

When my wife and I discussed GYE

Posted by KiviYVY - 23 Nov 2010 15:35

I apologize for the long post.

I had a discussion with my wife last night about this website and I thought the topics discussed were of benefit for the readers of this forum so here are my notes. Many of these points could probably be broken in to separate posts. I'll leave that to the moderators to do if they choose to.

I had recently mentioned a number of things I saw on GYE. She knew I was receiving the emails but she didn't know I was recently participating in the forums. I also displayed some recent detailed knowledge of the 12 steps, as I've been reading material on this site, listening to some of the phone conferences, and listening to the Big Book audiobook. That got her worrying that maybe I have an addiction myself so she asked me...

Do you have an addiction?

I said I'm not sure since the definition of addiction is quite broad but I said I do have temptations that recur. That's the truth but I'm personally trying to treat it like an addiction so it doesn't progress and so I can have the proper attitudes to help myself stay clean. I didn't want to put it to her in that way because I was afraid she would blow it out of proportion and think her marriage was on the rocks and live with a lingering tension inside that would reveal itself in all sorts of disproportionate forms in the future.

Why do you read GYE - doesn't that mean you have some problem that I don't know about? I care about you and I would want to know. Plus, you've given me the impression that having Webchaver's monitoring and filtering was enough.

I said Webchaver is helpful for the day to day, but there are always temptations of some sort, like on News sites and the like, and I read GYE to help me cope when those triggers arise so I can be healthy and confident enough to avoid succumbing to them.

She raised the issue of women that she knows who have expressed that their husbands have

some form of internet/porn addiction.

I said that I think it would be helpful for those women to take a look at GYE themselves. If there's one message women can take from reading these forums it's that in most cases men are drawn to lust as an escape from their personal issues weighing them down and not because of any desire to hurt their wives or out of dissatisfaction with their wives. These men are well-meaning, just weak, and they are crying for help.

I also suggested that she have these friends somehow introduce their husbands to this site. It seems to me that many, if not all, men drawn to this lust do not want to be doing so and are always searching for a way out. GYE is that lifesaver they deeply crave.

I mentioned that GYE is extremely important to Klal Yisrael today (listen to the recent clip sent to the Chizuk list from the Noviminsker Rebbe) and it has tools for recovery that absolutely cannot be found anywhere. I mentioned that this site is only a few years old and before it came on the scene it was nearly hopeless for a frum person suffering from this addiction to find the right advice on how to recover. Rabbeim were advising Bochorim with this issue to get married, as if that would solve the underlying problem. They were perhaps suggesting the normal means of Teshuva, which is largely ineffective when dealing with actual addiction. If they were wisely referred to a therapist even the therapists were often guiding them in the wrong way since they weren't trained to deal with addiction. Of course, the lures of the internet are fairly new and most people likely did not know the full extent of internet porn addiction.

I described GYE as an environment that's safe for frum people - the conversation is very positive, the personal stories never really get to graphic to the extent that it would give people ideas and feed into their lust, and that the moderators work very hard to run the site Al Taharas HaKodesh.

) because it

was an uncomfortable conversation for both of us. B"H the issue is more out in the open now and we don't need to hide it as much from each other. Husband and wife hiding secrets from each other is a recipe for anxiety and frustration so I'm glad to have eliminated that to a large extent.

I'll mention that speaking to your wife about this issue is an extremely sensitive undertaking, as has been mentioned many times on this site, and it must be done with great care. If you read

the women's testimonies on GYE you'll see that their perspective is LOADED with EXTREME emotion. While the truth is likely that addicts of lust do not mean to hurt their wives or their families and they're often suffering from completely different issues unrelated to a wife's physical attractiveness or the like, women appear to take this as a personal attack and often react with anger and insult.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by kosher - 23 Nov 2010 16:08

Well said

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by briut - 23 Nov 2010 16:11

Wow. What a beautiful post! Could I have permission to offer a few specific points of praise and admiration?

