

hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 19 Jul 2011 04:33

I've been lurking here for a couple of months, and now it's time to introduce myself and share my story. I first would like to express my Hakoras Hatov to Hashem for giving me a second chance, and for leading me to GYE when I needed it most. Also my thanks to all of you here, who through your stories and struggles have inspired me to hang on when times are tough, and to strive to become the person that Hashem really wants me to be.

I apologize if this is a bit long-winded but I am not such a good writer and I have a lot to get off my chest. I also apologize to the mods if I get too graphic and you have to edit. So here goes....

I am in my 40's, what you would call a "working yeshivishe ben torah", grew up in a small frum community, went to the "best" yeshivas, and I am B"H married with a bunch of kids K"AH. That's what everyone sees and thinks..... they don't know about my dark, secret life.

I have been struggling with SSA since my teens. Actually "struggling" is the wrong word, because until recently I was just wallowing in it. B"H I never went as far as doing it with another person, though not from lack of wanting. My natural shyness saved me many times from following through when situations presented themselves. But the looking, the fantasies, the WANTING, and the acting out with myself totally consumed my life and made me miserable even as I was enjoying the momentary pleasures.

I grew up in a small town with very few other boys my age. I am a loner type and very shy and I really didn't have friends. At Bar Mitzva age I was sent out of town to Yeshiva as there was no Yeshiva high school where I lived. I found myself even more isolated there, as most of the other boys had come in groups from larger schools and had their own circles of friends.

I had always "played with myself" even at a very young age. I had no idea what it meant or that it was wrong, just that it felt good. I guess I began using it to soothe myself more and more. At the same time, as my body matured, I found myself fascinated more and more with looking at the other boys and how they were developing. I had barely any idea what sex was at that point, and surely did not even know that there was such a thing as homosexuality. I attributed my fascination to "scientific curiosity".

At some point around the age of 15, I did MZ"L for the first time, also out of "curiosity". I cannot even begin to describe the way it was immediately addicting, probably like a first hit of cocaine (I have never done drugs). I am sure all of us here know what I am talking about. before i knew it I was doing it every chance I got, even 2-3 times a day. As I got older I realized that I was fantasizing about the other boys while I did it, and I began to realize that i had a "problem". But I couldn't stop, and there was nobody i felt close enough to talk to. So I went throug life walking the walk and talking the talk, while in secret i wallowed in my sick fantasies. I learned, davened and did mitzvos, and most of the time I even believed in it, even as I knew deep inside that it was all a show and I couldn't tell anyone about what was eating me up. I would cry on Yom Kippur, promising to be good, while knowing full well that the Yetzer Hora was waiting right outside the Bais Medrash door and i probably wouldn't make it 12 hours before i did it again.

There were times when I got into situations with friends who i think had similar desires. We would be together alone and we each knew the other one wanted it. Once a friend was telling me about his bodybuilding and wanted me to feel how hard his stomach muscles were. I knew what he really wanted, and he knew that I wanted it too. My hand was literally inches from that first contact with another boy's skin. But I couldn't bring myself to make that final move. I don't know what held me back but i knew that if I took that step there was no going back. I remember literally shaking from the tension and the desire, but I pulled my hand back and said no. For years later I would fantasize about what might have been, what could have happened. Now I look back and am comforted that even at my lowest moments i still had some self control (maybe it was just shyness but it saved me from going all the way over the edge).

I got older and began to date, but my heart wasn't in it and it really didn't go anywhere. I am attracted to women also so that was not a problem. I just couldn't "connect" with anyone.

Then I met my wife. From our first phone call it just "clicked". We got married and have a great relationship and a bunch of kids. I hoped that when i got married my 'problem' would go away. I actually stayed "clean" for almost a whole year, but then i fell right back in. My mistake was that I only stopped doing MZ"L, but would still gaze at every boy I saw, fantasize, and mast***** but without MZ"L. I quickly discovered that there's no halfway, but I could not stop and fell back in. This went on for years, I would stop MZ"L for a few weeks or even a couple of months, and then flop right back into the mud.

