My story so far Posted by gothika - 15 Aug 2011 15:43

Hi everyone,

I can see that this is a wonderful forum that you have here, and I am glad to be a part of it from now on.

I am going to try and use 'lashon naki' throughout this post but just so there are no misunderstandings: When I say shmiras habris, which i like to shorten to sb, or simply it, or the problem etc I mainly mean the aveira of masturbation.

My story in short (sort of short but if you can bear with me I would very much appreciate it):

Ages 14-17:

I guess I the issue really started when I first discovered my body and although I come from a frum family, I was actually unaware that it was assur until due to chance, I ended up browsing through an English copy of kitzur shulchan aruch (which was basically my only non human source of torah halacah etc that i could understand, since it is translated into English) and although I was looking for something else the topic of sb caught my eye and i was literally like, "WHAT?! And the author says its equivalent to MURDER?!?!?" Anyway although I found it hard to stop at that age (I must have been around 14) I imposed certain roadblocks(email or pm me for details if you want) and over the years of 14 to 17 I certainly had a clean stretch of about a year give or take(at some point) with all the in between times usually being punctuated by a falling down and then a feeling of oh no! what have i done and then going on strong for a while.

Age 17:

Then due to my own immaturity and perhaps the stresses of my final 2 years in high school (at age 17 or so) taking me away from more intense Torah study I somehow came to the conclusion that it was in fact not actually forbidden by halacha (it is) but rather a sort of chumra (its totally not a chumra!) or something (I'm not sure exactly what i can tell them in shamayim later as to my "heter" since the yetzer hara's Lomdus is never glatt it is usually vague and emotional based) so for the next 2 years I pretty much freely did what i wanted in this area.

Age 18:

I went to yeshiva in Israel and there was one rabbi there who i was close to that was not at all

"afraid" to talk about sb and so it was through him that I started feeling a little guilty again over what i was doing. By Elul of that year (i am the type of person who gets all anxious during elul and starts fretting and thinking about things a lot) instead of my default mode which was the following thought process: "Rav C said that this is one issue which is really important to work on,but whatever I don't think i am on that 'level' now so its fine" I started actively challenging the impulse. Now this part I thought would be easier since I had already done this step before (refer to 'age 13' above) and so what I wasn't prepared for was the fact that I remembered stopping when i was 14 was sort of easy in a way, what i mean is that although it was uncomfortable and quite hard it never got to a point where I just physically could not hold myself back but this time it was so hard.

I guess as i am typing up my story (and this is the first time ever i should add) this reason popped up. When I was 14 and stopped, I was quite young and my hormones were probably only just starting out at that point, but now at age 18 was the first time that my hormones were in full swing and yet i was trying to stop, also I had a series of years of habit from 17-18 to undo.

Anyway back to my story: I didn't know how to deal with this issue fully. I just sort of approached it the cold turkey type way once i decided that it really was assur, but I don't think that have ever had a stretch of more than around 6 weeks where I consistently never did it.

Age: 19-21.5 (which is now): The last few years takes us to right now, and although I have been trying, I have never tried, nor been aware of any system other than the "Well its assur so don't do it ever, and if you do you need to do teshuva"-system. I decided to join this forum since I just found out about it and the last time I tried searching the Internet for advice in this area is in 2008 (when i was 18), and at that point these holy forums never even existed.

One big area that I feel is insurmountable is that often if I haven't done it in a few days (like 10) then I will go to sleep at night and fall asleep and then at some point in the night I would wake up and being half awake and having little willpower I would do it while lying right there and then go back to sleep. Sometimes I wouldn't always have a full recollection/memory of if i even did it, which makes it even harder to stop since it practically feels as if sometimes I don't have any free will in the matter. I mean how can you stop doing something you can't control and possibly don't even recall. Just to be clear on this issue, I am not having what is known as a nocturnal emission, which is something different, I am actually causing it myself. If anyone else has this problem please let me know via a reply to this post or a pm/email if you don't feel comfortable discussing it in the forum itself so that I know that i am not the only one facing this particular aspect of this challenging area, and also so we can talk strategy.

