

My Story, Being Honest For Once

Posted by ilovehashem247 - 22 Sep 2022 01:20

Hello, Friends.

My name is iLoveHashem247. I am a married man with a supportive wife and three wonderful kids. Looking at my life from an outsider's perspective, you'd think I have it all. I own a renovated home on my own private road with lots of land, run my own business with which i support myself, am fortunate to be able to learn many more hours a week than i work, and am a popular and recognized member of my community - and I'm not yet 30 years old. But all this comes with a price tag - a lifelong struggle with addiction, mostly with marijuana and risky sexual encounters.

I had girlfriends in high school before becoming BT, and had shmirat habit challenges, like most teens. I struggled with SB and engaging in sexual activities at massage parlors but was able to be clean for at least 6 months before marriage. during my wife's pregnancy with our second child, i unfortunately reverted back to my pre-BT habit of recreational marijuana during the stress of a second pregnancy (the first one outside of the shana rishona "infatuation zone"), which in turn let down a rabbit hole of other issues... i had recently been visiting massage parlors, not for the sexual experience (i do not engage in any "happy endings" anymore, rather when i do succumb it is for the exhibitionism that i can indulge in without making a massive chillul Hashem). I am also very disappointed to admit that i had a sexual encounter with a shiksa who picked up a business card i had left at a restaurant i ate in, she sent me lewd photos and we met up one time (sept 12, '22) where she performed oral sex on me.

I am struggling to break out of these addictive patterns - i have recently filtered my home office desktop, my work laptop, and my smartphone i use to run my business (main issue was watching movies and free "live cams"). The crazy thing is that i am a person who has made such amazing changes in my life - in many ways, I am the kind of person i look up to and always wanted to become - but it is the sticky residue of my past life that I'm having such a hard time getting rid of.

I am sick of who I've secretly become and the double life i am living.

I want to be fair to myself, honest and equitable with my wife, and and terrified of the shame i will face when standing before my Creator on my day of judgement.

Well, that was deeply revealing and I have revealed to you, fellow strangers, that which i have not even revealed to my wife. To be fair though, i have been fully open with her regarding the guarding of eyes and marijuana addictions, but have never ever discussed the massage parlor or infidelity.

HELP!

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by ??? ????? ???? ??? - 02 Oct 2022 04:57

[frank.lee wrote on 01 Oct 2022 23:20:](#)

You're asking why you (used to) keep going back to these places. It sounds to me like an addiction, something your body and mind is wired to do from past behavior. Not something rational, like you are subconsciously running away from something.

I am not a therapist but as Vehkam mentioned, you should definitely consider one, to assist you with tools to rewire your head and body, and help you be the best person you can be, and you want to be!

I agree with @frank.lee and @Vekham.

I also want to echo the pushback from @Trouble. I think it is a good thing that you can report a "newfound inner strength," but I think that the consensus around here is that "inner strength" is helpful, but not sufficient. I am skeptical of "MZ'L is a line I simply cannot cross because then turning back is going to be much MUCH MUCH harder." What assures you that even on your worst of days you will go in simply for the "soft touch?"

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once

Posted by frank.lee - 03 Oct 2022 00:41

The point spelled out on posts here, some in the letters with Rabbi Twersky, is that an addiction is not something that can simply be stopped with enough willpower and good intention...

With the help of the amazing people here, and with your honesty and caring, you are on a path to success BSD!

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by iLoveHashem247 - 03 Oct 2022 05:26

Hello everyone,

I've been looking forward to responding, and appreciate everyone's comments - yes, *everyone's!*

So, for the update:

I've been thinking of starting to reach out and explore the options of a therapist - on the one hand, a true professional will be able to offer support and guidance beyond what I can give myself, on the other hand I have been very open with my wife and have been opening up to a close friend about my struggle. Not yet about the parlors, but maybe calling up one (or both) in a moment of struggle and telling them that I'm struggling may be enough to help keep me out of trouble.

I'm trying to absorb all of the new information i've been reading and hearing over phone calls, and even getting in emails. It's a lot to take in BH, and i'm trying to take it all in without being flooded and drowned...

I will admit that i recognize that I have an addictive personality, but i am not quite so sure what to do about that at this point.

I want to do the right thing, but what if my attempts to do the right thing lead me down a path that will only make things worse for me? Each step on the wrong path is two steps away from where i want to be going...