Then I discovered the internet! first it was just some pictures, but more recently I found all the "goodies" that are available. Now I had even more material to satisfy my fantasies and cravings. I began to secretly look at g** po** more and more. as time went on i got bolder, even looking at it while my wife was in the next room. (I work in IT so I know how to cover my tracks). She still had no idea.

As I sank deeper into my "alternate reality" I would begin to think and question where I really belong. I felt like I was living a lie (I WAS living a lie, i just wan't sure which one). There were times when I would feel like an outsider watching myself acting in a play, davening, learning, raising my kids to be good Yidden, all the while knowing that i couldn't REALLY believe in it if i was acting the way i was. i began to identify myself in my mind as g*y, wondering if I really belonged in the community where i lived. I wondered if Hashem really knew and cared, if He was really there and didn't want me to be like this why did He play such a nasty trick on me and make me this way....(vlo sosuru....zu haminus). I couldn't take the conflict in my head and wanted out. There were times when i contemplated running away and joining "them", and even considered ending it all....

But Hashem sends the refuah not before the Makkah, but IN the makkah itself. I eventually was compelled to break free...

This past winter I discovered what to me was the most destructive form of porn. Stories. I found a site with literally thousands of stories of boys having relationships. Not just s*x, but friendship and romance. A video is just fun while you see it, and you can only watch it so many times before it gets boring. A story makes you think, and you get emotionally involved with the characters. The stories are serials, with a new chapter added evey few days. I would be checking 10 times a day to see what was new. I found myself getting so caught up in them emotionally that it started to affect my daily life.

I also started to realize that as I was getting older, my fantasies were becoming less likely to be fulfilled, what teenager was going to do anything with a guy old enough to be their father? This just increased my sense of emotional desperation. I realized that I was yearning for the friendships i had never had in my youth, and sexualizing them because I had no proper frame of reference due to my stunted social development. I was turning into an emotional train wreck, and that just made me act out even more.

Then hashem started sending me messages, things that would open up my feelings in ways I had never experienced. For a year or 2 now i have started occasionally davening in another shul, wher they daven with intensity and feeling. I thin my own davening started to improve then, and hashem hears it when it comes from the heart even when we don't deserve it....

There are 2 boys in the shul that I daven in that are extremely close friends for years. One in particular was a big "trigger" for me and i fantasized about him all the time. I always imagined

that the 2 of them had "something going" (i hope it's not true, I'd hate for them to suffer like this). This past year they went out of town to separate yeshivas and did not see each other for six months. i was in Shul the shabbos before Pesach when they greeted each other after their long separation. They hugged like brothers, and I burst into tears. I never had a FRIEND like that, that I could hug in public. I never felt more alone then in that moment.

Then over Pesach I had a terrible dream. i dreamt that I had a close friend that I had not seen in many years. he was on his way to meet me , and was killed in a car crash. I woke up sobbing, and could barely make it through davening that morning. I couldn't figure out at the time why i affected me that badly, but it was all the accumulated emotional junk starting to bleed out of me. Then by Birchas Kohanim, where we daven for Hashem to heal our dreamd, i totally broke down. i cried, i'm not even sure what i cried FOR. I just cried in pain. I knew i was a hopeless mess and at that moment, i knew that only Hashem could fix me.

At that moment I felt a calmness and resolve rest upon me. i knew that I must do whatever it takes to bring the two halves of my life together. I realized that i have to do something so shocking to me, that i would be forced to completely change my life. i resolved to "come out" to my wife and tell her everything, and take the consequences as they came. At that point I wasn't even thinking about doing teshuva, just to stop living in secret and to take whichever path presented itself. i was prepared for the ultimate rejection. I don't know where i would have gone or what i would have done if that happened, but i couldnt survive anymore with what had been bottled up inside me for so long.

So that firs Motzoei Shabbos after Pesach, i sat down with my wonderful wife and said "I have something to tell you about myself that i have been hiding from you all these years.....I'm gay.....". Her reaction stunned me; "That's not so bad, we will work on fixing it together". In that instant i knew it would be OK. I shared everything with her, all the desperation, all the filth, all the loneliness, all the hopeless yearning for things that cannot and will not be.

