

Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 21 Oct 2014 17:59

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!

=====
=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by MayanHamisgaber - 21 Mar 2018 18:03

where the hell is the five star widget

=====
=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 03 Aug 2018 19:30

Wow, it's been some time since my last post. I felt the need to post this in light of the SSA section of the forum being shut down and an email thread among some GYE peeps that emerged afterwards discussing it.

While I am saddened that the SSA section was shut down, because it certainly helped me in pre-recovery, I understand that people were using it for the wrong reasons. Would I still like for it to exist? Definitely. I think that it can exist under the right circumstances. Up until this point, the description of the SSA forum had some language about "moving towards healthy heterosexuality." That description really bothers me. For many people, myself included, changing one's sexual attractions are all but impossible. I personally went to conversion therapy for 3 years and it did not change my attractions at all. Therefore, I take issue when that seems to be a goal of the SSA forum. Additionally, I suffered a lot of trauma from those years of therapy, and I only realized it when I got out of it. For 3 years, the message I received was that I was internally broken and defective, that there's something wrong with me and that's why I'm gay. I still suffer from that trauma, even though I've been sober for a while and been going to healthy therapy for over 2 years. I've also done a fair amount of research about those who went to conversion therapy, and many seem to have my experience also. I know plenty of guys who were in the conversion therapy community and the vast majority of them received no decrease in their heterosexual attractions or they are openly gay. At the time, I would have been an active supporter of the therapy, but I was completely clouded by denial. I didn't realize there was another way to deal with my sexuality without trying to change it.

In program, I've met many people who are homosexual. (I'm refraining from the use of SSA because, for me, it's a term that supports denial. Additionally, the Webster definition of "homosexual" is one who has homosexual feelings.) My Sponsor is one of them. Many of these homosexuals are living straight lifestyles and Torah lives also. None of them, to my knowledge, are in conversion therapy. How could this be? The answer is acceptance. They accepted themselves as gay/homosexual and they realized that this isn't something that's going to change. But they were ok with that. They learned to love themselves fully, even with their

sexuality, and they found ways to live to their morals while still accepting their sexuality. For many of these guys, they found that with a strong enough emotional connection coupled with sexual sobriety, they could perform sexually with their wives.

I am a full believer that everyone has a choice to live their lives the way they wish to, so long as they aren't hurting others. This includes those who wish to pursue gay relationships and those who wish to pursue straight relationships. I'm not God and I can't tell people what to do or what not to do. If someone is a homosexual and wants to pursue heterosexual relationships, I wish them success. It's a hard journey, but if one has the right systems in place, I have seen it be done. If one wants to pursue gay relationships, then I empathize with their desires and I can understand where they're coming from. To each their own. But what I will not do is support practices that are harmful and traumatic. The reality is that conversion therapy AS A THEORY (I cannot stress this enough) may have some logical basis. I know that I wasn't "born" gay (I was sexually addicted to heterosexual lust for about 4 years before my homosexual attractions developed) and I certainly believe that there are psychological components to my sexuality (along with genetic/hormonal components). However, conversion therapy as a therapy was incredibly damaging to my development and true self. And I am not alone with this, there are many more people who are right here with me. The fact is that conversion therapy is being banned all around the globe. If the majority of Western society is coming to realize that this therapy is harmful, and my experience certainly validates that fact, then I think I will side with them on this issue. For GYE to put forward a message supporting such practices hurts my soul.

To treat homosexuality as an addiction, which GYE was very much doing, is abhorrent to me. Homosexuals, including myself, need to be treated with love, tolerance, and patience. Not treated as broken vessels. I only got consistent recovery when I learned to love myself, and I believe that's true for everyone. The fact that I lust after men and Shmerel lusts after women is a non-issue when it comes to treating sexual addiction. The more we make it an issue, the more it will hold people back from recovery. I needed to stop watching porn because it was destroying my life, whether it was heterosexual or homosexual.

Do I believe that GYE should be a safe space for those who are homosexual? Yes, I certainly do. There is so much shame among Orthodox homosexuals that they need a place to talk about it openly and learn to accept themselves. I think that there should be a message of sorts that explicitly states GYE isn't a place of judgement, rather a place of recovery. But if we are going to approach this momentous task, then it must be done right. Sadly, I don't think GYE was doing it right in the past.