I sometimes feel so **blah**, i don't want to keep on fighting but then i remind myself that the whole point of this is to get out of the blah-ness so i must continue fighting this fight.

I know that Hashem is orchestrating this whole big picture, but I am such a small pixel in just a single half-frame of G-d's film of "humanity" , it's hard to find my place and mission in this world. I know and trust and believe and experience with every fiber of my being that Hashem only does good and that He is the Ultimate Giver of good, but blahhhhhh it's sometimes just so hard to stay focused!

I am getting nervous of the changing seasons, as the changing weather has historically been a trigger for me to relapse into marijuana use even if I've been clean. As much as in my brain i do not want to go back to it, there is really something soothing about a skinny little joint and a huge steaming cappuccino at 6am watching the sun rise through the woods in the backyard. The problem is that the little baby joints get fatter and fatter, and then there's one before and after every minyan and then all yokes are released and my life and the lives of those depending on me just float away from all semblance of order and structure. I guess i'll just stick to the cozy scarves and cardigans and warm air blowing on my feet when I'm driving.

This summer was the first one in years where i was clean from smoking weed. I actually found a huge bag of high quality material while out boating with a friend this summer, and dumped the whole thing in the water - i actually said "no way" out loud to my YH before dumping it. That was a big win, and it carried me through the entire summer... but man, those winter nights are so long and there's a filter on my work phone, and i can't watch any movies, and I threw out all my goyish novels.... Maybe I'll finally do another siyum with all that extra free time i now have.

So yes, willpower and determination is not enough, but is a supportive spouse and a close

friend and confidante enough? or therapy? If so, how much therapy and with whom?

but wait, there's more!

A few more thoughts to spill out through my fingers - one of the "escapes" i was using to avoid drug use was late night snacking. I must have gained 10 pounds this summer, which is a BIG deal (pun intended). I feel more sluggish and fat and gross, and my pants don't fit me... I started exercising with my wife yesterday (she found a male trainer fitness video for my shmirat enayim - what a woman!) and i was so embarrassed to call it quits after 12 minutes while she kept on going for almost an hour. This is for sure a part of the "blah-ness." When we first got married I was the buff and fit one, now my belly looks like there's a food baby growing inside....

An idea i've been really focusing in on is something i once heard from Gedale Fenster. "we have winning days and learning days." Some days, we have clear wins - whether it is overcoming the YH, not succumbing to my wife's anxiety/panic attack on a friday afternoon, or Hashem blessing us with a nice sale when we really were short on funds. But other days kind of suck, and the main point of that day is to figure out what we can learn from them.

So what I will learn out from today, this most wonderfully blah-full kind of day, is that even when i feel like shnitz & even when tuition, mortgage, credit card & vendors all gotta get paid yesterday, & even if wife is nervous because of this or that or the other... resisting the "call of the void" & not throwing away all i worked so hard for - even if it's just for 5 minutes, and then another 5 minutes, and then another 5 minutes until the whole day has passed - if that's not a win, then i don't know what is.

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by iLoveHashem247 - 04 Oct 2022 18:55

so i went to my first SA meeting last night.

Met lots of bnei aliyah.

Thoughts processing, more to follow.

gmar chatimah tova!

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by Vehkam - 04 Oct 2022 19:21

[iLoveHashem247 wrote on 04 Oct 2022 18:55:](#)

so i went to my first SA meeting last night.

Met lots of bnei aliyah.

Thoughts processing, more to follow.

gmar chatimah tova!

amazing! what a way to go into yom kippur. i am truly inspired.

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by iLoveHashem247 - 06 Oct 2022 01:17

What a wonderful Yom Kippur

meaningful tefillot

lots of perspective

so much of my suffering was because of my self centered perspective and taking from those closest to me to satisfy my wants without recognizing others' needs.

Giving is more fulfilling and recognizing the issues I must deal with and the focus on others in relationships makes all the difference

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by iLoveHashem247 - 06 Oct 2022 13:25

At what point and how does one recognize whether to get a therapist, go (or continue to go to) SA, or do something else?

how does a person approach their Rav about this topic?

I'm at a crossroads now and a bit unsure of what to do next.

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by frank.lee - 06 Oct 2022 14:46

If you can go to a therapist, why not do that?

If you started SA, do you have a reason to stop?

About speaking to a Rav, do you have a Rav who you speak to, who knows you or who you want to know you? You can assume that every shul/community Rav has experience talking to people about this issue, and even if your situation is unique, he can help you.

