

My Journey Starts Today

Posted by AnonyJew - 22 Apr 2020 15:33

Hi,

This is my first thread on GYE. I intend for this thread to be used as a log of my journey (to hold myself accountable and help others see what the process may look like) and a forum for conversations around the different obstacles and issues that will come up on this journey. I ask that if you're going through or have gone through something similar to please chime in and share your thoughts, advice and encouragement.

So here I am. I'm 29 years old and still struggling with shmiras einayim, shmiras habris and the weight of carrying my "secret" on my shoulders for some 18 years now. I've got a lot more to share but I will leave that for another post.

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Re: My Journey Starts Today

Posted by TRAPPED - 06 Aug 2020 21:24

Hey AntonyJew, so much to say. First of all, you are incredible and what you are going through is totally and completely normal. You are not alone! I see myself in your description of your struggle.

Practically speaking, I have experience with two areas I think might be helpful.

First of all, about talking to the wife. Obviously each relationship is different. I had been struggling with sex addiction (porn, relationships with boys and girls throughout high-school etc) for 15 years before marriage, since age 5. (Yes, I somehow knew then there was something dirty about it which led to shame, which led to more acting out... and you know the way it goes.) I was convinced marriage would change the game for me. I met this amazing girl and invested a ton into building the relationship. I am a sensitive person and went all in, bh we built an incredibly strong bond even before getting married. I made reference while dating to my struggles, she knew of my past girlfriends etc. but I never went into detail - was too scared, thought she understood from my references and felt there was no point anyhow since that chapter in my life was over. Well guess what. That's right! It wasn't over. A month or so after, I

was back at it in earnest. A year into my marriage, I got into gye and faced the fact that I am an addict. I started listening to dov's classes (life changing, but also sometimes off-putting) and got into the 12 steps. I went with the surrender tactic for 80 days (my wife was pregnant, so being together constantly helped, bh our emotional and physical bond is awesome) until I feel again. I was devastated. I was convinced i had broken free. Anyways, another half a year of acting out and i had enough. I was on the verge of suicide. I couldn't handle the lying the sneaking the shame the guilt. I just couldn't. And so one night after summoning up the courage I told my wife after dinner that i had to speak with her. It was the most TERRIFYING thing I have ever done. EVER. I thought I am risking my life. Risking my marriage. Risking everything. But the hell i was facing in the other direction was worse than anything that might happen. bari v'shema bari adif. And so i poured out my heart. I told her everything. Every last detail. Starting from when i was 5. The ups and the downs. The falling and getting back up. The self-loathing and shame. The compulsion. The inability to do what I truly wanted - to break free. And she listened. And she validated me as much as she could. And she respected my courage and honesty. I cried for two days straight, literally. At one point, she - in trying to process this - said that if I couldn't get this under control she couldn't stay with me and I almost died right there on the spot. If I lose her I am finished. She knows that. I am nothing without her. And I tell her that every night. And so we came up with plans to implement. And this speaks to your filter question. We go covenant eyes filter on my laptop and filter on my phone. And with my newfound resolve, I went 85 days again - until I discovered a loophole and crashed last tisha b'av, a year ago. Since then, until 28 days ago, i was stuck in the cycle once more. Of course I tried new filters, new ways, but I wasn't strong enough. I was caught two more times via the good services of covenant eyes (i hate that organization more than anything in the world but they will likely have a tremendous hand in saving my life). And after being caught the second time I decided to begin again in earnest. Reading and posting daily on the forum has been huge for me. All my devices are currently filtered bh. Just tonight i put covenant eyes on my wife phone (hope she doesn't mind!) so it would no longer be a temptation. And I am looking forward to my freedom, one day at a time.

That's my little story (IN SHORT!). Again, every relationship is different so I have no clue if telling is the right thing - you have to know your wife, your marriage, how invested she is, what her nature is, how naive she is, etc etc etc etc etc. But for me, it was a game changer and makes it a heck of a lot easier.

Anyway, that's enough out of me (for now.) I bless you with strength and courage. GYE is saving lives, and I hope you and I will be counted among them.

Shabbat shalom

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Re: My Journey Starts Today

Posted by AnonyJew - 30 Aug 2020 12:41

Hi Trapped (soon to be "Freed"),

I want to say first of all I really appreciate your post. I haven't been on GYE in some time now so I only saw it just now but I really do appreciate the time you put in to the post and sharing your experience with me. I'm going to post another update to my progress in a moment but I have to say it is truly inspiring to read your story.