YOU SAID: 1. I said I'm not sure since the definition of addiction is quite broad but I said I do have temptations that recur. That's the truth but I'm personally trying to treat it like an addiction so it doesn't progress [...] I was afraid she would blow it out of proportion and think her marriage was on the rocks [...].

A: Shkoiach for acting privately as if it might be an addiction, while letting her know that it's not an "addiction" since she might think it's like shooting up heroin on a street corner. Sensitivity to the wife is part of what I think will get all us married men back on a good path. Just my view....

YOU SAID: 2. I described GYE as an environment that's safe for frum people - the conversation is very positive....

A: Yeah, I also feel wives will feel comforted that it's both a kosher environment and populated by kosher people. I think we guys feel that way, too. (Example: How many guys in the "outside world" would even think p&m are even problems, much less understand how niddah is a nonnegotiable ingredient in the recovery? Whoa!) A good point to add.

YOU SAID: 3. ... it was an uncomfortable conversation for both of us. B"H the issue is now more out in the open and we don't need to hide it as much from each other. Husband and wife hiding secrets from each other is a recipe for anxiety and frustration [...] I'm glad to have eliminated that to a large extent.

A: Good job, for finding ways to bring out big "stuff" in an environment of safety and love. It sounds like she did the same. (Have you written her a love note for doing that, or bought her a single rose, or something??) I'm hoping you'll find some way of keeping her posted into the future, occasionally and b'tzniut, so she won't take the conversation off into an extreme and unwarranted direction. (And then, of course, commit yourself to avoiding any extreme directions!)

YOU SAID: 4. I'll mention that speaking to your wife about this issue is an extremely sensitive undertaking [...] the women's testimonies on GYE [are] loaded with EXTREME emotion. While [...] addicts of lust do not mean to hurt their wives or their families and they're often suffering from completely different issues unrelated to a wife's physical attractiveness or the like, women appear to take this as a personal attack and react with anger and insult.

A: Yeah, women seem to feel it's "all about them" when it comes to stuff like se*ual attraction or any kind of lust-related stuff. ("Does this dress make me look fat?") I forget that part sometimes. Especially when I must confess to myself (and online here, but never to my wife) that my imagination can than my reality with her. I can only daven that real life begin to appeal to me more, and empty fantasies less. Oy.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by KiviYVY - 23 Nov 2010 16:56

Thanks Briut for the validation. The love note/flowers suggestion is excellent. I'll get right on it!

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 23 Nov 2010 17:16

on the home page of GYE near the bottom there is a letter written by yechida to the wives of addicts. i am not suggesting you print it out and give it to her right now because it sounds like the situation is a little tense at the moment but you may benefit from reading it and knowing of it for a future opportunity. use your judgment.

i recently told my wife about my struggles. she was very understanding and supportive. it could have been a lot worse. it was not planned and it was somewhat spontaneous.

from what i have read here on GYE it is important to tell her only with guidance from a professional or the equivalent. it also helps a lot to be able to come to the table saying i have been out of trouble for x amount of time. this way she can see it as something you are working on and that you are not complacent about it. of course if she stumbles upon it then obviously there are no plans you can make as to the setting. but for damage control i would suggest reaching out to someone who can help you. like a rav or therapist or even someone here on GYE who has the knowledge and experience. as you wrote, it is a sensitive issue for a wife and needs to be handled with care. you will need to be extra-sensitive to the wife and try to be considerate of what she is processing at the moment. notes, flowers, gifts and phone calls during the day are always a good things and especially now.

in the long run, people who have the wife 'on-board' usually find it to be a source of strength and protection. it also deepens the bond between you as it brings out into the open an area that is shrouded for so many in secrecy and shadows.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE

Posted by KiviYVY - 24 Nov 2010 15:04

[ZemirosShabbos wrote on 23 Nov 2010 17:16:](#)

i recently told my wife about my struggles. she was very understanding and supportive. it could have been a lot worse. it was not planned and it was somewhat spontaneous.

