don't stop early on. And that is why we are here to help you. Please see the steps I suggested that he take there, most importantly - [a strong filter](#) - yes, on your laptop in Yeshiva - even if you think you are strong there. And if you can, at home too. Otherwise we may have to find ways that you can keep yourself off the computer at home unless other people are in the room. Perhaps even by using vows... (But we'll deal with that before you go home next).

It seems you have lots of "Blogging" and "Forum" experience. Well, consider this forum your new "spiritual family". We will give you chizuk and support, and help you break through this. Keep posting here about your progress. We really want to hear from you.

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by Levtahor - 02 Nov 2008 06:04

Thank you for your reply (and the posts in jw8's thread)! I'm very painfully aware that I'm addicted to a significant degree, although it's a bit puzzling to me that in the past I haven't have a harder time whilst in Yeshiva. (I've also only rarely struggled with certain personal 'no-goes' like using my credit card for age verification (once I was old enough...) - although that isn't very limiting at all nowadays. On the other hand, I never was able to commit to any *moral* limits (in terms of perversions that were just 'too far' to contemplate), and things like promises never felt like they'd really deter me - although I haven't ever actually formalised a Neder in this direction.) Apparently if it is just totally not an option, I'm fine, but as soon as there is any hint of availability, I end up tracking it down and finding the crack in the system. Indeed, last week was a lesson in "Al Tiftach Peh I'Soton" for me, as I spent basically the whole Thursday night/Friday doing things I would never have imagined myself doing in Yeshiva. I'm not so surprised actually

(which probably made my resistance beforehand much lower than it should have been), as almost every time I've slipped it's been at least a few days of false starts before I've gotten back on any kind of track - and this time, having only slipped the day before leaving home, I was still especially vulnerable. Now, after a good Shabbos, I feel much more 'on-track' and in control of myself, and I expect this coming week should be much better (though of course I know I can't let my guard down, which is why I'm forcing myself to post here before going to sleep).

I do have K9 on my laptop, but I've always come up with excuses, and have never yet had the internal strength to give the password to someone else. This site might just give me the impetus. There is also a tracking program on the laptop (Yeshiva officially requires it, although most Bochorim don't have it), but I'm pretty confident that it's rarely if ever checked. (The person the Yeshiva assigns to check the logs for all the Bochorim, is already busy enough.)

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Re: Sporadic failures

Posted by the.guard - 02 Nov 2008 08:55

Have you joined the chizuk list yet? I will add you.

As far as K9, PLEASE send me the password. Do not hold it yourself. See [this page](#) for more info on what to do with the filter passwords.

Your recent falls mean that Hashem wants you to grow. He gives a person falls to strengthen them and bring a person closer to him through their determination and through their struggles. He doesn't need Tzadikim. He has enough Malachim in Shamayim. He needs HUMANS. People who fall, struggle and get up again. That is what he desires most...

Hashem is calling you. That is an honor. Take up the challenge with joy and set yourself out a plan. Find what situations bring you to fall, and make yourself Gedarim.

Vows are very powerful tools. But one needs to be very careful to make vows that he KNOWS he can keep.

See [this page](#) for ideas and advice on how to do this, and see [this page](#) of the FAQ

Normally making vows is frowned upon by our sages as with someone playing with fire, but when it comes to girding oneself from sexual temptation, we find that making vows is praised by the Torah and by Chaz"al. As the Pasuk says "Nishbati Va'akayeima, lishmor Mishpatei Tzidkecha" - "I have vowed and will uphold it, to guard your righteous laws". And also it says "Nishba Lehora Velo Yamir - Oseh eileh lo Yimot Le'olam" - "He who swears to prevent bad and does not nullify... he will never falter". And Chaza"l also say that Bo'az swore to guard himself from transgressing when Ruth came to him in the silo at night, as it says "Chai Hashem, Shichvi ad haboker" - "In the name of G-d, lay here until morning".

May Hashem be with you!

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Re: Sporadic failures

Posted by Levtahor - 06 Nov 2008 07:41

I'm really having trouble breaking out of this new rut, of being in Yeshiva and yet wallowing in filth that represents exactly the opposite... I'm going to be traveling to a family Simcha for the weekend - IY"H it will be a chance for a fresh start when I get back. Whilst I'm away, I'm hoping that if I plan right (which I know is really where the challenge lights) I should be able to keep busy enough that I won't slip. Without planning the struggle I'm having in Yeshiva may just be even harder to resist when I'm out of that environment.