We resolved together to work on making it right. The very first thing we did was to install K9 on every computer in the house. From that moment on I have not MZ"L, I have not mast**** (except one slip recently), and I have not looked at porn (with one exception). I promised that any slips i would tell her immediately, and that I would see a therapist. I began from then on to daven with kavana and with tears, begging Hashem to give me the strength to hold on and continue, and to fight the Yetzer Hora for me because I cannot do it alone.

The first weeks were sheer hell. Just like starting was like a drug, stopping was like a physical withdrawal. i walked around in a daze, shaking from tension. i committed to making an effort not

to look and not to fantasize, but it's not that easy. My triggers are EVERYWHERE, in the street, in the store, in shul, at work (don't even mention the mikva). i don't even have a mechitza to hide behind. I constantly have to force myself to look away. i was literally whimpering with the desire for another look, another trigger to release that good feeling in my head. It's a little easier now, but still a constant struggle.

I had finally acknowledged that I am "gay" and i felt totally disconnected from reality. I would play with my kids in the yard and think to myself "What is this gay guy doing here, i don't belong here". My wife quickly set me straight (pun intended) on that one "You are not gay, you are a yid with a strange and powerful yetzer hora and you are finally fighting it!". I eventually realized that rejecting the label was one of the most important steps in recovery.

I also met with a frum therapist who deals with these issues. He helped me to understand how certain issues from my childhood cause the stunted social development that leads to this problem, and gave me some tips how to control and redirect my thoughts away from the dangerous fantasies.

Sometime during that first desperate week, ~~i discovered~~ Hashem led me to GYE. I had seen the ads before, and I always thought it was for a filtering service like JNet or Yeshivanet, which i was subconsciously resisting because i didn't want to lose access to my precious secret world... But then i was on another website, one that often mocks practices of the frum community. They had a post making fun of the GYE handbook (specifically the "rubberband snapping" thing). The post actually had a link back to the GYE handbook, and i was curious so i clicked it. It was like being transported to a new planet. Suddenly i was not alone anymore, there were so many others who were struggling with similar issues AND SUCCEEDING. I spent hours reading the handbook and browsing the forums, and got tremendous chizuk from it. I even discovered that i was not the only SSA addict out there, and that it can be successfully suppressed.

The entire secular culture is obsessed right now with being "Born This Way" and that it can't be changed and you should just "be yourself" and "it gets better" etc. as much as we strive to separate ourselves from the Goyish attitudes it seeps in like a poison and in moments of self-doubt the Yetzer Hora tries to convince us that they are really right. My weapon is to turn the slogans against them and use it to my own advantage. Yes i was "Born This Way", a member of Hashem's Chosen People, tasked with the mission of spreading His light in a world bent on ignoring Him. we each have our own mission and our own fight, and I have been tasked with a special job. I have a special and unique Yetzer Hora to fight, and although I was held captive by the enemy for 30 years, i have now escaped and i am fighting back! With sweat and tears (lots of tears) I try every day to resist the temptations placed in front of my eyes and the fantasies that linger in my mind. Eventually "It Gets Better", when the desires will fade away with time and it will be easier to resist. i know that just like I will have to pay and burn for each time I don't look away fast enough, so too i will receive infinite reward for each time I resist the urge for a second look, and each time i suppress the fantasies that constantly try to creep into my head.

I mentioned before that there was one exception to stopping to look at porn, and that was the stories (i found a way around the filter for those). I just couldn't. I needed that fix of knowing what happens next. For few weeks I unsuccessfully tried to quit, I would manage a day or 2 then I fell in again. I wasn't even interested in the s*x parts, just the storyline and the emotional buildup. But i knew it had to stop. Then one day i told myself "Enough! if you are serious about this there are no halfways anymore!" i went to Maariv that night and it was the 37th day of the Omer. The sefira of Gevura ShebYesod. I realized "that's what we are all about, Gevura, Kovesh es Yitzro, in the midda of Yesod, of self-control". I resolved that that day would be my personal Yom Kippur of sorts. I davened like never before, and promised that I would never go there again. B"H so far I have been successful. Hence my screen name.