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Re: My Journey Starts Today

Posted by AnonyJew - 30 Aug 2020 13:17

Hello GYE Heroes!

I wanted to share an update with all of you on my progress.

I've been going to therapy for a few weeks now working on dealing with anxiety, anger, communication, etc. All of those are really just different issues I'm working on that are related to my ultimate struggle - porn addiction.

Over the past month or so I've been struggling more and more. I tried to make a *peshara*, a compromise, and give in to the *yetzer harah* by "agreeing" to masturbate when I can't control the urge but to set a line not to watch porn. This ultimately resulted in an even worse situation. The added fuel to the fire of lust just exasperated the situation causing me to have even more urges. Besides that, I ended up discovering other forms of stimulation online that were even more shameful. Obviously I ended up back into porn and then just struggling.

I couldn't take the shame and the sense of being a hypocrite. I found these feelings eating at my desire to do mitzvot. I was rarely showing up to Davening. My learning was decreasing more and more by the day. I missed putting on tefillin. My relationship with my family started to suffer. I was more anxious, more irritable and always feeling stressed out.

?Granted, there were other issues in my life that were causing stress but because I felt like I was living this double life it has been a thousand times more stressful. I just couldn't take it anymore.

I got into a huge argument with my wife over stupid stuff and told her I was considering a divorce. We reconciled and things were ok for a few days until *?erev shabbos?*. We again had a huge argument. This time she left. We argued over WhatsApp for some time and I honestly felt hopeless. I had given up the will to fight. I found myself not only feeling like giving up on my marriage (which would entail potentially losing my kids and definitely losing at least part of the time with them) but I was giving up on myself. I started feeling like just not keeping Shabbos anymore. I was questioning whether I even still believe in Hashem.

How could I say I believe in Hashem when every action I'm taking is in opposition to everything I know of Him?

My wife came home just before *shabbos*. We didn't argue. We agreed to put the kids down for bed and talk about it after.

That evening, when we should have been saying kiddush, we instead sat on the couch to have a conversation. I sat there and just listened to her tell me everything she was upset about for what felt like hours. I literally shut my mouth the entire time. It was excruciating. Almost everything she said felt like an attack on me and it took a tremendous amount of self-control not to respond and to just listen. (Special thanks to my therapist for pointing out that you don't need to defend yourself, just listen and empathize).

Finally I felt I had heard all she had to tell and I started to share with her about the frustrations I was facing and my fears - finances, employment, our marriage, raising our kids, my spiritual doubts - and she listened. It was weird but somewhere in our venting to each other and arguing it seems something clicked. I guess I didn't realize how much stress and frustration she was dealing with and vice versa. It probably has a lot to do with my inability to communicate and my fear of having another fight with her.

This went on for some time until eventually we were at a breaking point. She could tell there

was more I wanted to say but I was being reserved. The real problem I wanted so badly to share with her was my struggle with porn. There is nothing in my life I am more ashamed of. The shame of bearing this secret was weighing on me more than all of the problems I told her about. Finally I gave in.

After asking her several times if she really would love me no matter what and all kinds of lines like that I told her. I told her I had been struggling with something that nobody knows about. That there is something I have been dealing with since I was roughly 8 years old. That I'm so ashamed. Before I could even get the words out her face changed from concern and worry to a kind puzzled look. She asked "What is it? Are you watching porn?" I couldn't believe it. I admitted to it and told her that it was an issue I've been dealing with my whole life and I didn't know how to get over it. Surprisingly she was so supportive and told me I don't need to apologize and she wasn't angry at all. She asked me if I was looking at porn of someone I knew. I haven't been so I was able to honestly tell her no. She said if that's the case she didn't care. She said she is upset that I kept it from her and was hiding it but that she understands why and is there for me.

I poured my heart out and told her everything. I told her that I've been working with my therapist to deal with it and that I want to stop watching porn altogether. I spoke to her about filters and she agreed to look at filters with me and help me. She told me if I ever feel an urge to just tell her and she would help me through it.