I've felt this way for a long time, but for various reasons I did not post my views on this website. I think it's time. Again, I want to repeat that I support ALL choices, so long as they aren't harmful, and I believe that certain homosexuals can accept themselves as homosexual but still pursue a

heterosexual lifestyle, given they have a lot of help and support. But I would never want anyone to endure the trauma that I received, and am still going through, by being in conversion therapy. It took me a very long time to realize that Hashem loves me with and without my attractions. It is not an aveirah to have homosexual attractions (only to act on them) so why, as Torah Jews, are we trying to change it? Especially when there's so much probability that things will go wrong. It took me a long time to understand that Hashem gave me my attractions for a reason and it was not a mistake. (I can't count the number of people in program who have confided in me about this subject, simply because I'm willing to be open about it). It's time that we turn the chapter, or maybe restart the book, to help our fellow brothers.

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by mzl - 03 Aug 2018 20:19

Big yasher koach for saying what everyone was thinking but which was not okay to say. And there are other things on that list of things that it's not ok to say here. We are not there. There's a reason Hashem packed up his house and left us wandering around.

I don't understand what you mean when you say that you support all choices. I don't support the choice to have homosexual contacts, but I support the desire because the desire is a fact, the action is a choice. Just making that clear.

I think conversion therapy is idiotic. It's like converting a taste for kugel into a desire for cholent. Desires don't convert into each other. You can emphasize one and de-emphasize another but converting them is nuts.

And let's not forget that people come here because they love pornography (excuse me: they hate it, but they have a yetzer hara) and inevitably a lot of them also do gay porn but don't dare say it.

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by ehrliche.bochur - 05 Aug 2018 04:13

.

=====
=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by stillgoing - 05 Aug 2018 15:36

...I personally went to conversion therapy for 3 years and it did not change my attractions at all. Therefore, I take issue when that seems to be a goal of the SSA forum. At the time, I would have been an active supporter of the therapy, but I was completely clouded by denial. I didn't realize there was another way to deal with my sexuality without trying to change it.

.... In program, I've met many people who are homosexual. (I'm refraining from the use of SSA because, for me, it's a term that supports denial. Additionally, the Webster definition of "homosexual" is one who has homosexual feelings.) ...

I am a full believer that everyone has a choice to live their lives the way they wish to, so long as they aren't hurting others. This includes those who wish to pursue gay relationships and those who wish to pursue straight relationships. I'm not God and I can't tell people what to do or what not to do.... If one wants to pursue gay relationships, then I empathize with their desires and I can understand where they're coming from. To each their own. But what I will not do is support practices that are harmful and traumatic.

... Again, I want to repeat that I support ALL choices, so long as they aren't harmful, .

Shlomo, your post makes me sad.

First of all, I want to say that I have SSA. I am not gay, and I am not in denial. I have same sex attraction. I do not feel guilt about it, I am not angry about it, I have accepted that for whatever reason, this is the way that I am. However I DO NOT identify as gay, because to quote Gevura (from memory) (way back when he first came here), gay is a term that is used by the huge gay community in this fine country. And connecting myself to that, is something I will not do. Why not? Because it is wrong. Period. I don't say this in the street. I say this in an jewish orthodox

website.

You write that you can and should tolerate anything that is not harmful. In other words, Gay lifestyles should be accepted - they are not harmful. Conversion therapy should not be accepted- it is much worse than living intimately with a man. This is obviously your opinion. Today. You've told me about two years ago that looking for causes of one's SSA is what any non liberal would say. So it seems to me that today you are saying that we should accept the liberal agenda, accept the gay lifestyle as an acceptable option if one chooses, but by no means should anyone attempt to try something that the liberal therapists do not like. I know, in the past you had a different view, now you realized the light, you can see clearly. Maybe next year your opinion will change again. I'm not trying to make a bashing session out of this. What I am trying to say, is that on a Torah website, let's stick to Torah values. You didn't have a good experience with conversion therapy, you can say so, and LET OTHERS MAKE THEIR OWN CHOICES, but don't make your current opinion as the absolute non negotiable rule for me. You write that you're not G-d and can't tell others how to live their lives, well G-d actually does have an opinion about living a homosexual lifestyle. It's not OK with Him.

sg

=====
=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by the.guard - 05 Aug 2018 16:29

Dear Shlomo, thank you for your post. I agree with almost everything you wrote besides for one thing:

I am a full believer that everyone has a choice to live their lives the way they wish to, so long as they aren't hurting others.

