

## Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 21 Oct 2014 17:59

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i came to israel for y"t and i am staying here,  
im going to be going to yeshiva here also.

Why did i switch? well i came here and i was hooked up with a bunch of guys who also have ssa just like me. that is something that i never experienced in america, simply because of logistics and availability. i israel there is a whole support group of guys who are willing to reach out and connect with each other. its amazing.  
hey whats up yall? im in israel now, permanently

additionally, because the gay rights group has a much smaller contingent here, many therapists openly say that they can change ssa. something that i would say is close to nonexistent in america, b/c u could lose your job from saying that, especially if the media finds out. i started going to a therapist who specializes in ssa and so far it has been awesome.

another reason is that in israel the general atmosphere is an atmosphere that is dedicated to torah and growth in yiddishkeit (at least in yerushalayim). i personally see that the level of tznius is much higher here. in america it has become normal for women to wear skirts above the knee, i am not sure who made up that garbage halacha. in israel the percentage of women who are untznus is soooooo much lower.

also, i have started going to sa in israel. what is unique is that i would say 97% of the members are frum, not just that, in fact most of them are in yeshiva/kollel and look like yeshivish guys.

basically, the feeling i am getting is an overwhelmingly positive one. with a lot of seyata deshmaya i have arrived here. i actually have to thank gye, because i would have never gone to sa if not for gye. also i made contact with someone who has ssa through gye and he was the one who gave me the original numbers of other guys that i could talk to.

KOT! YTC!

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Markz - 07 Aug 2017 17:49

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[Shlomo24 wrote on 07 Aug 2017 14:11:](#)

9 months sober!



Now you're at 1 Day for real

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 05 Sep 2017 05:43

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Thank God I'm doing really well. Better than ever before. I'm really progressing in my program, life, and relationship with my HP. I'm very grateful that I'm working step 12 right now and my Sponsor said that I should Sponsor others. While I don't think I would want to Sponsor someone

remotely, I can definitely help people with stepwork or if they want a recovery related opinion on something. I'm putting myself out there and I would like to help anyone who needs it.

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 08 Sep 2017 03:52

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10 months sober!

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by MayanHamisgaber - 08 Sep 2017 05:21

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may you be Zocha until 120

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 08 Sep 2017 11:08

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Mazel tov! Super! You must feel great. You are showing everyone out there that it can be done, and if i may add, you are busting the common misconception that for someone not yet married it's impossible to stay clean. We daven that you stay clean today - and repeat that tefila for the rest of your life.

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by MayanHamisgaber - 05 Nov 2017 20:41

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Hey Shlomo

Hope you are doing well

You are missed on the forum

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 05 Nov 2017 22:04

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Thanks for the message. In two days I will have a year of sobriety, God-willing. I will post a lengthily post then. I have already made a decision to let go of GYE, for various reasons which I will not be discussing here. If you post on my thread I get an email though, so I will see it.

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Markz - 05 Nov 2017 23:02

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[Shlomo24 wrote on 05 Nov 2017 22:04:](#)

Thanks for the message. In two days I will have a year of sobriety, God-willing. I will post a lengthily post then. I have already **made a decision to let go of GYE**, for various reasons which I will not be discussing here. If you post on my thread I get an email though, so I will see it.

I was wondering...

Someone is taking serious BIG STEPS over here

We'll miss you, and have you in mind in our small prayers ;-)

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Re: Big Steps

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Posted by Shlomo24 - 07 Nov 2017 06:16

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I am starting to write this at 12:22 AM Eastern Time. By 4:45 or so, provided I stay sober until then, I will have one year of sexual sobriety. This is incredibly special to me. I am a big proponent of One Day At A Time, and I truly believe in it, but one year is a big milestone to reach in recovery. I am immensely grateful to my Higher Power for giving me this gift.

For this share, I would like to focus on gratitude: I am incredibly grateful to God for leading me on this path of recovery. He has given me so much and I am so happy today. I did not think that my journey would take the path it did at all, but nonetheless I wouldn't have it any other way. God was there for me along every step that I took and he guided me gently, holding my hand throughout. He performed a miracle by keeping me sober. A miracle is when there is a breach of natural order and it is completely miraculous that I, who was in the depths of active addiction, am sober. I am powerless over lust yet I am sober. That is completely attributed to my Higher Power.

