

Starting anew. again.

Posted by shmiraShachaim - 08 Feb 2016 19:28

Hi everyone. I have introduced myself in the past but I decided to open a new account because I haven't been on top of my GYE game and after falling a couple times after a long streak I decided to start afresh. No point explaining more so I'll get down to what I have been going through: I go by Chaim and I'm 23. I started a rollercoaster of depravity and *teshuvah* about four years ago which began with lusting and masturbating, and progressed to pornography. During this period I dealt with being diagnosed with OCD, ADD and depression, and my mother passing away. As is common with addicts, my image completely clashed with my activities and thoughts. I was viewed as a masmid, bal medos, tzadik, etc. but I had this storm going on inside me going on without anyone noticing it besides poor lonely me. True, I might of lacked self-esteem and overly cared about what people thought about me and feigned who I was somewhat, but I didn't view myself as a *complete* fake because I *did* care about growing and coming close to Hashem. Instead I saw myself as a very confused and depressed person. With a few therapists under my belt and signing up on GYE, I have been working on myself by attaining a better understating of my addiction and attempting to address my diagnoses and circumstances which are interrelated with each other and my addiction. B"H, I have gained clarity through GYE in the nature of my addiction and the means of going about it. I was able to stay clean for a month and a half and I felt it was time to start dating. I felt clear headed going out with my first date. I haven't done more than having the occasional fleeting sexual thoughts in a while and as far as I can tell I didn't view her as a sex object. I didn't fantasize about her and I'm pretty sure I was evaluating it with my usual methodical and even OCD thinking and I really truly believe it's a neis that I am engaged to her. She is sweet, pure, and has a very similar outlook and goals that I do. I was clean for a while but I was still working on a TaPHSIC shvuah. I was able to think it through and write it down, but I acted out before I actually said it. I acted out once after that by paying my "small" kinas. I am so scared. What has gotten into me? I need to prepare for marriage and not hurt this girl whom I committed to take care of in a loving and healthy way. Please Hashem help me on this never ending journey!!

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by markz - 14 Feb 2016 20:58

The emunah and more that you will find in the white book (see links on the "Free Lust Towing" page)

Since you claimed OCD and other issues, I felt may be beneficial to see this post from 2009 - Please let me know if it helps you at all

[Ykv_schwartz wrote:](#)

Hi eye. I have read your posts and see you are a great warrior. Before I begin, I need to introduce myself. My name is Yaakov. I used to be an addict, but B"H, I have been healed from the addiction. I was addicted for close to 20 years and for 15 years I attempted to break this terrible addiction but I never had the strength nor courage to do so until I came to this wonderful site and was able to get my addiction out in the open and realize that I am normal. B"H, it is now 10 months of absolute freedom.

I know I will get criticized, so I will take a deep breath. Thank G-d for me, that Guard likes me. This is not meant to be chutzpah, but I am really l'shem shamayim about this. But I really feel strongly about what I am about to write. I have thought about this topic for a very long time now, and I still do not have complete clarity on how to convey it.

Now, I would like to address your issue. I wish I would be able to clarify this issue you brought to the forefront, but unfortunately, I have to agree with your wife on this one. Most controversial issues on this site I remain silent, but this one I am very passionate about and I feel very strongly that this particular attitude is not only a cop-out and dangerous (which I wholeheartedly agree with and will discuss soon) but is immature. A true man is one who can admit his mistakes and ask forgiveness. This is not a sign of weakness but rather strength. We live in a generation where we wish not take any blame for ourselves. We always blame ALL of our problems on the next person or "our disease". I believe this attitude is one of the biggest hindrances to any self growth and it holds us back not only of our addiction but all of our character flaws. And if I may add, I have seen fellow addicts stumble over and over again because this attitude permeates in their subconscious. They are simply not ready to take responsibility for their actions. In my own personal life, I played the "blame game" for so many years. When I was young, it was brother's fault. Then it was my friend's fault. Then it was my teacher's fault. Then it was the SAT's fault. Then it was chemistry's fault. Then it was english comp's fault. And then it was pschocology's fault. Then it was boss's fault. Then it was wife's fault. Then it was my ADHD's fault. Then it was therapists fault. And finally I was running out of people to blame it on. Then it was "I was born that way". But as I matured, I realized where the responsibility rests and I have the keys to change.

