

New here

Posted by Truetoself89 - 27 Sep 2012 05:36

Hello everyone,

After years and years of being addicted to pornography and masturbation, and months of knowing I should post, I finally told Hashem in neilah that I will take the next step. Today is day 2 (thanks to Yom Kippur!) and I'm trying to make it through as much as possible. I know this will probably be the hardest thing I have ever done, because it is so easy to fall, but I am going to give it a shot. I guess I've done the first step finally to admit that I do suffer from an addiction, and it's not something that I can stop because I can choose to---which is so hard considering I am admitting that I do not have control of my own actions ;(

Hopefully I will survive...hatzlacha raba to everybody on this forum, and thank you for all you do. Gmar chatima tova to all!

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Re: New here

Posted by geshertzarmeod - 27 Sep 2012 06:32

Good for you! Welcome aboard!

It may be the hardest thing you did but it was also the smartest. Remember this is a process with ups and downs. Hang in there. Take advantage of the handbooks and materials available here, and most importantly post as often as possible. Open up as much as possible it will help others help you and it will help your progress tremendously.

Wishing you much hatzlacha!

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Re: New here

Posted by nederman - 27 Sep 2012 09:27

Hi,

It's not true that you do not have control. Those that have used cognitive therapy to overcome addiction know that powerlessness is only one of many beliefs that can be changed. And you are a step ahead now that you have recognized that you do have this belief because now you may decide to change it.

There is also the 12-step approach, which is not to change this belief but to make it even stronger and to rely on other people, the group, and on acceptance (surrender) to work with it and to stay sober. This is the most popular approach because it's the path of least resistance.

I am using the cognitive approach.

The basic mechanism that makes you fall is that when you encounter a trigger you subconsciously think "this is overwhelming, it's more than I can bear" and you go ahead and think about it, or look at it some more. But without your cooperation the trigger would go nowhere. If you were a healthy person you would move on, you wouldn't run away from it, you wouldn't turn your head, you wouldn't shut your eyes, you would behave like someone who has better things to do.

What you can do to break the cycle is to remind yourself that you are not powerless, think to yourself "this is all going to blow over if I move on." You can even get a wrist counter, or make a note every time you do this, and pretty soon you will verify that you are not powerless. And the more you do the new behavior the more you get conditioned. Then you keep doing it but you do it less often and it gets easier.

You may also have other beliefs that push you to porn. You might have a belief that a Jew who feels attracted to porn is worthless. This raises the stakes when you have a trigger because instead of thinking "yes, I love porn, but I don't do it because I love my life as a frum yid and I am going to feel bad about doing it afterwards" you think "i am a worthless hedonist because I love porn, I am useless" and then you fall because the stakes are a lot higher for you than normal people.

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Re: New here

Posted by alexeliezer - 27 Sep 2012 14:59

Welcome!

Congratulations on taking the important step of admitting that you are addicted. Addicted to what? Addicted to Lust. Lust takes many forms, basically divided into what we see, what we think, and, when acting out, what we do.

The first step in getting sober is getting sober. That means absolutely none of the substance you're addicted to. For a lust addict this means very aggressive shmiras eynayim -- not looking at women at all, unless absolutely necessary. Not in pictures and not in person. Even fully tznius. Not even their faces. Not even just to see who it is.

It is equally important to deflect lustful thoughts as soon as they come knocking. These include memories of images, thoughts about sex, fantasies, and the thought that you want to masturbate. They're all poison, because they all feed that part of your brain that's addicted to lust.

For me, shmiras eynayim was primarily my responsibility. It's hard but do-able, and it gets easier over time. In the beginning I thought I would die if I didn't take a second look at a woman walking by. Now it's second nature for my eyes to bounce off and look away, or I just close them for a few moments.

Regarding the lustful thoughts, I found tefilla very helpful. I daven as soon as I first detect a lustful thought trying to land on my brain. Make Hashem your partner in your recovery. Turn to him constantly, repeatedly, incessantly -- whenever and as soon as lust tries to attack. Here's the tefillah I use:

"Ribono Shel Olam, I am powerless over lust and my life has become unmanageable.
Only You can restore me to sanity.