I would like to thank GYE for being such a vital part of my recovery. On GYE I found other people who were struggling just as I did and it was through GYE that I joined SA. I have laughed and cried with the other members of this forum and I have gained so much knowledge from the forum as a whole. It also allowed me to practice the 12th step of SA and be of service to those who needed it. There are a lot of users that had an impact in my recovery, but I am going to limit it to 5. I love all of you but I can't go through everyone.

Gevura: Thank you for being so positive and upbeat at all times. Thank you for reaching out to me when I first joined and for offering a warm welcome and with loving arms. I could always count on you to lighten up the mood and to provide the forum with much needed fellowship.

Cordnoy: Thank you for your wisdom and wit throughout my journey. Many of your posts have made an impression on me and I value your recovery and your opinion greatly. You have also helped me a lot with learning recovery concepts, even if they weren't directly sex-related.

Dov: Thank you for being available in times of need. I really cherished the phone calls and conversations that we had and you make recovery very real. You don't water things down and you helped me get to the heart of many issues.

WorkingGuy: I would not have expected you to be on this list, but you are. You really helped open my eyes and remain open-minded and objective about recovery. You helped me break away from black-and-white thinking and appreciate all forms of recovery. What started off a little rocky between you and I eventually changed into something much more healthy and I began to look forward to reading your posts. Your recovery was really internalized and it was very helpful for me to be in contact with you.

MarkZ: Thank you for all the assistance you provided with GYE. You were always very involved in making sure the site was running well and I really appreciate that. You also were instrumental in GYE being a happy and fun atmosphere, always quick to make a joke. Fellowship is integral to recovery and you were a big part of that for me. Your posts made me smile many times.

I am grateful to SA (SA is my main fellowship but I am really referring to the entire S-fellowship) for saving my life. If not for SA I would be homeless or dead or diseased. I fully believe that. Words cannot express how thankful I am to my Higher Power for the SA program. SA gave me a new lease on life. Not only that, I learned how to have relationships with people for the first time. The fellowship of SA has been so positive for me and it is what really keeps me coming back. I tried so many ways of stopping, but SA was the only way that worked for me. I have shared pain, happiness, anger and fear. I have cried from laughter and cried from tears. SA and the 12 steps taught me how to have a relationship with my Higher Power, which is the most valuable thing in my life today.

I am incredibly grateful to my Sponsor. He led me, sometimes gently, and sometimes not so gently, through the 12 steps of SA. He checked in with me and let me share with him. He listened to me when I needed someone to hear me out. He provided feedback when he had feedback to give, and listened when he didn't. He taught me how to relate to others, in all different levels of relationships. We connected on many levels and I truly believe that he was a messenger from God. My Sponsor told me things that I didn't want to hear, but many times it was exactly what I needed to hear. He taught me that "It's ok to feel ordinary" and that God loves me more than any human possibly can.

I also want to include some practical tools that I have acquired on my journey, in no particular order. Understand that this is the experience of an addict:

Phone calls - I find phone calls to be integral to my recovery. I need to get out of my head and to get feedback from others. I need to check in my daily life so problems don't fester and grow.

Meetings - There is no way that I could maintain long-term sobriety without meetings. I need meetings to hear other people's ideas and to bring out to light what is going on in my life. I need meetings to cultivate friendships and to teach me how to connect to my Higher Power.

Fellowship - Fellowship is the glue that keeps it all together. My closest friends are my SA friends and I am so proud of that. Fellowship has transformed recovery from a helpful tool into my daily life. I live recovery because I am constantly surrounded by my fellowship. Even if I am having a bad day, I am bound to be contacted by other fellows. The fellowship of SA is where I learned how to make healthy friends and I learned that I am lovable and that people care about me.

Higher Power: Call him whatever you want, I couldn't get sober without him. I crashed my business and I needed to turn it over to someone who is much more knowledgeable than me. As soon as I start doing things my way, I am returning the business to its failed CEO. So long as I am in my Higher Power's hands, I am safe and he will lead the way.