A side point; for food for thought is that have any of you holy members of the olam noticed that this issue is made so much worse by the fact that the rabbeim of our generation are so afraid of

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the awkwardness of this that they rather spend all their time teaching us other areas of the Torah which, although are avada very important for every Jew to know, should have been given second preference over teaching this very pressing issue to young barmitzvah age boys. I mean I was totally unaware that it was assur to begin with, never mind the necessary guidance to conquering the challenge.

Re: My story so far Posted by obormottel - 30 Aug 2011 22:24

Thank you so much for your time. And thanks nebulaMud for allowing this to go on on your threa ;)d

Firstly, I will bli neder stop calling you the Great one, and the guru, etc, since you are merely a fellow traveler.

Secondly, the concept of **active** surrender is compelling and I gotta mull this over. But do I understand you correctly, that even if someone stays clean for 90 days (alevai ba mir) by posting here, and reading emails, etc, still the surrender of lust will not take place unless he interacts in real time with other addicts (and I know I'm one based on everything you and others wrote about sex addiction)? How about then, there are 8 levels (outlined in the GYE inthe Nutshell) and 12 step programm and live meetings, etc, are only recommended after "I tried everything else and can't stay stopped"? Should I wait the 90 days to see if I can stay stopped or once I firmly beleive I am an addict like you, my only salvation is live meetings etc, and I should stop wasting time on the forum and instead enroll in SA?

I understand that I can fall after 90 days, and so can a guy who attends meetings; so I'm not talking about a delusion that if I stay clean for 90 days, I'm cured.

But I realize that acting out is just that: acting out on underlying problems. So my question (#35) is, are there levels of addiction (as the GYE is trying to imply) ,and if so, can one **addict** be helped positively by less drastic steps then the ones required for you?

Again, I am only asking your opinion as a fellow struggler with more experience, not as a teacher of truth (if it makes any difference to you).

B'derech tzachus, being oiverbottul is a problem for normal people. Maybe for an addict it's a prescription?

Sincerely,

Mottel the sexaholic

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Re: My story so far Posted by Dov - 30 Aug 2011 23:23

Thanks - first a little very friendly disclaimer: I never said you nor anyone ever needs to attend live meetings in order to get better. I only shared my own experience that I have seen it work for me and others, so far, and that if you find that you are unable to stay sober and life the good life without your lusting, you could try the meetings too. I tried to describe what it does to me, that's all. For me, it works.

OK. So.

No, I do not believe in levels of addiction, as I hear them described by some people. I believe that addiction is like pregnancy. A woman is no more pregnant an hour after conception than she is at her ninth month. If I use lust and cannot stop, then it does not really matter to me whether my compulsive behavior is exposing myself, having regular sex with prostitutes, etc.....or if it is secretly stealing a few minutes searching for the perfect porn images at my sister's computer when she is not home. If it is making me miserable and my life unmanageable, then I am a sick man.

If I have secrets, then I am sick. Period.

The only question is when *I* have had enough - or when *you* have had enough. It is so easy for soem people to act as if "no one else can understand their pain" - but I do not believe it. When I cruised around nightly for scenes of prostitution (I was not ready then to actually *use* them, but lusted after watching the action and seeing pretty women on the street and in cafe's and drove around frequently for that purpose [hoping that moshiach would not come "right while I was driving around like this idiot I am!"]), my life was already not mine. I was out of control. If any of you would have been watching me get into my car after the family fell asleep, and drive around, you would have scratched your heads, maybe thrown up. It was just plain idiotic. But I was absolutely convinced that doing that was in my very best interest - nay, that I *needed* it!

To me, that is just as crazy as the guy (was me) in the shower who really feels like he needs to masturbate there. That it is bad, ossur, whatever - but if he keeps doing it anyhow, ends up doing it over and over....he is *obviously* only doing it because deep down inside, his *gut* is

convinced that having sex with himself (what masturbation really is) *is* in his very best interest. That he needs it. That Hashem does not really *understand*.