I stayed clean until last friday. Then in the shower i suddenly found myself mast*** I stopped before anything worse happened, but i feel like i was teetering on the edge of a cliff. Then on shabbos i had fantasy dreams which i had not had in a long time. When i have these dreams they are so real that i experience every sensation. many times I would wake up wet, this time B"H I did not. but I need to strengthen myself over again. The events of the past week have affected me terribly and have left me emotionally drained, and maybe that's what made me vulnerable and in need of "soothing".

So here I am, trying to stay clean and to clear the bad thoughts from my head. It has its ups and

Once again I would like to thank all of you here on GYE who have shared your stories and your struggles, especially those of you who share my particular "flavor" of addiction. The chizuk i get from seeing how everyone encourages each other to get up and start again really inspired me in my darkest moments. Thank You.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by im not alone - 20 Jul 2011 18:45

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 19 Jul 2011 04:33:](#)

So that firs Motzoei Shabbos after Pesach, i sat down with my wonderful wife and said "I have something to tell you about myself that i have been hiding from you all these years.....I'm gay....."

I had finally acknknnowledged that I am "gay"

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 20 Jul 2011 02:49:](#)

First of all: I AM NOT GAY!

????? take a close look "GYE works". and it works fast

need I say more?

Continued success

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by TheJester - 20 Jul 2011 20:49

My wife quickly set me straight (pun intended) on that one "You are not gay, you are a yid with a

strange and powerful yetzer hora and you are finally fighting it!". I eventually realized that rejecting the label was one of the most important steps in recovery.

I think that 37's wife outweighed us all here. I already have an awesome respect for this lady.

@37:

In my experience, it might be a good idea to separate the masturbation, the SSA and the eye-guarding in your mind. That is not to say that they aren't related, but there is a danger when people take on "bundles" of values. I am closely and painfully aware of a situation where someone with a SSA took on a bundle of values, struggled in one area, and then ended up rejecting them all, because one area was just too hard.

I am most emphatically not, C"V, saying that you should be relaxed in any area, but rather that you should treat them all as separate struggles. It would be awful for you to end up "requestioning" your sexuality just because images or thoughts assail you, or you give in to your body, and feel that you have failed in all areas together.

In my own case, at a young age, I made the decision to banish all SSA thoughts from my mind, and spent a huge amount of mental energy dismissing them. I didn't "go out to war" with the thoughts, or searching for them. Rather, I concentrated on other things, but if the thoughts occurred to me, I would then deliberately and proactively banish them. I was young, and B"H I had a degree of success. Nevertheless, I guard myself constantly, mentally and situationally, to prevent any regression.

You are a lot older than I was when I dealt with this. But like me, you also have an attraction to women. Perhaps, like me, you have an appetite that is vast, and can be filled with pretty much anything sexual, and SSA just fell into your lap. Perhaps you, like me, have fewer inhibitions, or care less about prevailing social values. Or perhaps we are different people, with very different challenges. However I do know that it is possible to take SSA from being a major problem, to being a theoretical worry. Perhaps it is even possible to eradicate it altogether.

For me, it really helped to see SSA as a particular struggle that was separate to anything else, and indeed more important to deal with than anything else. I didn't deal with all my issues properly at the time (maybe I did it wrongly?) but I feel that had I tried to do so, I would have

questioned my success, and perhaps failed in all of them. Or perhaps not.

It really seems that the greatest asset in your life is your wife. Such a wife is precious beyond everything. If she is not worth recovering for, I don't know who or what is. And that you relate to the poem upon which you commented probably shows that you want recovery and repair very, very badly. For the record, I was crying when I wrote it, too.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 20 Jul 2011 23:21

@yossi:

As you say alot of these different things started separately but more or less simultaneously but didn't really get all mashed up into one mess until later. Much of the psychological/emotional stuff I did not really understand until I began the recovery process (beginning with the overwhelming emotional involvement that forced me to break out).

Afterwards I thought about what I really wanted deep down while I was doing it and came to much the same conclusions that my therapist later confirmed. Namely the lack of emotional connection as a child, the loneliness as a teenager , and my subsequent need to go back there over and over again. I never really wanted to do things TO boys, what I really wanted was to go back and BE one again. So I did it in my fantasies the only way I knew how.