If you are referring to non-Jews, then I guess you are right. But for Jews, we don't have a choice. Hashem lifted Har Sinai over our heads and threatened that if we don't keep the Torah, we will be buried underneath it.

Here are GYE's views on Homosexuality (in a nutshell):

- Having SSA is similar to someone who would be attracted ONLY to married women, i.e. single women don't attract him at all (if such a thing was possible). We must empathize with such people because they have struggles that most men can't even imagine. We must give them support and show them love and understanding.

- Having same sex attraction (SSA) is not a sin.

- **Acting on** SSA desires *is* a sin

- Some people are born gay and cannot be changed.

- Some people develop SSA due to external life factors and can change, i.e. through therapy or other ways, they can learn to have normal straight desires.

- Some people develop SSA due to external life factors and still CANNOT learn to have normal straight desires (as Shlomo claims is his case).

- If a person **can** learn to change and develop healthy normal sexual desires, that would be great. After all, since acting on these desires is a sin, if one can change and learn to marry and have a normal family, why wouldn't they do that? That is why, everyone who has SSA should attempt therapy. Because they can never know if it will work for them or not, and they'll only know by giving it a serious try.

- If they cannot learn to change, either because they were born that way, or because conversion therapy or other types of therapy doesn't work for them, then they can still learn to ACCEPT themselves as they are, with no shame, and simply work on controlling their desires in the same way any normal man needs to work on his desires for married women, i.e. by avoiding desire as much as possible, etc.. Such people can still get married and lead normal lives, like Shlomo said, with the right support and attitude.

=====

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by cordnoy - 06 Aug 2018 02:21

Il am not speakin' for gye and I am not speakin' for shlomo. I also know almost nothin' about the subject matter.

There are many posts above, includin' several paragraphs in shlomo's post that I do not fully understand, but I did not see in his post that he is advocatin' for someone with ssa tendencies to act upon his desires. Is he sayin' that conversion therapy is dangerous? Yes, that is his opinion. Is it the correct one? I have no idea.

Does everyone, even Jews, have a choice? Yes. Mount Sinai hoverin' over our heads commanded us what to do, but we still have choices; no? What I thought he meant in that sentence is that someone with ssa tendencies has a choice before him as to how to proceed, and he (even he) could choose heterosexual sex, although it may be difficult. He can choose homosexual sex (because everyone has bechirah), which, however, is a sin.

Then, there is the word 'tolerate,' which he used. Again, I can't say I understand the entire jist, but isn't this entire site about tolerance and acceptance? A fellow says he had three affairs in the past two years, another says he is a chronic masturbator, even durin' shiur, a third says he watches porn before usin' a kabbalistic sefer as he's engagin' in sex with his wife, another says he spied on his sister-in-law thru his drilled hole in the closet. Do we bash these fellows? Do we warn them that fire and brimstone will be hurled forth on them from below? Are we understandin' where they're coming from (shlomo's words)? Yes, we are. Are they/we/i sinnin'? Hell yes, but we speak to them and see if we can help them somewhat in their struggle.

As it is, this post is too long, so I deleted my conclusion.

Again, perhaps there will be some clarification as to what people above meant and then I will amend my words. My words are probably because I am a superficial thinker and naive, and I did not really understand what was bein' said.

=====

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by stillgoing - 06 Aug 2018 03:19

Cords, if you didn't understand, then I really have no hope.

in a line, what bothered me about the above quote is; if we can be so tolerant of homosexual lifestyle choices, then why is there zero tolerance for conversion therapy. Apparently, for something very harmful (in his opinion) there is no room for tolerance.