12 Steps: The 12 steps is where the magic of the program is. Stopping acting out is changing a behavior, but it is not changing the person. The 12 steps transformed a man who was fearful, resentful, and codependent into a man that is serene, accepting, and grounded. It also was the main way in which I learned how to connect to my Higher Power. It provided the framework for me to develop a God of my understanding. It cleared away the wreckage of my past and allowed me to have a clean slate with those I had harmed.

I don't plan on being on GYE that much, but you can all contact me through the links below. If you respond to this thread I will see an email and probably check the thread also. I don't want to say goodbye to GYE, but based on life circumstances I think it is appropriate to do so.

God bless you all.

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by MayanHamisgaber - 07 Nov 2017 12:00

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Thank you for sharing

As I read your post I am crying inside because this is what I dream of for myself

Maybe I will be zocha one day....

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Hashem Help Me - 07 Nov 2017 12:23

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Shlomo, what a post! First of all mazel tov on an incredible achievement. May Hashem lead you further and help you attain many many more days - one day at a time. Secondly, you have been a great inspiration to many here at GYE - especially to the singles. You have shown that it can be done and shared many tactics and concepts. Your decision to move into the background is respected - after all, it's your life. However i humbly request that if at all possible, post once a month or so - the chizuk you give will have far reaching effects. Hatzlocha rabba.

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by chazak! - 07 Nov 2017 18:26

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Mazel tov to you! If only you could make a huge lechaim in shul after shachris! I focus on a day at a time but am hoping to be able to write such a post when my year is up. Thanks for the amazing advice.

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Workingguy - 07 Nov 2017 19:34

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Shlomo,

What a beautiful and touching post; you had me smiling from ear to ear.



It's true that we started off a little rocky but I grew to appreciate your honesty, depth, passion, perseverance, and wisdom so far beyond your years. (Don't mean to sound like an old guy; I'm not)

You've been an inspiration to so many, and of course your presence will be missed, but go and be matzliach in whatever your next step is and I hope we'll catch you here once in a blue moon!

With appreciation,

WG

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Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 21 Mar 2018 05:37

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Although I posted this on another thread, this is a topic that is very dear to my heart so I am reposting it on my thread:

There have certainly been a fair amount of Jews who went to SA and became less religious, myself included, but I don't think it has anything at all to do with SA's program. I think it has much more to do with today's frum culture (which is a completely different topic and one that I will not discuss). I have no scientific evidence on this, but I have found that those who join SA and live out of town (for me that means out of NY/NJ) have had no decrease in their religious practices, while those who live in-town are much more likely to become less religious, although it's certainly not everybody. In my home group (I live in NY but not in the more dense areas) the vast majority of people have kept their level of frumkeit. I also know that many people are in touch with Rebbeim (especially in Lakewood) and they actively seek Rabbinical advice. My Sponsor is actually not religious anymore and he still maintains a close relationship with his Rebbi. At one point, I expressed to my therapist (who's also a respected frum Rabbi) that it was disheartening to me that my Sponsor isn't religious, because I do believe in Judaism and I believe that he's not doing the "right" thing by being irreligious. My therapist's response to that actually shocked me. He said who am I to know what is the right thing for everyone and if people need to be religious. My Sponsor cares for his family very well and he supports and loves them. He pays yeshiva tuition, even though he's not religious. My therapist said that could be his tafkid in life. My disheartenment was stemming from an assumption that I had as to what

the right or wrong path for my Sponsor. This was coming from a frum Rabbi. I also have a friend who had a dip in religious observance (he stopped going to shul etc.) and he spoke to a renowned Maggid Shiur (I'm not going to say his name because I was never given permission to publish this in his name). My friend was expressing despair that he was having over not going to shul, but at the time he was feeling like it was too much for him to do, as he was working a hard recovery program. The Maggid Shiur told my friend that his tafkid for now was just to work a recovery program and get sober. That's it. He told him not to focus on religious observance, because that was too much to take on. It happens to be that this friend of mine actually got solid sobriety and he eventually was able to return to his previous level of yiddishkeit.