I turn my life and my lust over to Your care and ask You to please heal me from this illness of lust. I don't want to lust. I only want You and a relationship with You and your Torah. I surrender my lust to you. Please take my lust.

Surrendering lust means stepping aside and turning it over to Hashem. Like surrendering your drivers license. Turn your burden of lust over to Hashem.

One day at a time. One nisayon at a time. One right decision at a time. You can do that.

Hatzlocha and keep us posted.

Alex

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Re: New here

Posted by mifatfait - 27 Sep 2012 16:02

Like Nederman said, it's not true that you don't have control. In fact, you have plenty of control. Not to hold back from looking or acting out, if you had control for that you wouldn't be an addict. But control to feel and live powerless, control to get through each nisayon only with Hashem's help. And that's plenty, it's sometimes scary how big mountains of lust melt away before my eyes when I succeed to feel that I truly don't have the power to push them away. I don't understand it, but it works.

I sometimes still fall, but there's far and few between with virtually no day's long landslides, and only when I don't properly do powerlessness. I need to do more work for recovery in general, I'm starting to work the 12 steps in earnest one day and step at a time.

All the best!!!!

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Re: New here

Posted by Truetoself89 - 27 Sep 2012 23:21

Hi guys,

Thanks for all your guidance and support. Today is day 3 and I am seriously dying. Not a moment goes by when my yetzer hara doesn't try to get me to masturbate. All day, I have been thinking about doing it vs. not doing it, and it is completely making me crazy. There are moments of the day when I think of giving in, because I don't know how I will get through this. It hurts to write this, but I literally don't know how to get past the next hour. My entire body aches as I know that a simple 2 minutes will calm down my body at least until I start feeling guilty....aaahhhhh I feel like I am crashing, and need to stop my car....so I have a couple of questions for everyone who is willing to answer:

1. Although I definitely feel guilty afterwards, I was reading some posts where people ask if you really want to stop. Of course I feel guilty because I know Hashem is hurt, but why would I want to stop something that feels so good? Am I crazy? Does everyone else in this forum want to stop it for all the right reasons?

2. Do you guys recommend attempting 90 days being clean? Or is it expected to fall sometimes? I know this sounds immature, but I really don't know how I will be able to make it. I've seriously never had such a hard day where my body is so frail. I'm not asking for pity---just simply wondering.

3. I work in a professional setting, where a. No filters on the Internet, b. the profession gives us all phones with Internet so we can e accessible at all times, and c. A place where not working with women is impossible. While everyones suggestion of being completely free of looking at anything lustful is ideal, in my situation, this will not be possible!

Thank you all!

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Re: New here

Posted by alexeliezer - 28 Sep 2012 18:34

[Truetoself89 wrote on 27 Sep 2012 23:21:](#)

Hi guys,

4. Any advice in general? I could use anything right now to help
Thanks for all your guidance and support. Today is day 3 and I am seriously dying.

You are not dying. You are going through physical withdrawal.

Not a moment goes by when my yetzer hara doesn't try to get me to masturbate.

Then not a moment goes by that you don't daven and ask for Hashem's help, and surrender your lust to Him.

All day, I have been thinking about doing it vs. not doing it, and it is completely making me crazy.

As I mentioned in my prior post, thoughts of masturbation count as lustful thoughts and must be avoided. Surrender these thoughts to Hashem, ask Him to take them.

There are moments of the day when I think of giving in, because I don't know how I will get through this. It hurts to write this, but I literally don't know how to get past the next hour. My entire body aches...

We've all been there. You can get through this. You will not die and you will not explode. You are going through withdrawal, and it gets easier as the days pass. Take it one day at a time, even one hour at a time.

...as I know that a simple 2 minutes will calm down my body at least until I start feeling guilty....

This is living? Sex with yourself? That's true geshmak? That's as good as it gets?