This was also kinda spontaneous, but certainly better than being caught in the act or something. B"H the gift (chocolate bar) and note were enormously successful. Thank you all for suggesting that. It might have slipped my mind.

By the way, it's not like she didn't know about this struggle of mine at all. I was once sort of caught, although pretty mild compared to what could have happened. I also had told her about this struggle many years ago, soon after we were married - against the advice of my Rebbe. My Rebbe was right and I was just stupid. She respected me at the time, but she didn't need that subconscious fear within her, especially right after marriage, and I feel it's been the elephant in the room all these years. B"H the elephant is being addressed now (although I have no idea how it will fit in the mailbox... ;D)

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by 1daat - 25 Nov 2010 06:06

YVY, I remember telling my wife at the time about my "issues". I really wanted her acceptance, understanding, forgiveness. It was for me. A big Slach nah. At the end of the day it would have been less selfish to have just suffered and done something about it. Somehow, having her understanding felt like I had license to slip and fall.

I'm not trying to suggest I think this is going on with you, ChVsh. It sounds like Zemiroshabbos came from a place of pure motives, and his wife responded to him in kind. Sounds like your talk with your wife began the process of dealing with the elephant (I have an Israeli friend who calls it Ha Peel B'cheder). I'm just putting into the mix that we need to think deeply about our motives.

I'm fourthing the idea of love notes left on pillows, compliments to ANYTHING--"You have beautiful hands", a mid-day phone call just to say you were thinking about her, walking in the door and heading right to the kitchen to clean the dishes, etc.

You have beytzim like steel. I admire you. You teach us all. Thanks.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by silentbattle - 25 Nov 2010 06:29

I would add this website is wonderful in many ways - I mentioned to my wife that I love being connected to people who remind me that it's not just P&M that's wrong - even checking out a girl in the street is wrong, and crazy!

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by briut - 25 Nov 2010 12:35

[silentbattle wrote on 25 Nov 2010 06:29:](#)

mentioned to my wife that I love being connected to people who remind me that it's not just P&M that's wrong - even checking out a girl in the street is wrong, and crazy!
Forgive the thread hijack, but SB I'm happy to hear that your new wife knows something about you and the site. I sorta remember hearing before the wedding that the psak was to make vague reference. I was scared for you (a virtual friend, virtual stranger; strange, ain't it?). Now I know you two are really slated for closeness and greatness, secret-free.

I don't know your real-life situation, of course, but here in virtual-land it's nice to hear this place isn't a secret. "A good marriage can withstand anything... except a secret."

Now back to our regularly scheduled programming.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 25 Nov 2010 16:00

[1daat wrote on 25 Nov 2010 06:06:](#)

It sounds like ZemiroShabbos came from a place of pure motives, and his wife responded to him in kind.

1daat, i appreciate the sentiment but i think that the way my wife responded has more to do with her emotional state than my motives. my wife is very confident, with a healthy self-image. she does not need a husband who 'fits the mold' of an ideal husband to make her feel validated and successful. she can 'afford' to tolerate a husband who messed up a little, it does not demolish a carefully-built (but false) image of perfection.

i would not mind being wrong on that but i think that it is very likely to be true.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by 1daat - 26 Nov 2010 06:51

Zemmy. Wrong. Sincere motives. Lovely. I'm so glad for you two.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by Yesod Tzadik - 26 Nov 2010 12:24

At first she was skeptical saying; why do you need to know other peoples struggle, it opens your head to new things which you never knew.

I explained to her that everybody who has got a computer with internet knows that there are problems and we can get addicted to it. I told her the concept of 'hitting bottom whilst still on top'

that it's good to know where it can get you if you get addicted to it.

Than I did not speak about it for a couple of weeks. (She trust and admires me very much and I would not be able to tell her my problem)

After a while I told her about the daily emails and a couple of nice thoughts I saw on the site.

Last week I told here that I am posting 'my comments' on the site.

I will have to give her a break for another couple of weeks.

