

clarity please

Posted by geshertzarmeod - 14 Feb 2011 10:18

Can someone clarify for me please. How is acceptance of lust addiction as a disease not a "cop out" for a responsible person not to take responsibility for his actions? I read Dr. Twerski's definition of addiction. But cant everything be written off as an addiction? Isnt that what our society has done with psychology? Nothing is our fault anymore. I realize that there is a difference between a one time aveira and a constant behavior pattern. But that still doesnt do it for me. Reb Elazar ben Dordaya succeeded by taking responsibility for himself. Granted he cried

So is that the answer? taking responsibility doesnt work if you want to stay alive? I dont think so.

Can someone help me here, because this a major hashkafic issue preventing me from proceeding.

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Re: clarity please

Posted by Reb Yid - 20 Feb 2011 08:33

himself to death

I just spent a long time going through this thread from beginning to end. I must say that I found it to be one of the most fascinating I've seen since joining GYE about a month ago. I must personally thank Gesher, and all the other participants for truly helping me to work out many of those things that were bothering me, but I couldn't put my finger on. There were so many questions and beautiful answers given that I feel a little overwhelmed by it all. As a Rebbe for many years, I like to organize all of my thoughts. So I will attempt to organize and summarize what I've seen here so far, and maybe sprinkle in my own 2 cents here and there. Once I was doing it, I figured I may as well share my synopsis with everyone, on the outside chance that someone may find it beneficial. Let's start from the beginning:

[geshertzarmeod wrote on 14 Feb 2011 10:18:](#)

Can someone clarify for me please. How is acceptance of lust addiction as a disease not a "cop out" for a responsible person not to take responsibility for his actions? I read Dr. Twerski's definition of addiction. But cant everything be written off as an addiction? Isnt that what our society has done with psychology? Nothing is our fault anymore. I realize that there is a difference between a one time aveira and a constant behavior pattern. But that still doesnt do it for me. Reb Elazar ben Dordaya succeeded by taking responsibility for himself. Granted he cried

So is that the answer? taking responsibility doesn't work if you want to stay alive? I don't think so.

Can someone help me here, because this is a major hashkafic issue preventing me from proceeding.

Gesher brings up many questions, but basically one vitally important one. "How is it helpful to call it an addiction, which implies that it's not my fault. Wouldn't it be better to take responsibility for my actions?"

Probably a question most of us had when first learning about "the addiction". I think the basic answer that we received from the Heligeh GYE members was that only after they were able to acknowledge that it was out of their control, were they able to take responsibility for it. I understand it like this. If I think I should be able to run a marathon, and I never make it past the first mile, I will get depressed. I will give up. In my mind I am sure I can do it, but I keep failing to do it. So why should I keep trying? I am obviously a failure. But then somebody comes and tells me "You idiot!! If you never ran a mile, YOU CAN'T RUN A MARATHON!!! If you want to run the marathon, you must build up stamina, do a little more each week, until eventually you will be able to do it." After hearing that I realize that he's right. I *can't* do it - not yet anyway. But it is that thought which gets me back to training, so eventually I will be able to do it.

That's what we are dealing with. As long as we think we should be able to do it, but can't, we just give up, and give in. If I am so screwed up, so why try?! Even if we do try, we continue to fail, because we are going about it wrong BECAUSE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT IS WRONG!! Once we are told that we can't overcome it, then suddenly we realize that we are not screwed up worthless good for nothing Reshaim, and that with the proper training and perspective we eventually *could* do it. Therefore, it is our admission that we *can't* do it, which allows us *to do* what's necessary to get it done eventually.

