

18. Overhauling our character traitsPosted by mnman415 - 09 Nov 2010 03:32

If we continue to experience falls again and again, even after trying to redirect the energy of our souls to spiritual enthusiasm and passion, then something far more fundamental in our character traits may be absent.

The addiction is often a sign that we are missing some of the most basic principles of what it means to be a human being, created in the image of Hashem. Even animals don't abuse their desires and fall into addictions. We have fallen even lower than animals.

Although it may be hard to admit this, the emotional maturity of an addict can often be at the level of a two year old. When we don't get what we want, we feel like crying, kicking and screaming. We never learned how to deal properly with pain, anxiety, resentment, stress or anger. We have always used the addiction to hide inside ourselves, and we refrained from mature emotional interaction with others. While our peers were growing up and learning about life from the world around them, we were zoning out into our fantasy worlds of self-pleasure and escape. And so we often remained as emotionally immature as a little child.

In order to really begin to heal at the source, we must learn the most basic moral principles again from scratch. Fundamentals such as rigorous honesty in all our affairs, an honest personal accounting, complete trust in Hashem, true humility, and a sincere willingness to make amends with those we have harmed and to surrender our disease to Hashem. These principles are so basic, that even the non-Jewish drunks of AA are able to relate to them, and by working through a program of these principles (The 12-Steps) they often succeed in turning their entire lives around and becoming "Men of G-d." (See Chizuk e-mail #446 on this page for more on this powerful idea). The 12-Steps don't even mention drinking or acting out. They are all about learning how to think right and to live right.

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Rabbi Twerski once wrote as follows to someone who was convinced he could never give up these behaviors:

His conviction that he cannot overcome the addiction is the addiction talking to him, saying, "Give up the fight, it's useless. You'll never succeed, so why put yourself through the misery."

Other than try to stop and pray etc, what has this young man done to make essential changes in his character? That's where one should begin.

I attended an AA meeting where the speaker was celebrating his 20th year of sobriety. He began by saying, "The man I once was, drank. And the man I once was, will drink again" (but the man I am today, will not). Alcoholics who have not had a drink for many years but have not overhauled their character are "dry drunks" and will often drink again. The same is true for this addiction.

How does one become a different person? By working diligently on improving one's character

traits. Learning how to manage anger, to rid oneself of resentments, to overcome hate, to be humble, to be considerate of others, to be absolutely honest in all one's affairs, to admit being wrong, to overcome envy, to be diligent and overcome procrastination. In short, one should take the Orchos Tzadikim (I'm sure it's available in English), and go down the list of character traits, strengthening the good ones and trying to eliminate the bad ones. This does not happen quickly.

When one has transformed one's character and has become a different person, one will find that this "new person" can accomplish things that the old person could not.

See also this beautiful article by Rabbi Twerski from the Hamodia.

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Re: 18. Overhauling our character traits

Posted by mnman415 - 09 Nov 2010 03:36

after we tried to redirect our addiction into hashem many of us might find ourselves still slipping away. this does NOT mean that you have no hope. that is false.

it might be because we are missing key personalities. we are acting like 2 year olds. 2 year old only care about themselves and what THEY want. they have no self control. then we might have to work from the basics. we have to go back to the age of 2 and re-program ourselves into being an adult. this is what the 12 steps are.

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