These conversations are normally part of other conversations so once I see that she has some doubts I just steer away the conversation

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by KiviYVY - 26 Nov 2010 13:55

TB - the gradual approach might work, but just beware that she may have a strong suspicion that there's a real problem and she's just afraid to speak about that elephant in the room. Carrying that elephant around is a real burden and I think it's important to somehow address it. If that might be the case, which may take much honesty and bravery to discover, I'd look for some expert guidance on how to proceed. I'm certainly no expert, but there must be some others on this forum and referred to on this site who can help.

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by Dov - 29 Nov 2010 04:56

Tomid besimcha, you have a very wise wife, b"H. But it is very sad that you are not able to tell her everything...

Yet I do not blame you and **admit** that it might be the right thing for you both right now. But it's not poshut, at all.

This topic is so sensitive and such a double-edged sword. Most couples I know have gotten

burned in *some* respect by this 'honesty' issue. As far the wife is concerned, it is actually the hugest issue in the entire mess. The fact that **they** were living in a lie - being made a fool of. It hurts terribly. And of all the people in the world, your *spouse* is the one person you *need* to feel safe with. For crying out loud, she *chose* to make herself vulnerable to her husband emotionally, sexually, and financially. If a parent double-crosses a child it will certainly cause deep, deep hurt - but a betrayed spouse feels like the town-idiot even if no one else knows about it. They were fooled!

My wife taught me this. And boy, was she angry. And when her anger would subside a bit, it was replaced by bitter fear. It was hell for her.

Now, there are different levels of betrayal. The guy who frum and yet still watching stuff like nudity and people having sex online is certainly betraying his wife. She thought (and still thinks) he is a good Jew, and here he is doing something that he would tell anybody is absolutely assur, stupid, and immoral. That's why we keep it so secret (and also because if everyone knew about what we were doing, we'd have to quit!) Gevalt! She is living with a liar! And, of course - she *is*. Bais Yaakov doesn't prepare them to live with liars...

Then there is the guy who is frum and yet discovers that he cannot stop meeting other people for his addiction. He is himself shocked at how successful his *lust* is and how *unsuccessful* all the tools at his disposal are (yir'as Shomayim, mussar, his rebbi, his willpower, his brains, fear of his wife, getting arrested, etc.). He is trying to do teshuvah, klopping, tikun Klali, learning, etc... He is messing around even though he is frum in every other respect - he is clearly mentally ill, yet never quite feels comfortable admitting that to himself.

This guy's wife is sleeping with other people in the bed with her, figuratively speaking....or maybe not. Diseases are passed that way and I know a number of marriages that have been affected by this. How is she supposed to deal with all that? What and when does he tell her about *his* stuff? There is a lot to say about this.

Each case is different.

My wife taught me that it is not the moment that we get caught - when we tell our wives what we did - that ruins the relationship, at all. It is the moment we went and **did** that horrible behavior we need to hide. That was when the damage was done...and we reacted inside with, "well, what she doesn't know will not really hurt her...I'll be good from now on and really try this time and be

honest from this moment forward....what good will it do to tell her, anyway?" Stuff like that. Then we just kept acting out worse and worse. Sheesh. That is no way to live (especially for a nice Jewish boy), and in sobriety we do not tolerate it, thank-G-d.

Often, every woman sees *her* betrayal as the worst. Nu. Who is to say how *much* she is hurting?

And in the end - whether it be appreciated or not - our sobriety is certainly the **main** most important thing we can contribute to the marriage, and later - our recovery. Still, honesty is the only policy for any hope for a healthy marriage to exist at all! I must be honest with my wife, period. What to do about what I did before I started recovery...that is something to take up with your sponsor and each case is different.

Hope this is helpful and you do not want to slap me for any of it.

Love,

Dov

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Re: When my wife and I discussed GYE
Posted by installed - 29 Nov 2010 10:44

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"A good marriage can withstand anything... except a secret."

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I'm glad you are writing all this in the Jewish Men forum and not in the Married Men forum. I find all the opinions very interesting and insightful.

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