On a personal level, I (as I mentioned before) am much less steadfast in my religious observance than I used to be. But like my friend, I was taking on way too much. I was not able to juggle leading an intensely religious lifestyle and also work an intense recovery program. However, once I got grounded in recovery and was living a normal life for a consistent period of time, I realized what I was missing in life and made some changes to get back to where I wanted to be with religion. But what recovery has taught me is that I cannot do things quickly. I need to take things very slowly in order for it to "stick." And that is how I'm treating religion. I'm not making massive strides. To steal a phrase from Dov, I'm taking "baby steps." Which is the only way that I know how to grow. I have spoken to two Rebbeim of mine, in fact my two closest Rebbeim, and they both gave their full support to my process. In fact, one of them was my Mashgiach from high school and beis medrash (and a well-established one at that) and he said "I have found that people who have similar paths to you have the most success using the approach that you're using." When I was in active addiction (and this is true for numerous other frum addicts) my religion was a crutch. I used it to cure my addiction (which didn't work, by the way. You wouldn't use religion to cure diabetes, and addiction is just as much of a disease as diabetes) and it was not intrinsic at all. God was two things to me: A ruthless taskmaster who punished me when I stepped out of line and a Santa Claus God who ought to give me what I want because I deserve it. Both of those concepts are incredibly untrue and un-Jewish. And even when I looked very religious (tzitzis out and big yarmulka and peyos and all that jazz) I was very much not religious on the inside. My behavior would go from extremes, from being hyper religious (probably because I needed a cure for my acting out) to being completely dormant (probably because I was depressed from acting out). With the exception of Shabbos and kosher (which I understand are massive aspects of being frum) I cannot claim that I was living a frum life. And that last sentence is true for many other frum/formerly frum addicts. What you see on the outside (white shirt etc.) is not at all what you get, when it comes to addicts. Today, and only because of recovery, I am on a gradual (very gradual) upwards path when it comes to religious observance. I know that I want to raise a frum family and for my kids to go to frum schools. Will it be at the (supposed) level of observance that I had before I got sober? Absolutely not. I don't even desire that anymore. But it will be serene and calm and wholesome and real. Without SA I guarantee you (assuming I would have physically survived, which is a rather large assumption) that I would have utterly destroyed my spouse, traumatized my children, and estranged and embarrassed my family. Today, because of recovery, I know that won't happen (provided I remain in SA).

Which brings me to my next point: A suggestion was made to join SA, get sober, and leave. There are numerous problems with this suggestion. Firstly, if it was as easy as "join and get sober" we would have a lot more members than we have currently. Secondly, and most importantly, I have crossed paths with numerous people who have joined SA, got sober, and left. The vast majority did not remain sober. In fact, I only know of three people who have done that and remained sober. The odds are certainly stacked. I leave the choice to you, either you can stay in SA, get sober, and gain stability. Or you can leave once you get sober and risk losing your sobriety and destroying those close to you in the process. As I understand myself today, I would never leave SA. Never. This program has completely saved my life and everything (including my religious observance) I owe to SA.

One final note is that even if SA always caused people to be less religious, there still may be a compelling argument that addicts should go. If one understands the true nature of addiction, that addicts are powerless over their drug of choice (powerlessness is not a cheesy concept, it's scientifically proven) and that the addict will not stop at any point to get their drug of choice (although those red lines get usually get crossed gradually) then addiction is a disease of life or death. SA (along with the S-fellowship as a whole) is proven to be effective for sex addicts and it's still the largest method of recovery used for sex addicts. I could certainly see the argument as to why someone should join, even if their religious observance decreases. And this is assuming that SA automatically reduces one's level of religious observance, which it certainly doesn't.

All in all, SA is certainly a place for everyone, yidden included. If you feel that it's the right thing for you, I fully support it. You can even give me a call about it if you'd like. My number is below

(Also, Dov has an entire article about this topic but I can't seem to find it. If someone could post that link I would appreciate it. I know that my mother got a lot of solace once she read it and I have found some of Dov's words to be startlingly true for me, in my experience).

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