Ok. On to the next point. How can I know if I am actually addicted to lust, or if it is just a bad habit that I can change on my own? The answer to this one, I think, is pretty simple. Pay attention to what's going on!! Most bad habits do not manifest themselves in extreme ways, and are controllable almost all of the time if you pay attention to it. But if you find yourself knowing you are doing the wrong thing, and not being able to stop even though you want to, this goes beyond habit straight to addiction. Here's how David/Rage put it so beautifully:

[David/Rage wrote on 15 Feb 2011 15:49:](#)

for me, these facts, among others, led me to believe i am experiencing something more akin to a heroin addiction than a bad habit:

i desperately want to stop but i cannot

i continue acting out even though it hurts me to do so

i have struggled with it for many many years and can never find a permanent solution

i have gone stretches of months without acting out but eventually i go back to it

i spend hours and hours and many dollars feeding the need to act out

i act out even though my mind tells me i shouldnt

i wake up in the middle of the night with the need to act out

if i dont act out for a while i start becoming extremely jittery and my heart begins to race and i get sweaty palms

once i start acting out i do not see anything or hear anything else that goes on around me

i have risked my entire life to act out

when i am not acting out i want to die because i act out

when i act out i feel like i will die if i dont act out

i evaluate the worth of any thing i do or anything that happens around me in terms of whether it will help me or hurt me in getting to my obsession; whether it will help me or hinder my ability to act out

acting out violates every religious and social principle i believe in

i look at those things plus everything else and ask myself whether i can continue fooling myself into believing that i can overcome this without some serious intervention...

I have nothing more to add to that.

While following a 12 step or similar type of program, do the classic methods of Chazal have any role to play? Can we work on the program, while still using the old methods? Or do we stop with everything but what the program teaches us? I believe Zemiros Shabbos says it the best here:

[ZemirosShabbos wrote on 15 Feb 2011 19:07:](#)

Ok. Point 3 (pay close attention. There will be a test on this next Tuesday!!)

They are a system that takes conceptions and ideas we grew up with, reinforced by years of shmoozes, seforim and commonly held beliefs and asks us to examine them and re-build them from the ground up.

I also add what Yosef Hatzadik quoted from Dov:

[Yosef Hatzadik wrote on 16 Feb 2011 16:27:](#)

I received the following via PM:

[dov wrote on 15 Feb 2011 18:03:](#)

I believe that desire is where resistance to addiction recovery is coming from and always will. At it's most raw and basic level of practice, the recovery derech **has** to be wrong for normal people, for it is not *made* for normal people.

Only one who really sees the end in view will have the motivation to naturally reach for G-d. A goy just as much and as deeply as a yid. The reaching will be done differently, but the motivation is the very same in recovery that I am familiar with.

I would like to add one more point. The Rabbanim teach us that fiery Mussar was meant to be given to *normal healthy functioning* Yidden, to keep them on the right path. They are like diet and exercise, or the proverbial "apple a day" to help keep the doctor away!! However nobody would tell you that for an illness you should just have your "apple a day" and all will be fine!

So just as vitamins and exercise are preventative measures, so too is mussar. But once we are sick, we still need to build our defenses, while fighting the disease simultaneously.

Last thing. I promise. ??? Gesher asked a question that bothered me from day 1, and until ~~tonight~~ this morning :-\ I had no good response. Here it is: [geshertzarmeod wrote on 15 Feb 2011 20:22:](#)

I think the real focus of my problem is as follows. If it's an addiction, then it is a danger for the addict to go back to normal usage. An alcoholic cannot have a drink after work, as it will set him back to the beginning. So what does a sex addict do? Never have sex again? Obviously M is out of the question as is P and inappropriate gazing. But normal sexual activity is a must for a married adult!

(except maybe the fruit man)

What a great question!!! I saw 2 responses and I'd like to combine them both.

[ZemirosShabbos wrote on 15 Feb 2011 20:40:](#)

i would like to just add a different addiction that might be more analogous to lust, and that is eating.

of course you have to eat every day, but how are you eating? why are you eating?

are you eating to escape something, for comfort, to lose yourself in?

or are you eating to have energy?

lust might be similar, a married person he will need to be active, but the motives and expectations are what need to be examined.

And This:[David/Rage wrote on 15 Feb 2011 21:08:](#)

really its not sex that's an addiction but lust...and lust and sex have little to do with one another...