That's sick in the head, no? But that's what we do as addicts.

So who is sicker? Niether fellow, I say. I see the 'progression of the disease to worse behaviors' as just new boredom with the old stuff - but the need driving it all *is exactly the same*!

So Guard calls it "hitting bottom while still on top". Because he is such an oheiv Yisroel, he is hoping that at least some people will see they are on the same street to destruction - before they have to lose their jobs, make chillul Hashems, lose their marriage and families, or even die. He is hoping that some people will open their eyes and see that they are already losers - they have *already* lost, and have no hope at all in just "trying harder". They need G-d as does one with cancer. It's over and only a miracle can help them. Fortunately, that happens all the time. Just read the stories in the back of AA, or "recovery Continues" frok SA. We who have given up *do* get sober and we *do* get healthier. It works if you work it.

So I think that R' Guard hopes that maybe, for a change, those who need to will *finally* open up to other people and to themselves (that's the only 'admission fee' to recovery), and reach for G-d *for real* (that's the only solution).

And just being really frum is **neither** of these, for the guy who is already an addict. For he had all the frum tools while he was learning how to get so screwed up in the first place. He needs special help, which is available - if he knows that he is as powerless as the guy who is arrested with hookers. The hooker guy may go right back out there (and I know many guys with peyos who have) - but I have met many who have 'only' messed around with porn and masturbation, who have given up and gotten the help they need. Some people are low-bottom drunks, but many are high-bottom ones. Not everyone needs to go through as deep a living gehinnom. But there is **no** easy way out.

So if by "levels of addiction" you mean people with a low-bottom or a high-bottom, I am with you 100%. But both are just as sick in the head and unmanageable. Otherwise I make no sense of it, at all.

In dog training, they say that "if your dog has not yet learned that he *must* come when called, then **you do not have a dog**." He will get lost, hit by a car, or bite other people and have to get put down. It is the smart dog owners who go through the simple but not easy work of training their dog to return when called even before they have to learn it the really hard way.

I am not saying what cannot work for you - just sharing my experience. If you want it, take it.

Re: My story so far Posted by obormottel - 31 Aug 2011 00:19

Again, I find you extremely insightful and honest and eloquent, I just wish you were more authoritative in your prescriptions. Perhaps, the decision for certain actions must come from within, without being prescribed by a guru, and that is your motivation for merely "sharing" and not "advising". Am I wrong in expecting to be taken by the hand and led into recovery? I found the GYE so useful precisely because it has structure, and plan, and steps, and it allows you to gauge your progress etc....

I am lucky that Hashem loves me. I hit bottom way before the sh8t hit the fan, in a way that I had a presence of mind to realize I stand to loose everything I love if I don't stop.

Shower? Check. How about in the mikve AFTER having dipped?

Cruising around looking to *observe* prostitutes? Gosh, I really thought that NOONE can be that sick. I guess ein chodosh tachas hashemesh.

Last question for you (as well as for everyone reading), sorry to be such a nudge:

In your unprofessional opinion, should one try 90 day chart and then consider other options, or once the diagnosis is in (even if the 90 day plan is working), one should stop wasting time and find the nearest SA meeting?

Again, I realize that I am only asking for an opinion, not a psak.

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Re: My story so far Posted by gibbor120 - 31 Aug 2011 15:59 dov wrote on 30 Aug 2011 23:23:

No, I do not believe in levels of addiction, as I hear them described by some people. I believe that addiction is like pregnancy. A woman is no more pregnant an hour after conception than she is at her ninth month. If I use lust and cannot stop, then it does not really matter to me whether my compulsive behavior is exposing myself, having regular sex with prostitutes, etc.....or if it is secretly stealing a few minutes searching for the perfect porn images at my sister's computer when she is not home. If it is making me miserable and my life unmanageable, then I am a sick man.