=====

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 06 Aug 2018 03:49

[ehrliche.bochur wrote on 05 Aug 2018 04:13:](#)

[Shlomo24 wrote on 03 Aug 2018 19:30:](#)

Up until this point, the description of the SSA forum had some language about "moving towards healthy heterosexuality." That description really bothers me. For many people, myself included, changing one's sexual attractions are all but impossible.

If one wants to pursue gay relationships, then I empathize with their desires and I can understand where they're coming from. To each their own. But what I will not do is support practices that are harmful and traumatic.

The fact is that conversion therapy is being banned all around the globe. If the majority of Western society is coming to realize that this therapy is harmful, and my experience certainly validates that fact, then I think I will side with them on this issue. For GYE to put forward a message supporting such practices hurts my soul.

To treat homosexuality as an addiction, which GYE was very much doing, is abhorrent to me. Homosexuals, including myself, need to be treated with love, tolerance, and patience.

We do not make our life decisions because what western society thinks. Western society also think it is okay for discusting practice like man marry with man and woman marry with woman. western society also think abortion is okay. But we live our life how Hashem want us. We do not live our life for chilonim/western society.

Shlomo... you were first person who talk with me when i join GYE 4 years ago. Your story and your life helped me so much.. You gave me information for JONAH and helped me to fight SSA and get cure. How you can say you dont support harmful practices but support something because you helped me so much. i am sad because you inspired me so much to get help for my SSA. But i think it is dangerous you come to GYE and write we should tolerate ho*ose*uality and people who choose that life because someone who is struggling with SSA might see this message and think it is okay to live this way and that we should accept Ho*ose*ual life.we always should promote full life by torah

I never said I support a homosexual lifestyle. It saddens me that you missed the entire point of my post. And in terms of JONAH, they were shut down by the US government for doing illegal practices. I cannot condone their services ever.

=====

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by mzl - 06 Aug 2018 03:55

I think the point was that there are two orthogonal issues. One is sex addiction, which is why the site is here, and the other is homosexuality. Straight men don't understand that the writer of that post feels entirely at home desiring men (me neither, I had to go read it again) and wants people on the site to just forget about whether he's desiring a man or a woman, and view him as just another sex addict even if he should choose to recover to be a happy homosexual. An

almost impossible request, but he got it off his chest.

=====

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 06 Aug 2018 03:57

[the.guard wrote on 05 Aug 2018 16:29:](#)

Dear Shlomo, thank you for your post. I agree with almost everything you wrote besides for one thing:

I am a full believer that everyone has a choice to live their lives the way they wish to, so long as they aren't hurting others.

If you are referring to non-Jews, then I guess you are right. But for Jews, we don't have a choice. Hashem lifted Har Sinai over our heads and threatened that if we don't keep the Torah, we will be buried underneath it.

Here are GYE's views on Homosexuality (in a nutshell):

- Having SSA is similar to someone who would be attracted ONLY to married women, i.e. single women don't attract him at all (if such a thing was possible). We must empathize with such people because they have struggles that most men can't even imagine. We must give them support and show them love and understanding.

- Having same sex attraction (SSA) is not a sin.

- **Acting on** SSA desires **is** a sin

- Some people are born gay and cannot be changed.

- Some people develop SSA due to external life factors and can change, i.e. through therapy or other ways, they can learn to have normal straight desires.

- Some people develop SSA due to external life factors and still CANNOT learn to have normal straight desires (as Shlomo claims is his case).

- If a person **can** learn to change and develop healthy normal sexual desires, that would be great. After all, since acting on these desires is a sin, if one can change and learn to marry and have a normal family, why wouldn't they do that? That is why, everyone who has SSA should attempt therapy. Because they can never know if it will work for them or not, and they'll only know by giving it a serious try.

- If they cannot learn to change, either because they were born that way, or because conversion therapy or other types of therapy doesn't work for them, then they can still learn to ACCEPT themselves as they are, with no shame, and simply work on controlling their desires in the same way any normal man needs to work on his desires for married women, i.e. by avoiding desire as much as possible, etc.. Such people can still get married and lead normal lives, like Shlomo said, with the right support and attitude.

Thank you for your response. Again, I never said I support living a homosexual lifestyle. Let's move on from that.