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by frank.lee - 06 Oct 2022 14:50

Also, a therapist can help you with tools to assist you in changing your life, as well as listening and helping you understand yourself and your actions better.

And you may be surprised how much insight a Rav can have in all areas of life, gleaned from years of experience helping all sorts of people in all situations.

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by wilnevergiveup - 06 Oct 2022 15:28

[iLoveHashem247 wrote on 06 Oct 2022 13:25:](#)

At what point and how does one recognize whether to get a therapist, go (or continue to go to) SA, or do something else?

how does a person approach their Rav about this topic?

I'm at a crossroads now and a bit unsure of what to do next.

Reliefhelp.org can help on the therapy front and @Dov can help on the SA front. Try contacting them.

As far as the Rav, it doesn't have to be from a place of I'm a bad person, but rather from a place of being stuck and needing help.

You can think of it as a sickness that you need help to heal from instead of an aveira that makes you into a horrible person.

As an aside, I wonder what's worse, being *motzei zera l'vatala* and whatever else, or going to a massage parlor but being shomer habris? What bris are you being shomer anyways? The one with your wife? The one with G-d? The bris Milah (a symbol of the covenant with G-d)?

What is it about *motzei zera l'vatala* that makes you think that it is that bad that it's worse than an outright prohibition in the Torah?

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by chancy - 06 Oct 2022 17:21

Hi I love Hashem247!

First of all, We are all free of sin today! that is a fact! Some tsadikim said that the reason we say "Slach Loni" right after yom kippur is because maybe we didn't totally believe that yom kippur forgives and we need to ask forgiveness for having that thought! So first lets appreciate that for a minute.

Secondly, it seems that you and me have similar mindsets and thought patterns. I can see myself in the way that you express yourself. I think that you are overthinking your addictions to the next level to no avail, addictions are not rational and therefore can not be explained or reasoned into oblivion. I agree that you need to get to know yourself better but that's because you need to find the underlying thing that's bothering you, and that is not the addiction! As the saying from Rabbi Twersky ZT"L goes "Addiction is not the problem, its the solution" you have some void in your mind/life and you are trying to fill it, that's why you wrote the whole rundown in the beginning about how successful you are, and how much you learn and everything, you need to feel good about yourself and you are crushed that after everything you have archived and worked so hard and you are such a good person and yid, yet you are STILL failing! and that is killing you. (I might be totally off, but thats what i think). I would highly recommend that you take the F2F course, it will take a few weeks but you will be so much clearer and i think that will point you in the right direction to know where you should focus on.

If I am completely off course, sorry.

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by ??? ????? ????? ??? - 07 Oct 2022 02:45

[frank.lee wrote on 06 Oct 2022 14:46:](#)

If you can go to a therapist, why not do that?

If you started SA, do you have a reason to stop?

About speaking to a Rav, do you have a Rav who you speak to, who knows you or who you want to know you? You can assume that every shul/community Rav has experience talking to people about this issue, and even if your situation is unique, he can help you.

I agree with @frank.lee about therapy and SA. You have shared that you have a specific struggle. If you have access to help, take it!

I'm not sure that you can assume that all shul/community Rabbonim have experience talking to people about sex or pornography addiction, but I think you can assume that all shul/community Rabbonim are aware of this issue and have experience talking to people about issues of various sorts (even if not this one in particular). I suggest determining what it is that you want to get out of your session with the rabbi. Is it a confessional of sorts? Admit to the rabbi what you have done wrong to get it off your chest? Are you looking for encouragement or a *bracha*? Are you looking for validation? Hear from the rabbi that you are still a great person despite your struggles with massage parlor visits? Are you looking for advice? Are you looking for support? Are you looking for something else?

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once
Posted by Dov - 07 Oct 2022 14:17

You're in a great spot, bH. I emailed you my info. If you wish you can call. All I do is help ppl

clarify what's best for them. Many people here are not addicts, bH, and do not need 12 step recovery groups - some are appropriate for that. Your call. I'm always happy to discuss all options openly.

Dov

Warning: Spoiler!