Dov, I have "heard" you say on this forum that you think most people here are **not** addicts. However, it seems that most people here **can't** stop (which seems to be your criteria for calling it an addiction)- that's why they are here. In which case, the quote above implies that they are indeed addicts. Maybe it's in the definition of "cannot stop"???

Then again, maybe it's like a potential *ger*, that we try to convince that he shouldn't join the Jewish people. He has to pass that test to join. You try to convince people that they are not addicts. They have to really beleive they are to join SA. ???

To answer obormottel, perhaps, as you are saying. Try the tools in the handbook, if they do not work, it's time to try something else. You are not the only one who is confused, at times, by Dov's replies. ???

Re: My story so far

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Posted by obormottel - 31 Aug 2011 20:57

gibbor120 wrote on 31 Aug 2011 15:59:

You are not the only one who is confused, at times, by Dov's replies. ???

That is almost as much relief as I ever got on this website ;D Thanks, Gibbor!

Re: My story so far Posted by Dov - 04 Sep 2011 12:29

Whoa...to try and answer something for Obermottel and Gibbor, no I'd never suggest SA in a blanket sort of way to any guys who are having a hard time stopping the fantasy/porn/masturbation/'teshuvah'/withdrawal/fantasy merry-go-round. I sincerely believe that everybody is different and that there are truly a lot of guys out there who simply need a warm, loving approach to **trying harder**.

The porn industry is huge, huge. It can't possibly be powered all by addicts. Look in the dictionary for "addict" and you will typically find that it is a psychological or physiological dependence on something that damages a person's life in some way, and causes trauma when ceased. It is also described as "progressive and chronic" by the American Society of Addiction Medicine. Therefore they call it a 'disease'. I and some other people have a disease. The way I see it, it's just plain silly to say that basically all the guys out there who like the way porn makes them feel, are ill. Mistaken, yes, but mentally ill? I think not. That would seem to me nothing more than a giant cop-out, or a great way to make a lot of money selling a lot of "Johnson's snake-oil for addicts like all of you!". Surely most people must simply try harder and fight for their morality! And I believe that most of the long-term chronic losers at that are probably addicts....like me and others I know. A good frum guy probably should resist a ton before arriving at the surrender point of an addict. But to say that lust addiction is different in this respect from say, drinking, cuz this is a tremendous aveiro? That's silly. It is not the aveiro/evil itself that finally gets guys like us into real recovery, but rather it is the painful unmanageability we see in ourselves and our excruciating glimpse of our own powerlessness that finally bottoms us out - not the drinking, sexing or drugging behavior itself. Hey, I could have gone on for quite some time masturbating, using sex phone calls, and meeting women but my own pain is what I could not handle any more. I insist that pain itself was the greatest gift Hashem could give me. Dayeinu, it would have been enough for eternal gratitude, even without recovery.

So I guess any decent frum guy *should* end up going into the Program under 'duress' and jumping up and down screaming, "No! I *can* and *must* beat this! I can, I can, I can!"....all the way into the arms of their sober recovering friends who know they can't do it either - but are sober by Hashem's Chessed today.

I also cannot accept that the tools the Torah and Chaza"I gave us to fight the Yetzer Hora are so imperfect that they do not work *at all* for some people. It makes more sense to understand that the the *losers* at applying Torah are sick people. Torah does not typically work very well for cancer and diabetes - and it does not typically work very well for addiction. Any idiot can see that.