While the masturbation may have started earlier, it eventually became the vehicle for me to escape into my fantasy world and soothe myself with pleasure. It took over my entire being until it began to be who I was.

One of the things I am trying to do now is to separate these thing back out. B'H I have been pretty successful in stopping the acting out, and slowly improving in the looking and thinking. Sometimes I just find myself WANTING something, nothing in particular, just this empty NEED deep inside. I know its the YH trying to get me depressed again, so I tell myself "I WANT to be GOOD!".

At the same time I am working on the emotional aspect, trying to allow myself to feel in way that I have not been able to allow myself before. Sometimes this turns me into a blubbering idiot, but in the long run I think it will help a lot. I am also working on making friends my own age and to connect with people. It's hard because I am so shy. This forum is one of the best things that has happened to me.

I have so much more to say but I have to run now. I must go to Shiur.... (anyone remember Judaea?)

Gevura!

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 21 Jul 2011 17:03

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 20 Jul 2011 02:49:](#)

Hi Ninety,

First of all: I AM NOT GAY!

I no longer allow myself to think like that, because that defines me by my problem and prevents me from working it out. One of the first things i did when I started my recovery (my wife really pushed this and i appreciate it) is to reject the label and not allow my issues to define my identity. Identifyin oneself like that is exactly what the whole secular media culture is shoving down our throats right now, you were born that way, it's just as normal, just be yourself, "alternate lifestyle choice" etc. As long as i entertained those thoughts i was full of self-doubt that i could actually break free from it.

I have come to see that my true identity is that i am a regular yid with an unusual yetzer hora. Hashem gave me this tafkid in life, to fight this battle. (Maybe i am a gilgul of someone who fell in this area and it's my job to fix it?) I messed up for a long time but now I am working on it.

If you hear a voice within you saying, "You are not a painter," then by all means paint, boy, and that voice will be silenced. (Henri Matisse)

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 21 Jul 2011 18:59

That can be read in the opposite way of what I think you intended, but I understand what you mean.

Since I started posting here I feel like a huge weight has been lifted from me. Daaga blev Ish Yasichena. Or as they say in English, "A trouble shared is a trouble halved" so by sharing with so many people here after hiding for so long I really feel like it has been halved again and again.

I feel so NORMAL today, after being miserable for so long, it's almost like something's missing in me. A part of wants to feel bad again, to recapture the intensity of those first weeks of withdrawal...

(I better stop now, i'm weirding myself out with this...)

Anyway I know it will only last until the YH finds a new trigger to shove in my face, then I know the monster inside me will come roaring out of its cave....

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by shteighecher - 21 Jul 2011 19:19

Gevura;

We love you, your post are inspiring to me and to many others here who still don't have the guts to be as honest as you are.

Thank you.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by ninetydays - 22 Jul 2011 02:48

Gevura Shebeysod -

I apologize if I categorized you and I was completely wrong. In truth I too have fallen prey to societal nomenclatures and believe that everyone is born a certain way.

I think Rav Yaakov and Rav Moshe have a disagreement whether a desire for males is innate or acquired. I believe that seeing it as an acquired trait or part of your nurturing; it is then easier to view oneself as heterosexual and overcome whatever desires he may have.

I wanted to point out something and Gevura please tell me if you agree with me.

In English we have two words (I am sure there are many more) that describe feeling uncomfortable when something comes to light. Shame and embarrassment.

Here are a few scenarios where one might be ashamed

- 1) Caught watching straight p***
- 2) Caught sleeping with shiksos
- 3) Desiring porn
- 4) Desiring other men, or children

What we fail to distinguish is that that in the first two scenarios the person was wrong and the act that he did he deserves to feel ashamed of.

In scenerios 3 and 4 the word to describe this should be different. While one may feel dirty from desiring these things, he should not feel ashamed at all. Only the dead dont desire. In fact the word to describe him should be positive so long as he does not act out on his natural inclinations.

ninety

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 22 Jul 2011 17:41

90,

no need to apologize.

innate element to it, and that people are born with an inclination to being this way. therefore the label is appropriate.