First allow me to address the sources on bechira and then we will revisit the issue of "taking the edge off guilt".

Regarding the sources, I do not want to elaborate too much, but I would like to encourage you to read Rambam's "hilchos teshuva", chapter 5, where he address all the basic ideas about bechira. For a more philosophical discussion , see chovos halevovos, shaar avodas elokim, perek 8. The material is too lengthy to repeat here, but if you are sincere in your quest, you will look up the sources. In my weak-minded understanding, after reading the Rambam, there is little room for the above belief that you quoted. But he makes it clear that our mitzvos and averiros are a result of our bechira (NO distinction between past and present, it does not even make sense). He explains that this is one of the tenets of Jewish faith, and only a person who believes in this can be lead to teshuvah. There could be other opinions, but I personally could not find any that make the assertion you quoted. (And yes, I read the FAQ. In fact I once corresponded with Guard in this issue. The first FAQ, does not quote sources. The second one is a totally different issue; that is the issue using Hashem to fight the yetzer hara. And yes, the 12 steps idea of bringing Hashem into battle is a Jewish one. Though, the Jewish emphasis is slightly different, not for now. The famous question how that fits in with bechira is addressed by many.) Again, if I am misunderstanding the Rambam or if there are other mainstream opinions out there, forgive my ignorance.

Now I will explain why this is detrimental. Unless we really believe we are in control of our actions, it will be very hard to break our addiction. Our addiction, by definition, is lack of control. The more we believe we are not in control, and cannot be in control, we are feeding our addiction more. (As an aside, when you do research on people who failed 12 steps, it is because this point. See Recovery Nation for a very clear explanation of this phenomenon. The purpose of declaring powerlessness is two fold. But not for now.)

In my personal journey, it was at the moment that I realized it was my fault, and more importantly, ADMITTED to myself that I am in control of decisions, I am at fault, I am to blame, and it is MY responsibility and I WANT to change, was I able to change. [It has been over ten months without nisyonos, B"H.] You would be surprised to realize that most people do not really believe in free choice. I am not talking about what people have been trained to say they believe. But what they believe in their hearts is another thing. Internally, we are scared to admit it, because the blame falls on us and then we have to change.

Children constantly say "It was not my fault". But a grown man says, "I made a mistake, can you please forgive me." And I truly great man takes responsibility of all his actions even the ones that were not really his fault. [This does not imply that you can beat the addiction all alone with just will power, but rather it will be your driving force to recovery. More about this later]

So where does this leave us? What could we do to take the edge of the guilt? The first thing to realize is to have proper perspective on guilt/shame/regret (whatever word you like).

Guilt/shame (don't get caught up in semantics) is only healthy if it leads to change. However, it can also lead to depression. [See this article from Rabbi Twereki](#). He wrote another one about the difference between guilt and depression which I cannot seem to locate.

The problem is most people cannot handle guilt as it often leads to depression, as we look at ourselves as failures. So this lead us to the second principle to do take the edge off the guilt. We just don't think about it. Even for me, it can be too overwhelming when I think about the terrible things I did. The shame is too strong. So what the baalei mussar tell us is to just not think about the past. It is usually not productive. We can't live in the the past. This is perhaps the yesod that Guard meant to quote. But this is not because we are not responsible for it, but just because it is not productive to think about it. It is like a person who got himself into terrible debt. His main focus is to continue living a happy life while at the same time try to figure out how to pay back his loans. He cannot dwell on the mistakes he made that lead him to this situation. Nor can he dwell on the fact that he has tons of debts on his shoulders. He needs to focus on paying back. But that does not mean he is not at fault.