But as has been discovered here on GYE and elsewhere, saying this causes some decent, Torah-loving people to become completely unglued. Though they themselves are still not clean which they admit is pretty bad, actually coming out and admitting that it's not working for them or for some others is just the last straw! (I know that sounds crazy, but that's what I have seen over and over). Too threatening....can't be. Nu. If you want to get all cooked in that maclokess, look elsewhere on GYE. And those who have found sobriety and long term success using the same Torah tools we all know and love are few and far between. They need to stay here and keep sharing their exact methods of success. Often they do not. I feel strongly that they would actually serve the oilam better by shutting up until they themselves are sober for six months or so. And when they share their success, they also admit the exact nature of their sexual acting out and describe their failure and weakness, their struggle and their pain. Experience is the key here, not wisdom. Wise and frum people who are still masturbating their brains out are unfortunately a dime a dozen. Get sober, then share how it worked, otherwise the remonstrations and exhortations may just be really frum-sounding poison. Maybe not. I suspect it's OK for normals, but more likely poison for addicts. Finally, I feel strongly that anybody granted long term success in this problem - whether addict or not - aught to feel they need to actually meet with others in trouble in order to share their success, even if it means sacrificing a bit of their feeling of personal safety. Addicts in recovery do this all the time. In fact, it is the 12th step. Why should a 'Torah-method' be OK to share behind a fake name and only virtually. Too few pure mussarnicks here have done this, and I say yyasher kochacho to the braver ones. B"H, I do it all the time with those who believe they are addicts.

Now, back to the issue.

If believing that I am, in fact, a very sick man were just a way for me to keep on playing with myself and porning out, then I agree with the naysayers who insist that it's a cop-out to say "I am a sick man." But that is *not at all* what we 12 step people do with the label!

Because I and those in 12 steps see themselves as sick people, we *get the medicine we need!* In other words, the type who never get that lump checked out for they know they'd never be able to deal with it, usually drop dead after it's too late. You do not even hear much about

them for they do not last very long. Hence the horrifying news stories of sexual abuse and arrests with porn, hookers, etc., even among our rabbis, R"I (like some of us right here!).

The ones who feel a lump and get it checked out are the ones that get treatment. Does anyone say that admitting that one has cancer or diabetes (both absolutely chronic, progressive, and fatal disease) is a cop out?! NO way. And the earlier the better. Yes, there are hypochondriacs - but if the true signs of the illness are there, then there is treatment.

But the treatment - in my own case, the steps - is not for sissies. So we who desperately want to live, we get clean and live life as mentchen as a result of out own hard work - **at surrendering**. Surrendering our right to have sex with ourselves, surrendering our right to use others for sex, and to demand sex from our wives; giving up our deep belief that we have the right or ability to successfully use porn. We get help from others to stop feeding our disease. Turning to others is *itself* part of admitting we are powerless - that we do not possess the ability to successfully control and enjoy it. Plugging into lust only and always makes our lives more unmanageable - *if* we are addicts.

There is no escape from personal responsibility, *least* of all in the steps! On the contrary - it is usually the ones who refuse to give up their romance with beating this thing 'for the glory of G-d', who are still in the bathroom on their knees masturbating to their precious porn! But their advice, chizzuk, and encouragement keeps right on coming and with great force sometimes...

Nu. As I wrote above, I believe that such advice is probably fine for *some* people, but probably not for addicts.

So, is *anything* more clear now? I'm up real late tonight and figured I'd just finish this post that has been waiting for a few days. Hope it made some sense to you two amigos...

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Re: My story so far Posted by obormottel - 05 Sep 2011 17:01

As much as I enjoy your verbose posts, it seems that you recycle the same advice no matter what the question is and whoever poses it. I haven't made a pip about being frum, getting better

through means of Toiro alone, or dissing the 12 steps. In fact, many of my posts was to the effect that "veren frimer" is not an option for me any more and I need real, serious help, which I was happy to find on GYE and the tools that it offers (including but not limited to this forum).

Yet you seem determined to drive a certain point home through your abrasive pontification, all little disclaimers notwithstanding.

So let me see if I can succintly summarize your previous posts:

1. You are not an addict unless you do it on a bathroom floor.

2. You must shut up and not share any advice unless you've been clean for six months.

3. You certainly shouldn't offer any encouragement or chizuk if you experience occasional falls.

4. Stop learning Toiro, chassidus, mussar, etc, because it will prevent you from going to meetings.

5. Get a goy to sponsor you, preferably a Catholic.

6. Noone on this forum is an addict, even if they admitted their powerlessness to deal with this issue and surrendered the fight to Hashem, because they haven't stayed clean for 13 years. (This one I have trouble understanding...)