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Re: Sporadic failures

Posted by the.guard - 06 Nov 2008 11:54

What's with a reliable filter? Believe me Lev tahor, you don't want to go down the path of addiction. It's pain, pain and more pain, until life becomes unmanageable. We can help you at that stage too, but we don't want you getting there. PLEASE take the advice of the tips on the site. Install a strong filter, maybe use vows to punish yourself with various painful things if you fall, or **before** you allow yourself to fall.

This whole struggle is in the mind. Once a good filter is in and you have various punishments

you will have to do, the mind let's you be free of this and it becomes 100 times easier.

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by kookooreekoo - 06 Nov 2008 17:11

Hi All,

It appears to me that many of you may be sexaholics (sex addicts) like me, and will never get cured. This is a mental illness and it only gets worse. The only option for me is to "work the twelve steps" and am sober now for about 1000 days.

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by UTS - 09 Nov 2008 09:41

Why do you say that sex addicts never get cured?

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by the.guard - 09 Nov 2008 15:54

What he means, is that someone who was once addicted may always be very sensitive to these things and be triggered very easily. However, we learn our triggers and avoid them, we learn the techniques and how to control it and it becomes 100 times easier. So it depends how you define "cured".

We should never look at it as a problem though. It's really a gift, because once we learn control, we have the opportunity to give Hashem our hearts each time we are triggered. We are able to grow with every time we exercise restraint. People who had this once can become greater tzaddikim than others who aren't triggered so easily.

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Re: Sporadic failures

Posted by kookooreekoo - 11 Nov 2008 16:26

once an addict allways an addict...

Mabey you are not an addict or maby you just fool yourself that you are over with it. However, if you are a real addict and just try to combat it with your own willpower, while you do that your addiction is making push-ups and one day it will burst into flame so out of control you never imagined.

Again, maby you are not a real addict, but if you are one like myself the only option is working the twelve steps. There can be no continuous sobriety, healing in the marriage, and acceptance in life for addicts like myself without the twelve steps.

In the past I tried everything people on this site tried but kept on falling back. Today I Hashem is helping me one day at a time since Bais Iyur Tuf Shin Samech Vof...

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Re: Sporadic failures

Posted by Levtahor - 11 Nov 2008 20:23

BH I had a busy weekend and managed just fine without internet access for a few days (apart from checking my email a few times). After writing that post I put a random password into K9, and so far BH I haven't had desire to try and bypass it. We'll see how the rest of the week pans out - I'm pretty positive about it.

Does anyone have advice about where Shidduchim fits into my working on this addiction? I've kind of been on a break from Shidduchim for a couple months, primarily triggered by a particular experience over the summer, not directly related to this issue - though it was partially related to more general self-esteem problems which have much of their root in my p* problem. I feel almost ready to start again, but I'm not sure how 'cured' I need to be in order to be able to

develop a healthy relationship, and be confident that I have the strength not to fall again. I certainly realise that marriage is not a 'solution' to the problem. The truth is I've never associated my p* binges with real love and relationships, and I don't generally transfer my addictive thoughts to real people (also cf. my original post about some more 'platonic' relationships I developed whilst I was younger), so I don't feel that it's had a deep impact on my ability to form emotional bonds and build a Bayis (nor in terms of unrealistic expectations, and misguided focus about the purpose of marriage). But perhaps that's true for most people? Again part of my uncertainty is that my hardest time of struggle is when I'm home during Bein haZmanim - and if I start Shidduchim again soon, I could very well be engaged by then, so I won't even have a chance to see how well I can control myself in more trying circumstances.

I also just noticed battleworn's comments about his battle prior to marriage - and then the fact that it resurfaced after marriage too (if I understood correctly), which leaves me quite nervous about jumping back into the world of Shidduchim. In one of those classic spiral circumstances though, starting Shidduchim again, and even getting engaged could boost my self-confidence as well as give me one more very important reason to succeed and prove myself.

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by the.guard - 11 Nov 2008 21:25

I think the general consensus on this question is that you should be working on yourself and dating at the same time. Both are important. Don't wait until you're fully healed, you never know when that might be, and the loneliness of being single and unsettled can exacerbate the problem. And also, dating can give you the extra incentive to prepare yourself properly and stop these behaviors.

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by Levtahor - 12 Nov 2008 03:53

That's reassuring to hear. :-) More or less what I figured.

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Re: Sporadic failures
Posted by kookooreekoo - 12 Nov 2008 15:57

Dating while thinking or believing that you halfway healed will give you a good indication if you are a real addict or not...

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