

I'm new, and a little confused

Posted by mrtonyb - 14 Sep 2022 17:57

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Hi all. This is my third week on GYE, but my first post.

First, a little about myself.

I am in my 30s, happily married. I struggled in high school with thinking for myself. I basically believed whatever my peers believed. So when there was a lot of porn and masturbation going on in my yeshiva, with people talking about it openly, I got involved. I knew it was wrong, but I didn't really care. Everyone was doing it...

My first year in Beis Medrash, (in a different yeshiva, thank G-d) I quickly realized that this wasn't something that people there were involved in, and I stopped discussing inappropriate topics (cold turkey, and successfully), I cut back on porn (with probably 98% success, rarely had any easy access and I wasn't searching for it), and I started a years long struggle with masturbation.

In the last 8 years, I have basically won that battle. I did have a few falls (less than 20, and in the last 3 yrs, only 3 falls); they were all at times of emotional turmoil and extreme stress (falls could be P&M or either of the 2). On a day to day basis, I really have no desire for porn and its very rare that I actually have to hold back from masturbation.

So... Why am I here? (That's actually my question, but I'll come back to that)

I am here because I do want to improve in 2 areas. The first is shmiras einayim, that I can walk down the street and keep my eyes turned down or up, but not towards women. I don't want to have that quick "second glance" that I just can't seem to stop. And the second is fantasies. I sometimes (maybe 3 days a month) have a day that I my mind keeps inventing sexual fantasies. They are distracting, and probably not good for my personal growth and closeness to Hashem.

Since I've been here, almost everything has been about a lust addiction. And i frankly don't feel like I'm addicted. Maybe I'm in denial, and you'll help me see the truth so I can start my journey to recovery. But unless that happens, I feel like I'm in the wrong place.

Is there any support or help I can get from GYE if my problem isn't one of addiction? If all I want to do is improve my mastery over what is well known to be a very common, crafty and strong yetzer hara? Or did I come to the wrong place?

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused

Posted by DavidT - 14 Sep 2022 18:12

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Hi and welcome to GYE!

You've come to the right place.

First of all congratulations on your great victories and it sounds like you're really trying to do what's right and you'll get there with the help of Hashem.

Some people find that they can learn to control their roaming eyes in the street if they are mekabel on themselves a small knas every time they take a "second look" or gaze at something they shouldn't for more than 3 seconds. Some people give a "dollar" to tzedaka each time. Others give themselves a pinch or they keep a rubber-band on their hand and snap it hard for each wrong look.

Here are some Suggestions of what not to do when fantasies intrude on your thoughts:

Don't get upset – While the Torah encourages us to avoid purposely fantasizing, it recognizes that experiencing fantasies and daydreams is part of being human, "Sinful thoughts are among the three sins which no man escapes for a single day" (Bava Basra 164b). Even though you have sexual fantasies, you should be proud that you struggle with them rather than blindly indulging in them.

Accept rather than suppress these thoughts. Pushing sexual fantasies out of your mind won't work because it perpetuates the pink elephant problem. In other words, when you tell yourself not to think about pink elephants, you'll find that you only think about pink elephants! Research demonstrates that trying hard to suppress specific thoughts means that they're more likely to dominate your thinking.

So what can you do? The best way to deal with such thoughts and fantasies is to try to ignore them, tend to more important matters, or shift your focus to something else. This idea is known as hesech hadaas in Hebrew.

Defuse – Accept that you're having these thoughts. The ACT technique of unhooking the thought by saying to yourself, "Okay, I'm having these thoughts. They'll soon go away on their own; I don't need to push them out of my head". Then shift your focus to whatever you need to attend to in the present moment.

Focused distraction. Redirect your attention to a specific object or activity. As it's difficult for the mind to think about more than one thing at a time, thinking about something different will immediately pull your mind away from sexual thoughts and fantasies.

Whenever you apply hesech hadaas, you accomplish the great Mitzvah. Remind yourself that rather than getting upset about the thought, you can celebrate it as an opportunity to do a mitzvah!

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by Vehkam - 14 Sep 2022 20:29

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Hi. Please consider reading the battle of the generation. I read a chapter each night and have found it to be extremely helpful. It is available on Amazon for around \$10. or if you send me a pm I can possibly get you a copy for free.

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by ?????? ?????? - 15 Sep 2022 00:22

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Welcome!

I think your in the right place, not everyone here is addicted and not everyone here struggles with internet use in regards to shemirat einayim. You are on a higher madreiga than me, but I'll direct you to read this book called zot briti which is available as a free e-book for the hebrew version here [guardyoureyes.com/ebooks/item/zos-brisi](http://guardyoureyes.com/ebooks/item/zos-brisi). There's also an english version and the book bears approbation from Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Rav Shmuel Wosner, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, Rav Malkiel Kotler and Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz. It's focused on maintaining our purity in thought, word and action. And here's a general link to a list of e-books on GYE that may help: [guardyoureyes.com/ebooks/category/halacha-3](http://guardyoureyes.com/ebooks/category/halacha-3)

Wishing you much hatzalacha!

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by Captain - 15 Sep 2022 00:22

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Welcome!

I agree. Check out The Battle of the Generation. You can buy on Amazon, or see my signature below for a link to the PDF.

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by YeshivaGuy - 20 Sep 2022 02:12

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So all you "want to do is improve my mastery over what is well known to be a very common, crafty and strong yetzer hara"?

Then yup this is it!