7. Dov is not giving advice, just sharing what worked for him.

8. See number 7 to make sure you remember it well next time you want to ask Dov for advice, for example if you want to know whether Dov thinks that 90 day chart is a waste of time for someone who is truly an addict (see #1 and 6 for a definition of an addict).

9. Whatever you do trying to get better, don't try harder.

The only thing I still don't get, is that if nobody here is an addict, and your posts are aimed to convince addicts to get help through the 12 steps and live meetings, aren't your 1000+ word

As an example of a short version of what you may be trying to say, here is a quote from the White Book that someone posted on my thread, and the one I agree with 100%:

"We don't claim to be experts in addictions, and we don't claim to be using the term in it's exact sense, however, the program of recovery (and attitude) which has been helpful for other addictions has also been very helpful for treating us--and other methods have failed."

So please don't spend any more time going over your finest points (which I hope I gave justice to in my summary) because I AGREE.

Love,

Mottel.

P.S. I still think you're a great voice of sexaholism recovery, you just waste your bullets on friendly fire.

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Re: My story so far Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 06 Sep 2011 14:45

SupernovaNebula, how goes things?

blue dwarfs? red giants? white mediums?

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Re: My story so far Posted by Yosef Hatzadik - 06 Sep 2011 14:57

I merited to get to know **Dov** a bit lately.

When he is speaking over the phone he gives off a very different impression than these post over here. I used to have the same sentiments about him as these, but I have since changed my mind.

obormottel wrote on 05 Sep 2011 17:01:

As much as I enjoy your verbose posts, it seems that you recycle the same advice no matter what the question is and whoever poses it. I haven't made a pip about being frum, getting better through means of Toiro alone, or dissing the 12 steps. In fact, one of my opening posts was to the effect that "veren frimer" is not an option for me any more and I need real, serious help,

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Love,

Mottel.

P.S. I still think you're a great voice of sexaholism recovery, you just waste your bullets on friendly fire.

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Re: My story so far Posted by Dov - 06 Sep 2011 17:01

Points all well-taken. Thanks. I will try to remain more focused and might be able to write shorter and be more useful that way. But my post you are referring to here was written in the wee hours of the morning and I wandered into autopilot in it, even more than usual. Really, thanks for pointing it out to me. Though I did not like your tone, you were pretty clear. Any other suggestions? I'll PM to open up that venue, if *you*'d like to talk more privately.

So to try and answer your question from 7 posts ago in an *answer* rather than what you consider a riddle: If *you* feel your are in real danger of screwing up your life, then there are SA meetings waiting for you. There are plenty folks there who are not as heavily ill as you are, but have come in to try and find recovery there simply because they see they are actually not in control any more, and that soon after thinking they have 'regained control of the situation' they discover they have flopped hard, yet again. So they start to begin to give up and become willing to open up and get real help rather than just chizzuk to keep trying not to get some of the real and uncomfortable help that might actually work for them. But it takes real guts and some real searching. And stick with the winners, not with the guys who seem to 'understand' but are not actually getting *better*.

Sorry I am like pulling teeth, sometimes.

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Re: My story so far Posted by david712 - 06 Sep 2011 17:34

Dov- I am truly impressed how you dealt with that one. I got lots to learn!

Re: My story so far Posted by Dov - 06 Sep 2011 18:41

What I wrote was upsetting, what's the shayloh?

Re: My story so far Posted by obormottel - 06 Sep 2011 18:52

thank you for addressing my questions head-on. I can give you excuses for my irate tone, but I will just appologize. I actually took two days to try and tone down what I wanted to write, without much success.

Lots of people came to your defense, including in private; which is all the more my (haphazard) point: you got so much to tell people yet you dished out seemingly the same prescription for everyone.

I would be honored to PM with you.

mottel

Re: My story so far Posted by Me3 - 06 Sep 2011 20:06

No! No! Don't apologize that was the funniest post I've seen on GYE in months!

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