I know a person who, due to his terrible addiction for wealth, got himself into major mess, where he ended up stealing from the people who are closest to him. The person's life is obviously a disaster. But he cannot focus on all the bad things he did because he will get no where. Right now he is focusing on building a somewhat kosher normal life for himself. Only after he rebuilds himself can he go back to his past as he realizes what damage he did and try his best to make amends. And the same it is for us p**n addicts. Our primary focus is what we can do now to make it better. On Yom Kippur, we will dwell on our past mistakes. And for those that can handle it after maintaining sobriety. But now, we will dwell on our future potential.

There is a great sefer called "Vehaer Eneinu", about shemiras Eynayim. I read this every morning. It is a magnificent sefer, with tons of chizuk, advice and attitudes. In the back of the sefer, he includes a part of another sefer of his about simcha. Chapter 3 is devoted to this yesod. The idea of not allowing our aveiros wear us down. Also, read all of my dear friend bardichev's posts, who always make mention of this yesod

The third principle to realize to take the edge off the guilt is regarding addictions in general. We can debate from today till tomorrow how each one of us got ourselves into this mess in the first place. Was it our fault or was it not our fault. It makes no difference. One thing is clear; an addict's level of bechira is very low. What this means is that his pull for sin is great, and he does not know how to use his bechira faculties. This puts him at "low fault". A great read on this is Rav Dessler's kuntras habechira, vol I, page 111. I discussed on my sucra thread some sources that make it clear once a person is an addict, his bechira is down, way down. He may not even be punished for the later sins. And for most people, it means, they don't know how to maintain self control. This is where therapy/12 steps and the like fit in. We learn how to regain our self control. Because, as an addict, we simply do not know how to do it. And I think this something we all on the forum can relate to. Yes, we had bechira. But the odds were against us, and we simply were not trained on how to use it. This should not open the doors for continued addiction, but it eases the pain a bit and it is very true.

There are some other principles to understand but I want to move on to a very powerful principle. This is the fourth principle to take the "edge off the guilt". We must realize that as much as we made a mistakes in our lives, we can fix the mistakes of our lives. Making mistakes is part of life. We are human. But as long as you do not fix your mistakes, you are a failure. But if you fix your mistakes, you are a hero. G-d has given us a great gift called teshuvah where we are able to undo our mistakes and lift ourselves higher than we were before the aveira. It makes no sense. And that is why G-d had to make a new "creation" just for baalei teshuvah. As long we were able to lift ourselves up, as you and all the other great warriors on this forum do, we become heros. The seforim tell us that G-d gives these challenges to the special people, and by overcoming lust we are actually raising the world. A great read on this is in Arvei Nachal parshas Ki Seitse. Understanding the greatness of teshuvah can be so liberating and uplifting. People who do not take the time to remind themselves how great they are for having accomplished true teshuvah, may risk remaining morbid. It is ok to proud of yourself once in a while.

Final Remarks: As much as we recognize we made mistakes, we need to forgive as well. This means a wife needs to forgive her husband (after seeing that he is sincere and is recovered) and more importantly, the recovered addict needs to forgive himself. This closes the last wounds. As stated above, we are human, and as humans we make mistakes. However, when we admit our mistakes, commit to never do it again, and effect the change, we are deserving of forgiveness. This forgiveness gives us closure. We are ready to move on in life. A lot goes into forgiveness. But not for now. This is a very healthy approach.

I hope you benefited from this.

With immense love to another sincere Yid,

Yaakov

Keep on Trucking

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by shmirashachaim - 15 Feb 2016 18:07

wow thanks for sharing Markz.. seemed like a fascinating post and I am planning on reading it again. Eventhough I got some clarity on this addiction I still am quiet a newbie when it comes to the controversies of bechira, but am planning on gaining more clarity! As far as my OCD and ADD I am not necessarily blaming my addiction on them or trying to shift the blame. I am still learning about how I should relate to titles like "OCD" and "ADD", but as for now I am just taking what I can learn from them in order to discern how I can work on myself and how eventhough Hashem gave me a certain disposition that can cause me to have certain midos and become an addict it is still up to me to work on myself and do what I can do to fix my life.