I am still in the shock of it all. I want to tell everyone here who is going through similar questions of whether to come clean or not about it that for me it has been the greatest thing ever. Following our conversation I have never felt so free. It is as if this deep dark secret has just floated away. The weight I've been carrying around of the *real me* is gone. The shame, guilt and everything else is gone. Now I'm just a guy with a *yetzer harah* and I'm working on *shechting* it.

My relationship with my wife following this conversation has been incredible. I know it hasn't been long and it is possible this will all wear off but for now I find myself looking for things to make her happy all the time now. I'm not doing it because I want something from her it just because I'm in love with her (again). My Davening this Shabbos was the best Davening it has ever been. I'm not sure if I even remember how to say this with 100% honesty but for the first time I feel like I can say "I am happy".

This addiction and the journey to overcome it may very well be the greatest thing to ever happen to me. Thank you Hashem for giving me this addition. Thank You Hashem for helping me through it. Thank you to the GYE Heroes who have encouraged, inspired and supported

me. If not for you I would never have gone in to therapy. I would never have pushed myself more and more to deal with my real issues. I would never have told me wife and not just saved my marriage but made something so much more. I am grateful to everyone here.

I am 4 days in now to my new 90 day challenge but this time I am not just saying that I will be clean. This time I really believe it.

Hatzlacha! Hope to be back soon with another update in the near future!

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Re: My Journey Starts Today
Posted by Markz - 30 Aug 2020 14:12

Amazing!!! thanks for sharing.

Glad to hear your Ploka Dance ended positively - see more about it from Sue Johnson at <https://guardyoureyes.com/forum/17-Balei-Battims-Forum/275640-Re-Pnimius-HaZivvug#275640>

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Re: My Journey Starts Today
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 01 Sep 2020 23:56

You are a real hero! And you are fortunate to have a wise and understanding wife. The relief you feel from coming out with this in the open is incredible. Keep the good news coming. Ask your wife to really make your home and office safe.

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Re: My Journey Starts Today
Posted by Dave M - 02 Sep 2020 00:16

That is one incredible story. I am so happy for you and am emotional as I write these words. I hope GYE put your post on the front page of GYE.

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Re: My Journey Starts Today

Posted by Keseretein - 27 Sep 2020 03:17

WOW! I'm so happy for you:grinning:! Keep working at it - as you see even though you had some pretty low points you eventually got WAAAYY UUPP. Remember that by future challenges (The Yetzer Harah never rests...). Bright HIGHS are around the corner! Don't give up!

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Re: My Journey Starts Today

Posted by AnonyJew - 09 Nov 2020 11:56

Hey everyone, just a long overdue update. I'm 40 days clean now. The filter has been a huge help and being open with my wife has also been incredible. I still experience a few struggles here and there.

?Baruch HaShem I haven't gone into any pornographic sites or the like. But now I'm realizing how much of a nisayon social media was without a filter.

Technically I still have access to social media but knowing that I may have to give an accounting for any random screenshot makes me think twice before looking at anything approaching inappropriate. Now and then a photo or video come up and I spend a few seconds more on it than I would like to. It is very hard when for so long every woman was a gateway into the inappropriate journeys that led to pornography and shichvas zero lashav. I am finding now that with time and retraining myself not to look that it is becoming easier. Don't get me wrong, I'm not there yet. I still experience the beginnings of being triggered when I see some of these photos and posts but now b"H I have built up enough control that most of the time I can just close the app or move on without allowing myself to dwell on those thoughts allowing me to escape before I get caught in them.

Besides the triggers, anxiety and stress was also a big part of thee problem for me. I used pornography as an escape. During my current run I have only experienced a true struggle due to anxiety twice. Thankfully I have continued to move ahead.

On the good side I can say I feel much better about myself. My davening is improving and my learning is lightyears ahead of what it was. I am much more likely to be part of minyan now and I have been learning consistently and well. My relationship with my wife has improved although it's still rocky at times. I do find that I am more likely to try to help her.

?Anyways I gotta run but that's just an update. Keep it up everyone! Thanks for the support.

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Re: My Journey Starts Today

Posted by Grant400 - 09 Nov 2020 14:32

Thanx for the update! Bh! I'm so happy for you. I will daven that you should have continued success forever.

Just a quick question. I know you don't want to hear this, but why do you use social media? For work?

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Re: My Journey Starts Today

Posted by YeshivaGuy - 14 Dec 2020 21:26

How u been buddy?

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