It's unfortunate that many in our community think GYE is only for addicts. There's this picture of a guy who spends all day long in a dark basement with his wife crying upstairs...

But ya it's for everyone.

So my brother, what steps have you taken so far?

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by mrtonyb - 21 Sep 2022 15:01

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Thank you DavidT for your suggestions.

I generally struggle with fantasies much more during the times that my wife's asur times, which is starting up now, so I'll have to try your ideas. I've basically been trying hesech hadaas for years, but I like what you wrote in the next paragraph: "The ACT technique of unhooking the thought by saying to yourself, "Okay, I'm having these thoughts. They'll soon go away on their own; I don't need to push them out of my head". Then shift your focus to whatever you need to

attend to in the present moment." Distracting yourself while pushing the thoughts out is harder than distracting yourself while letting the thoughts go away on their own. I'll have to give that technique a good couple of weeks of trying.

In terms of controlling my eyes, I am unsure how much of it is tayva related, and how much is "naturally curious eyes". I struggle very much with all kinds of things I know I shouldn't be looking at, and most of them have nothing to do with lust. Examples include looking at other people's phone screens to see their texts (or bank account balance!), looking at people who look different from what I'm used to (missing limbs, extreme obesity, facial scars, and more subtle things like watching how people with limited dexterity in their arms or hands do tasks that are simple for me) and watching how other people parent their children. All these things are socially unacceptable, can definitely lead to people feeling uncomfortable or hurt, and might even be assur, but are not driven by lust. So when I see a woman whose clothing is exposing too much, and I look, it's very easy for me to defend myself that I'm just curious, same as when I see anything else that makes me look twice. And my defense probably is actually true some of the time, and definitely partly true most of the time. I don't feel that "punishing" myself for something which is wrong, but not motivated by something wrong, is beneficial to growth.

I am here to be helped, so if you disagree with me, let me know!

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by mrtonyb - 21 Sep 2022 15:16

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You are on a higher madreiga than me

This might just be semantics, so feel free to ignore...

I take issue with comparing madreigos. I might currently be more successful than you at "doing the right thing" when it comes to certain things (at least based on your allegation that I'm on a higher madreiga), but our struggles can't be compared. Neither of us knows the strength of anyone else's yeitzer hara, or the natural will power we have before we start our journey of growth. I appreciate the chizzuk I inevitably feel when someone praises my "madreiga", but I also feel an incredible respect towards the members of this community who are here, fighting an incredibly powerful enemy, losing battles, and coming back stronger for the next battle! Seeing the amazing effort put in by people who wish they could be living their lives without this challenge, but still come back to GYE again and again, to help themselves and to help others with similar struggles, is the biggest chizzuk I get.

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by mrtonyb - 21 Sep 2022 15:42

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It's unfortunate that many in our community think GYE is only for addicts. There's this picture of a guy who spends all day long in a dark basement with his wife crying upstairs...

I actually joined because I thought GYE was for everyone. It was after joining that I got that impression. Except it wasn't an impression of a guy who spends all day in a dark basement with his wife crying upstairs, it was an impression of a person who just wants to "be better", a person dealing with tremendous shame and fear while battling an addiction that leaves them lonely and emotionally drained. It was an impression of a hidden Tzaddik who feels like a hidden rasha, a giant who is terrified of people discovering his secrets and "realizing he's not so good", but doesn't appreciate that his battle actually makes him twice the man other people see.

That person isn't me. I am a "regular" guy who usually does the right thing, sometimes does the wrong thing, but gets back up to try again. I have worked on improving my middos, I have worked on following halacha better, and I have more work to do. I feel good about myself and my growth over the years, and I thank Hashem for making it easy for me to grow. B"H, I've never had to deal with addiction, abuse, mental illness, extreme poverty, instability in my home, health struggles or many of the other things that make everyday life so hard for many people.

So my brother, what steps have you taken so far?

So far, I've done the first 3 weeks of the Flight to Freedom. I stalled on week three, because I couldn't track my urges when I wasn't having urges.... But I did get the very strong impression that Flight to Freedom is for addicts.

I have avoided P&M for quite a while, although I have no idea how long. I started tracking when I joined GYE, but it's been much much longer.

I've been more aware of when I look where I shouldn't, because joining GYE has given me more awareness and consciousness of that. (GYE is worth it for me just for that!) I have not been more successful at not looking, though.

I have not taken advantage of the reading material that was suggested to me by ?????  
????? and Vehkam. That is my next step.

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by DavidT - 21 Sep 2022 16:53

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[mrtonyb wrote on 21 Sep 2022 15:01:](#)

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I am here to be helped, so if you disagree with me, let me know!

First of all it's very common that people struggle at the time when the wife's asur. It's very important to be prepared beforehand which can help for that period of time.

You wrote: *"it's very easy for me to defend myself that I'm just curious"*

We have extraordinary ability to rationalize. We must be on our guard that we do not delude ourselves.

The Rambam warns that promiscuity begins with gazing at women who are forbidden to you. Even though a man may rationalize that he is above such behavior, the Rambam informs him that self-control must start at the beginning. Controlling our eyes from looking at women is the most powerful preventative . *Like a loving parent who sets limits on his children for their own safety, the Torah instructs us not to look at women for our own spiritual and physical well-being.*

**Keep up your good work and progress!**

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Re: I'm new, and a little confused  
Posted by Vehkam - 21 Sep 2022 20:03

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[mrtonyb wrote on 21 Sep 2022 15:16:](#)

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Very important idea. Thank you for expressing it so well.

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