Secondly, simply because there are psychological reasons for the development of sexuality does not warrant a legitimate reason to try and undue those things if the method is harmful. Conversion therapy was exceedingly traumatic for me. The majority of Western psychologists agree that conversion therapy is harmful, I can't see how you support such a tactic. Additionally, all this is assuming the therapy works, which in my case, and (in my experience) most cases, does not. So essentially we are taking a very strong risk, one that will probably lead to trauma and no change, but because it's theoretically possible we are taking a risk. To me, that sounds uneducated and illogical.

That's my main issue with how GYE treats homosexuality.

=====
=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 06 Aug 2018 04:03

[stillgoing wrote on 06 Aug 2018 03:19:](#)

Cords, if you didn't understand, then I really have no hope.

in a line, what bothered me about the above quote is; if we can be so tolerant of homosexual lifestyle choices, then why is there zero tolerance for conversion therapy. Apparently, for something very harmful (in his opinion) there is no room for tolerance.

In my post I explained that I empathize with those who choose homosexual lifestyles because I get where they are coming from. That's all I said. Does that mean tolerance? Probably. For me tolerance means "I may not support what you're doing, but I have some level of understanding why and so long as you don't negatively affect my life, I'm ok with that." I don't think that's too radical of a position to take on the issue of homosexuality, to say the least.

Why do I have no tolerance of conversion therapy? Because, in my experience, I have seen how those practices traumatized me and shamed me. Not only me, but countless others as well. Additionally, I have rarely seen the "therapy" work within the hundreds of people that I am aware of went through it. So just like you wouldn't be tolerant of letting children walk in the street alone, even though they might make it to the other side, so to I am intolerant of conversion therapy.

=====
=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by Shlomo24 - 06 Aug 2018 04:04

[mzl wrote on 06 Aug 2018 03:55:](#)

I think the point was that there are two orthogonal issues. One is sex addiction, which is why the

site is here, and the other is homosexuality. Straight men don't understand that the writer of that post feels entirely at home desiring men (me neither, I had to go read it again) and wants people on the site to just forget about whether he's desiring a man or a woman, and view him as just another sex addict even if he should choose to recover to be a happy homosexual. An almost impossible request, but he got it off his chest.

I don't understand what you're saying, but if you are attempting to speak for me, please don't. Thank you.

=====

Re: Big Steps

Posted by stillgoing - 06 Aug 2018 04:27

[Shlomo24 wrote on 06 Aug 2018 03:57:](#)

Thank you for your response. Again, I never said I support living a homosexual lifestyle. Let's move on from that.

Secondly, simply because there are psychological reasons for the development of sexuality does not warrant a legitimate reason to try and undue those things if the method is harmful. Conversion therapy was exceedingly traumatic for me. The majority of Western psychologists agree that conversion therapy is harmful, I can't see how you support such a tactic. Additionally, all this is assuming the therapy works, which in my case, and (in my experience) most cases, does not. So essentially we are taking a very strong risk, one that will probably lead to trauma and no change, but because it's theoretically possible we are taking a risk. To me, that sounds uneducated and illogical.

That's my main issue with how GYE treats homosexuality.

Hi Shlomo.

First of all, thank you for your response. That is what makes dialog possible.

You referred several times to the fact that western culture does not approve of conversion therapy. Do you not think that western culture is biased? There is a tremendous massive push in this country that you are aware of as well as I, to completely normalize all gay lifestyles. In many ways, the campaign is over, they've won, and have now moved on to try and normalize

the trans 'community'. This is the same western culture that fought tooth and nail in the supreme court to require all states to recognize gay marriages. They filed suits against several bakeries who wouldn't made wedding cakes for gay marriages. This is the same western culture that is so vehement against conversion therapy. I hardly think that this western culture has any credibility in this matter.

You, on the other hand, have first hand experience that conversion therapy was not only not helpful - you even found it harmful. I would never suggest to you to do something that you've found to be harmful. Everyone and every situation is different however. Perhaps I would like to try conversion therapy. I know that you would not recommend it, but would you not tolerate it? If I wanted to marry a man, you wrote that you could tolerate me, so why not let me go on my own journey and accept me with the choices that I make?

sg

=====

=====