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In your opening post, you were inspired and committed to breaking free from this addiction. Now that you're in withdrawal, your addict wants you to negotiate -- "does it have to be so strict? Can't I sneak one here and there?"

It doesn't hurt Hashem. It hurts you. It prevents you from enjoying and really living life. I'm

speaking from personal experience. In active addiction I knew that lusting was my only true pleasure. Looking at a picture of someone I'll never meet. Lusting for a few moments after a woman in the street that I can never have. For a fantasy to feed my addiction I sacrificed lifes true sweetness.

2. Do you guys recommend attempting 90 days being clean?

No. I recommend you commit to doing whatever it takes to break free from addiction. Give it up for once and for all. Your addict is terrified of commitment, so you start negotiating.

Just take it one day at a time. Personally, I never counted days. (It's been 3 1/2 years)

Or is it expected to fall sometimes? I know this sounds immature, but I really don't know how I will be able to make it. I've seriously never had such a hard day where my body is so frail. I'm not asking for pity---just simply wondering.

Depends on how ironclad your resolve is. Also depends on whether you're applying proven recovery techniques (see my first post for an intro) or just holding your breath. The system works if you work it.

3. I work in a professional setting, where a. No filters on the Internet, b. the profession gives us all phones with Internet so we can be accessible at all times, and c. A place where not working with women is impossible. While everyones suggestion of being completely free of looking at anything lustful is ideal, in my situation, this will not be possible!

Me too. I have wide open internet at the office. I work with many beautiful, athletic women. Several of them were the objects of my staring before I started recovery. Now I'm able to interact with them. The suggestions I made regarding shmiras eynayim in my first post still apply. Talk to them when you need to. That doesn't give you permission to look up and watch them walk by. You're going to need to make your recovery your number one priority.

Keep on posting. And don't be afraid to share chizuk, insights, and just feelings you may have on other guys' threads just cuz you're new at it. We all need chizuk.

You can do this. One nisayon at a time. And don't quit.

Sorry, I'm at a loss for words

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Re: New here

Posted by nederman - 30 Sep 2012 02:07

It sounds like you are white-knuckling it, which means you are lusting but you are not masturbating (correct if I am wrong.) That's not going to work. Either do the 12-step program, at least the surrender concept to get started, or learn cognitive therapy so you can change yourself into a person who loves sex but has better things to do. Just improvising is not going to work (but the primary sin of a person is to believe that he knows better, so if you must then go ahead ...)

If you want to explore cognitive therapy you can read Feeling Good by David Burns to get you started.

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Re: New here

Posted by Dov - 30 Sep 2012 11:33

[Truetoself89 wrote on 27 Sep 2012 23:21:](#)

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Thank you all!

Dear Truetoself89,

re #1. Hashem is not 'hurt' by your masturbating. Chaza"l tell us so in many places. I understand the idea you're referring to, but perhaps you can pass on the guilt trip.

"Stopping for all the right reasons." Why is that relevant to you, chaver? Hashem wants you to have the good life. Am I *happy* porning and masturbating, or not? - That is the first question, I think. If you really are, then that's the truth, and say so and we will go on from there in another direction. But honesty (like your username suggests) is first.

I believe that it's not quite as simple as you present it here, "why *should* I stop something that feels so good?!", but I understand 100% what you mean. I am just asking you to set the sin thing completely aside and determine: are you a happy man when you are living with the porn compulsion, or not? Look into yourself and see if you are trying to stop for the 'sin' aspect - or if you are *really* trying to stop for another, more personal reason. In other words, are the nudes making a monkey out of you and how do you like that? Some people apparently do not mind being at the mercy of our lust - and some hate it to death even though they cannot imagine living without it. I am just asking **you**, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with religion.

4. Any advice in general? I could use anything right now to help
re #2. Expected to fail? Sure you are expected to fail. I am expected to fail, and so is everyone else here. So? What do you want is the question - and then to work toward that. Shame of falling off a list is not going to save you from falling. So join, don't join, whatever.