I would add to what David/Rage wrote, that really, Love and Lust are complete opposites. When I lust, I want for me. When I love, I want for you. Lust is about taking, and love is about giving. If our intimacy with our wives is all about taking or filling a need for ourselves, then it is absolutely feeding the addiction, in which case it must be stopped completely. But, if we learn how to change the focus of our intimacy over into an expression of love for our wives, then not only is it not feeding the lust addiction, but it is actually converting our neural pleasure centers from lustful - focusing on ourselves - to loving - focusing on our wives. And if every married man was **addicted to loving his wife**, and giving her what SHE truly needed, than being addicted, wouldn't be so bad after all!! ;D ;D

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Re: clarity please

Posted by geshertzarmeod - 20 Feb 2011 09:26

Thank you Reb Yid. I agree with everything you wrote.

I think it might just take some time for it to sink in

and 90 days for the attitudes to really take effect.

In the meantime one day at a time!

Thank you again!

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Re: clarity please

Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 20 Feb 2011 16:40

[Sick Man Getting Well wrote on 20 Feb 2011 01:46:](#)

and Dan Quale says P-O-T-A-T-O-E.

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Re: clarity please

Posted by Reb Yid - 20 Feb 2011 19:12

Who needs a "just for fun" thread? Reb Yosef Hatzadik seems to keep us having fun in *every* thread!!!

Thanks for the comic relief!!

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Re: clarity please

Posted by geshertzarmeod - 20 Feb 2011 20:11

[Reb Yid wrote on 20 Feb 2011 19:12:](#)

Who needs a "just for fun" thread? Reb Yosef Hatzadik seems to keep us having fun in *every* thread!!!

Thanks for the comic relief!!

Yosef, that was spontaneously generated by Reb Yid. I promise!

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Re: clarity please

Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 20 Feb 2011 20:23

Thanks, all of you, for the compliments. It is appreciated.

Although we try to keep the long running humor threads in their proper place, a short post to keep the smile on our faces is welcome anywhere. (This is to defend myself from **Me3**'s attack!)

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Re: clarity please

Posted by Me3 - 20 Feb 2011 20:54

I'm glad you clarified the rules.

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Re: clarity please

Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 20 Feb 2011 21:10

[Me3 wrote on 20 Feb 2011 20:54:](#)

I'm glad you clarified the rules.

The last you you flew into a rage, the veins on your forehead looked like they are gonna pop! i was very afraid of what might happen if I were to antagonize you again.

I figured that a thread entitled "Clarity Please" is a good place to clarify the rules.

Now we can be friends?

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Re: clarity please

Posted by Me3 - 20 Feb 2011 21:19

I'll think about it.

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Re: clarity please

Posted by tehillimzugger - 22 Feb 2012 17:00

[Gesher Tzar Meod wrote on 20 Feb 2011 20:11:](#)

[Reb Yid wrote on 20 Feb 2011 19:12:](#)

Who needs a "just for fun" thread? Reb Yosef Hatzadik seems to keep us having fun in *every* thread!!!

Thanks for the comic relief!!

Yosef, that was spontaneously generated by Reb Yid. I promise!

Hey Gesher (thanx for the mareh makom by the way, amazing thread)

we had a few jinxes lately in the hi thread, didn't we?

[I'm just clarifying not ch"v saying hi in the wrong place and crashing the servers]

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Re: clarity please

Posted by mifatfait - 23 Feb 2012 06:40

Thank you Reb Yid for putting together this thread.

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Re: clarity please

Posted by geshertzarmeod - 23 Feb 2012 07:14

Very cute, mefatfait!

:D

I'm sorry for getting your name wrong on your thread.

Will you forgive me?

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Re: clarity please

Posted by tehillimzugger - 23 Feb 2012 11:16

HEY GESHER. NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE.

MIXEDUP HIJACKED HIS THREAD. IT HAPPENS.

[I DIDN'T INTENTIONALLY PUT THIS IN CAPS]

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Re: clarity please

Posted by mifatfait - 26 Feb 2012 23:11

Your'e a real good man, gesher. and TZ

(BTW, I changed and added to my name to make the idea clearer and maybe cooler. although now I'm thinking maybe it would have been better to start with something like John Smith to begin with. I don't know too much about this stuff.)

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