However as a matter of attitude i insist

on rejecting the label for myself, because that gives me the confidence to fight it off. even if we are born like this, Hashem would not forbid something that is impossible to resist. Its difficult as hell, especially after such a long time of soaking in the mud, but i must believe that it can be done. the physical, visceral reaction to seeing a "trigger" is as strong as ever, all i can do right now is to train myself to ignore it and turn my thoughts elsewhere.

Shame vs. embarrasment: as i understand it shame is what you feel to yourself and embarrasment is what you feel to others. so if you get busted you feel both. as far as 3 and 4 one can be ashamed of what one thought and did, and at the same time be proud and happy at not having done worse.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by alexeliezer - 22 Jul 2011 18:33

Thirty seven,

Just read your beautiful intro post today. It is just so good to hear that someone who was so ill can turn things around. Your wife is a gem! You will be in a position to help many people here.

It sounds like you have the enemy sized up pretty well. It will continue to get easier, but it will be a lifelong vigil.

Welcome, welcome, welcome!

Alex

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 24 Jul 2011 06:23

90,

Sorry my previous post got mangled and the beginning was missing. Basically i was saying that in regard to the Nature vs. Nurture debate, I believe that there is some of both. I am sure that some people are born with more of an inclination to these things, but it may take various environmental factors to bring it out. So there is some truth in someone considering themselves "gay".

However as part of my recovery, my attitude must be that i will not allow myself to be defined that way. So we are sort of in agreement there.

The other day I saw the Yad Hashem. It was a small thing, but I was inspired by it.

I was davening in a shul I don't frequent that often. I had my glasses off, as I do pretty often these days to avoid the inevitable distractions. Out of the corner of my eyes I noticed someone walk in, and even with my blurry view I could tell he would be big "trouble". He came over and took a seat RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME! I could feel the aching need for a better look. I told myself I would wait until davening was over (I often use such a "delaying tactic" to give me time to get my act together. I will tell myself "I will not look for the next 5 minutes" then try another 5 etc.).

I then said quietly "Hashem please make him go away. I don't want to be tested like this." I continued davening, trying to keep my eyes only in my siddur. Just a minute before davening was over, for no apparent reason he picked himself up and walked over to a seat on the other side of the room. WHEW!

I felt like Hashem was telling me "I see you, I know you are trying and I am here to help".

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by the.guard - 24 Jul 2011 10:25

Welcome gevurah... What an inspiring story!

There are some links on this page that might be helpful to you:

www.guardureyes.com/GUE/FAQ/FAQ16.asp

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 24 Jul 2011 15:46

WOW! A post from the heilige Guard! On my thread! Now I feel like I truly belong.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 27 Jul 2011 03:40

Just signed on to the 90 day chart. I am on day 10 now since I last fell. I hope b'ezras hashem never to have to restart the count....

I'm having a bit of a problem since I started this process, that is that i have a lot of trouble sleeping. It's all my fault, of course. For countless years i had gotten used to soothing myself to sleep every night, with a couple of pillows and a good fantasy. I have stopped that now of course, but i feel like a baby that had his tzummy taken away. i toss and turn for hours every night untill i pass out from exhaustion. The only thing that seems to work is to think about sad things (like what a miserable rotten person i was (and still am trying not to be)) or just sing a hartzige niggun to myself until i cry, then i cry myself to sleep. Just like a baby. i want my tzummy back..... :'(:'(:'(:'(

I also have a problem where I wake up in the middle of the night with a physical arousal. In the old days I would just take advantage of it and snuggle back into the pillows, now I just have to wait till it goes away.

If anyone has any *eitzos* I would be glad to hear them.

Keeping On Trucking...

Gevura!

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by TheJester - 27 Jul 2011 04:21

No guarantees, but try the following:

Get yourself lying down in a comfortable position - one in which you could be totally relaxed.

"Switch off" each part of your body, thinking about it, and turning it off like a light - begin with your toes, your feet, your heels, your ankles - actually *feel* each bit, and let shut down for the night. You should feel your feet, then legs, etc. becoming heavy and relaxed. Take your time doing it.

Work through your whole body like this.

I had the same issue - precisely!

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It's what I use, and it works very well for me, B"H