It is about what real steps you take to get real about this thing that matters. So onto re #4:

Your opening up like this on this forum is amazing! But you can get so much more help, still. Consider dropping the username (at least off the forum) and make some (real) phone calls to (real) other clean guys who want to openly talk about their day with you and hear you, as well. Every single day - morning and evening is very nice for many. Staying clean one day at a time is a good thing for many people I know. Talking with real people is a great tool, and hiding behind a username on a virtual forum will probably only get you but so far...you deserve the best.

And discussions about powerlessness sound a bit silly to me, here. Who knows if you are powerless yet? Who knows if you are an addict yet? Who cares? Is this a religion? I hope not. It isn't for me. The 12 steps are *tools* for a better way of living - nothing more. So I think you will gain far more from opening up with other real people who are willing to talk on the phone daily with you, than you will by adhering to a "code of recovery" - on your own...and this forum thing is a pretty weak tool, I deem. Perhaps you are not comfortable with that idea yet - but I know people who are comfortable to talk should you change your mind.

Oh, and living "one nisayon at a time" is a surefire way to act out our lust again. Sure, reality is that way - giving up one temptation at a time to Hashem is the only way to do it. We can't fix ourselves, and certainly not in one fell swoop. That's what Alexeliezer means, I guess. But seeing my day as *primarily a struggle against lust*, frames lust as the very **context** of my life. That's very sick. Throwing down the gauntlet is not a great way to win a war. Especially with ourselves.

Chill, stay cool, and get more into real living - less into fighting.

Hatzlocha getting a few phone partners(if that's what you decide to do). Let the steam off before it burns (however you decide to do that). And *enjoy* the day today chabibi! The present is called that for a reason.

- Dov

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That's my general advice. And it is absolutely free!
Re: New here

Posted by alexeliezer - 30 Sep 2012 14:42

[dov wrote on 30 Sep 2012 11:33:](#)

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Agree. Temptations must be taken one at a time, addressing only the challenge I have before me now, not worrying about tomorrow.

As Dov says, nisyonos shouldn't be the focus. We need to put lust behind us. Living life, real living, is ultimately what we're after, and the only way to stay in recovery.

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Re: New here
Posted by Dov - 30 Sep 2012 16:37

Ditto, brother, DEEEETTTTTOOOO!!

Hey. Have a sweet, fun, and family-like Succah-sitting and Lulav shaking, Alex and everybody!

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Re: New here
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 30 Sep 2012 16:50

... Don't forget the willow-branch whipping! ;D :o

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Re: New here
Posted by Truetoself89 - 04 Oct 2012 00:16

Hi guys,

Thanks for responding to my previous post.

These past days have been awful. I began a downward spiral when I woke up on Shabbos and have told myself each time that "that time" would be the last time...if only.

Dov, I guess you asked some questions that really get to the core of my inner debate. To be honest, if you told me there was no sin involved in masturbating, I would continue doing it, because it does make me happy. Someone asked if "sex with myself" is the happiest I can be, and when I read it, and considering I am single, I almost wanted to respond yes. It does feel good and sinning aside, it makes me happy. Am I way more screwed up than I thought? I want to believe that I am normal, and not some messed up 20-year old...but am I?

Also, I guess I am having a hard time agreeing to speak to someone on the phone, because I want to believe I can fight this myself. My entire life, I have HATED asking for help, no matter for what it was. I hate that feeling that I owe someone because they helped me. I am a confusing person...I know! But am definitely trying to fight my pride...

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Re: New here

Posted by nederman - 04 Oct 2012 01:21

To me it sounds as if you are better off than most people because you sound ready to believe that you are "screwed up," if that turns out to be the truth and that you like sex more than other activities.

Thank you everyone--really appreciate all the advice and help
Let me ask you a question. Imagine yourself as a sixty-year old man. When you were young you chose to pursue sex because it was the best thing. How do you feel when you think back on all those years of beautiful women, porn etc.?