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Re: My Story, Being Honest For Once

Posted by iLoveHashem247 - 13 Oct 2022 01:30

I've been doing a lot of thinking... following up on some comments and adding in some new thoughts. Also been taking the time to focus on learning even more than before and pushing my limits in my learning especially on shabbat and YT... exerting the mental energy into learning leaves less room for other things...

re. frank.lee - Before i start anything new, i want to make sure i am taking full advantage of the resources available to me. BH I have a very supportive wife (I'm trying to focus on the fact that she is unusually supportive and that i should be so grateful) and a new mentor (/friend) who has been giving me excellent advice and support. I will be visiting this mentor with my wife after YT to discuss next steps, especially whether SA is relevant to me or not. BH I have a lot of experience in changing myself and my lifestyle and am not sure whether guidance in the right direct is the best move or therapy. Thinking things out and reflecting upon my thoughts with my wife and mentor have made a massive positive change in my life this past month.

I realized something during second day of YT after reading through Charlie Harary's "Unlocking Greatness." He writes that every addiction is caused by a certain pain/unresolved challenge in a person's life. So there were two "addictive behaviours" to focus on: 1. the need to engage in sex with my wife on as close to as daily as possible, and when that is not possible or when

especially overwhelmed with stresses, resorting to getting the physical touch from massage parlors. 2. the drag to consume marijuana.

i realized that behavior #1 was very much helped (too early in the process to say "resolved") by HHM's guidance on emotional intimacy with one's wife and how to improve the relationship / change the focus of the relationship. This is something i am actively working on with my wife and my mentor.

Behavior/desire #2 seems to pull at me more when i am experiencing physical discomfort or pain. I think that this needs to be approached with a game plan on how to increase my resilience - need to ruminate on that thought though, let's see where this direction will take me...

Re. a rav, there is someone local i will be reaching out to in after bein hazmanim once we are all back in town / in yeshiva.

willnevergiveup, thank you for the resources! Will explore them further after meeting with wife nd metor to decide on best direction moving forward. What you wrote really makes me think

("As an aside, I wonder what's worse, being *motzei zera l'vatala* and whatever else, or going to a massage parlor but being shomer habris? What bris are you being shomer anyways? The one with your wife? The one with G-d? The bris Milah (a symbol of the covenant with G-d)?"

i was talking to my mentor about one of the things someone said at the one SA meeting i went to which i could not wrap my mind around. This person spoke about doing something that took it beyond the level of self indulgence and was already at the point where it was affecting multiple families. I say "can't wrap my mind around it" not because i am judging him unfavorably, rather because it was unfathomable and just was not possible for my heart to understand what my mind processed....my mentor told me that my goal is to have the same reaction to going to a massage parlor. and my answer to you is that it is hard for me to answer that. the sefarim talk about the klipot and mekatrgim that come from the zera that is spilled, but then again, what about the malachim created from my actions that will stand against me on the day of judgement? These are things that my mind understands, but have not yet penetrated the

heart... something to think about and work on along with everything else, in fact maybe more than everything else because i need to face the denial that what i had done was somewhat better in any way that doing it all the way...

Chancy, you are so on point and it is kind of scary...

??? ???? ???? ???, i agree that all resources available should be taken advantage of, but to what extent and in what order is to be determined, hopefully together with my wife and mentor in the next week or two BH. Re. speaking to a rav, i would first need to determine the best rav to speak to (as mentioned will broach the topic with a very chashuv local rav with whom i have a relationship - once yeshiva is back in session and we are all back in town). I believe that the primary thing i'd be looking to get out of sessions with a rav would be clarity on where i stand in this area in general, and guidance on best next steps on how to work on my struggles.

Dov, will BH be in touch pretty soon.

To wrap up, i must say that the amount of support has been incredible! GYE is such a great tool. The forum has so much great info, and now that i have some more push toward the F2F program, i'll definitely be looking into it more...so many resources and not nearly enough time! BH i guess that's what this is all about. One thing i do know is super important is not delaying on putting a stronger filter on my wife's work phone - the other day i slipped - not in pornography but in binge watching stupid youtube clips on their homepage for hours... i ended up in bed at 1:30 am and was exhausted the next day.

I have been feeling withdrawal from the dopamine cravings of videos, expeditions to massage parlors, news headlines, movies, random spotify secular music, etc... it's a big change in an area of my life that the public does not see, which i think makes it a bit harder, but i am pushing and fighting day by day... i have also been taking more time to be with the humans in my life and am trying to avoid making GYE yet another dopamine outlet.

it really helps to be able to vent to my wife in general and to my mentor friend with the specifics.

thanks so much to everyone who is helping along the way!

hope everyone has an amazing and uplifting remainder of their YT!

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