Not sure if I am responding correctly or even clear. I will B'H read that post again and will hopefully get more clarity on these issues.

Any more material you or anyone else recommend would be great.

Also please does anyone have any resources or forums that have revelance to engagment or marriage? thanks so much

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by realsimcha - 15 Feb 2016 20:34

A new day. A new post.

Been getting a little easier and this scares the bejeesus out of me. Is this the quiet before the storm or can I hope for a little relief from all the constant fighting? the fight is bad for me but I am afraid that the calm is even worse. I am frightened of getting used to it and not being on guard.

Help?!

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by shmiraashachaim - 16 Feb 2016 00:06

[realsimcha wrote on Unknown:](#)

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Help?!

I think you can hope for a little relief but it is still only the quiet before the storm.. at least at this

stage. It's great that you are afraid! just keep posting, learning, and internalizing that you still have work to do!

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by shmiraShachaim - 16 Feb 2016 04:31

As for me I have been Having a rough day. I had a couple triggers today and have been struggling. I hope this isn't the beginning of the end. Being engaged is hard for any frum shomer person, but I feel it is especially difficult for an addict. I don't use my Kallah as a sex object but learning hilchos niddah is putting these images in my mind. I am trying to not see myself as a horrible guy to be doing this. On top of this I got triggered last night at a wedding and I feel anxiety about a bunch of things that I don't want to bore anyone with. I was having fleeting but frequent images in my mind today. I feel triggered when I speak to my Kallah. I am wondering how I was able to feel so confident when I got into this and now in this state. I feel pressure in my whole body now and I am trying to relax right now as I write this. Please Hashem take this away from me so I can continue on my journey. I hope pulling the laptop out to write this gives me some zchusim

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by realsimcha - 16 Feb 2016 04:39

[shmiraShachaim wrote on Unknown:](#)

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Wow. Sounds difficult. You have so much to look forward to, though, and you can do this ... for

now. and now is all that counts!

By the way, I am not one to know, and Its above my pay grade, but i think you should reach out to someone - matbe someone on this site can help - about how to deal with this issue in regard to your engagement. Please reach out to someone now, so you dont make mistakes that will affect you later.

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by cordnoy - 16 Feb 2016 15:13

[realsimcha wrote on Unknown:](#)

[shmirashachaim wrote on Unknown:](#)

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yep, he should.

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by shmiraShachaim - 16 Feb 2016 17:48

Thanks for being there for being there for me Simcha. It means a lot. I also appreciate your concern and advice. Maybe I should go to a therapist but I have been going for so long and don't see how I will get insight. But maybe I'll do so anyways. I was hoping there could be some direction on this website anyone could recommend? Articles? Someone to talk to about this? thanks.

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by Sasha 2 - 16 Feb 2016 17:55

Hi!

I feel everything you write! I too have been here once before and I'm back not because I am engaged but rather because I would like to get engaged without this problem that's stuck to all of us. I find that the Taphsic shvua really helps if you make a good one.

Hatzlocha! I'm in this with you together!

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by Mesayin - 16 Feb 2016 20:56

[shmirashachaim wrote on Unknown:](#)

Thanks for being there for being there for me Simcha. It means a lot. I also appreciate your concern and advice. Maybe I should go to a therapist but I have been going for so long and don't see how I will get insight. But maybe I'll so anyways. I was hoping there could be some direction on this website anyone could recommend? Articles? Someone to talk to about this? thanks.

ly"h when you get the solution, please don't hesitate to post it on GYE, after all there are many here who can use such kind of help.

For example: ME

I have a shtikel concern, I have never got into a personal conversation with a woman/girl, especially one that might have interest in marrying me, so my concern is that when I'll meet one (IY"H b'kuriov; say umein) that I'll have triggers on me like the snow in New York.