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Re: New here

Posted by Dov - 04 Oct 2012 05:17

[Truetoself89 wrote on 04 Oct 2012 00:16:](#)

Hi guys,

Thanks for responding to my previous post.

These past days have been awful. I began a downward spiral when I woke up on Shabbos and have told myself each time that "that time" would be the last time...if only.

You are not alone there, chaver! Well, I guess telling ourselves that we **do** indeed have the power to control and enjoy our lust might not be a great solution, after all. It seems that self-honesty is the key, not principles or dogma. You are on the right path, I believe.

Dov, I guess you asked some questions that really get to the core of my inner debate. To be honest, if you told me there was no sin involved in masturbating, I would continue doing it, because it does make me happy. Someone asked if "sex with myself" is the happiest I can be, and when I read it, and considering I am single, I almost wanted to respond yes. It does feel good and sinning aside, it makes me happy. Am I way more screwed up than I thought? I want to believe that I am normal, and not some messed up 20-year old...but am I?

You know, here comes something that will probably sound funny to you and some other people: You write (very honestly) that if sex with yourself was *not* a sin you'd keep doing it, no shaylo. I used to know the same thing. There was a time when the *chase* and the orgasms **were** a solution for an emotional need of some sort. But then over the years, my persistent sex with myself (people call that masturbation - or here, M**), the compulsive and occasionally shocking pornography use, the demoralizing compulsive searching, peeping, compulsive looking and touching myself and other cyclical repeating behaviors became the problem. My best friend and solution turned on me! That really stunk. It got so that I simply could no longer afford to act out my lust. All it did was make me miserable - but I could not stop and did it anyhow. Very demoralizing.

And here is the funny sounding part: If the Torah were to tell me that masturbating myself was a **mitzvah** - I **still** would not do it! For as an addict, I'd be completely potur from that mitzvah. Like alcoholics do not drink wine on Pesach or Purim. Acting out my lust is poison for me, my wife, my family, everything I have is ruined by it. No sefer needs to tell me that - and no sefer *can* tell me that. Only I can see it for myself and know it. And by the same token, I could never tell you that you can't do those things. Maybe you can. Hashem says you can. As the RMB"M writes in hilchos Teshuvah, free will is given to all to sin or do good. You can do it. But an addict cannot - he (or she) cannot afford to. Simple.

Why do you think we do not keep the mitzvah of Yibum anymore? It just does not work in our generations because of lust. And that's not referring to addicts (the minority), but to *normal* Jews (the majority)! The family dynamics in our time would prove too sick and twisted to do that mitzvah properly. So better do Chalitzah instead. This is the reason for the minhag, no? Why don't we go like the RMB"M who goes like the Rabonon - they are the majority, no? But the minhag is not that way. Hanach lohem l'yisroel... (I hope I am not being megaleh ponim baTorah shelo kahalocha here)

Acting out my lust is poison for me - and that has nothing, but *nothing* to do with the Torah.

Kind of an interesting opposite, no? So you can see I have no pride at all in the matter, for it is not because I am on a higher madreiga that I need to steear clear of lusting, but because I am sicker. And that's OK. Life has been very good and getting better ever since I started, beChasdei Hashem through the help I get from other addicts in recovery one day at a time.

I am sharing all this with you because I think you may be able to relate very well. Maybe not. Let me know how you feel these ideas apply (or do not apply) to you, OK?

Also, I guess I am having a hard time agreeing to speak to someone on the phone because I want to believe I can fight this myself. My entire life, I have HATED asking for help, no matter for what it was. I hate that feeling that I owe someone because they helped me. I am a confusing person...I know! But am definitely trying to fight my pride...

haKovod motzi es ho'odom min ha'olam.

You are not alone there, either. But there is no shame with other sick - but recovering and sober - people. So I suggest you drop the shame for it really looks silly when you are standing on the other end. The guys who open up cannot believe they ever hesitated.

Hatzlocha!

- Dov

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Thank you everyone--really appreciate all the advice and help