Good idea chaim! Perhaps you can also talk to a rabbi that can help you, they are for free

Your relentlessness is inspiring, keep it up!

Do bear in mind, that Hashem should help you should have a wonderful marriage and maybe he already has it in store for you but he just needs you to past this test.

Chazak V'emutz

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by realsimcha - 16 Feb 2016 21:08

[shmirashachaim wrote on Unknown:](#)

Thanks for being there for being there for me Simcha. It means a lot. I also appreciate your concern and advice. Maybe I should go to a therapist but I have been going for so long and don't see how I will get insight. But maybe I'll so anyways. I was hoping there could be some direction on this website anyone could recommend? Articles? Someone to talk to about this? thanks.

I dont know. Maybe a Rav or Rebbe who understands this stuff? Or maybe someone here can recommend a therapist?

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by shmirashachaim - 17 Feb 2016 17:56

[Sasha 2 wrote on Unknown:](#)

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I feel everything you write! I too have been here once before and im back not because i am engaged but rather because i would like to get engaged without this problem thats stuck to all of us. I find that the Taphsic shvua really helps if you make a good one.

Hatzlocha! Im in this with you together!

Hey Sasha! It's great that your back! Its takes a lot to commit to a long time stay and its good to see you want to take care of this before you date. I didn't want to even start dating until I felt I had some grasp on my situation. How can I possibly be constantly be looking at women in order to make a clear headed decision to marry them when my mind in muddled and I'm busy lusting uncontrollably? I was clean for a month and a half and even before that I haven;t had a long period of acting out. If I made the right decision to start or not I guess is irrelevant now, but I would suggest being very cautious when you start as you probably know . However, even though this might be the completely wrong thing to say i'll through it out anyways- if you wait until your sober like Dov you might never get married... I don't know.

Yes I made a TaPHSIC shvuah and its been helpful B"H.

I appreciate you considering yourself in this together with me! I'm trying to get out of isolation because as everyone says addiction feeds on it. Looking forward to more posts from you!

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Re: Starting anew. again.
Posted by shmiraShachaim - 17 Feb 2016 18:10

[Mesayin wrote on Unknown:](#)

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For example: ME

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Good idea chaim! Perhaps you can also talk to a rabbi that can help you, they are for free
Your relentlessness is inspiring, keep it up!

Do bear in mind, that Hashem should help you should have a wonderful marriage and maybe he already has it in store for you but he just needs you to past this test.

Chazak V'emutz

Hi Mesayin! Nice to meet you! I have seen your forum and it's wonderful. You mentioned talking to a Rabbi about this.. Should I mention the obvious that I am petrified of doing so? He will look at me in a completely different light and I can't hack that. Maybe you can suggest a Satmer

Chassid I can speak to:lol:.

You mention posting a solution wjen I find one. I would love to but I would be a little surprised to hear there is non on this website. Aren't there tons of men on here with relationships already? I assume one of them had something to say! No articles on engagement or marriage? If anyone knows of something please let me know! thanks!

Mesayin you seem like a wonderful person and I give you a brachah that you should find a wonderful girl that you can share an amazing healthy life together, where you can use your overcoming of your past struggles to bond an ahavah with her and grow together closer to Hashem! Amen!

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Re: Starting anew. again.

Posted by Mesayin - 17 Feb 2016 21:02

Umein on your bracha and yasher koich for your kind words!

All of us when we first start recovery we think that we are in a crowd of a few that struggle in this area, but the truth is EVERYBODY struggles in with lust, for those that never touched a computer or a phone it is obviously much less, but they also struggle, it's human nature.

With that being said, maybe you shouldn't be that petrified to talk to your rabbi, he is a kind understanding person who knows that men, especially singles and especially in the 21st century struggle with lust, so it shouldn't be that shameful. (of course we don't always have to go into details with the rabbi but...)

Or you can ask your rabbi if he knows of a rabbi (if only I had a nickel for every time I wrote rabbi) that can help you with it.

Any SOULutions that anyone gives including helps.

Chazak V'emutz

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