

My long journey

Posted by AZGaddict - 30 May 2023 22:13

Hi everyone,

I'm new around here. My journey seems to be somewhat different than most.

At the age of 16, before I became frum, I found a porn magazine in the local park, took it home, and tried out masturbation. The experience was exactly what it was supposed to be, and I went back for more, until I ended up with a full blown addiction. I didn't realize what that really meant at the time, but I did know that it was taking up more of my time than I wanted, and I started to get uncontrollable urges, an urgent feeling in my stomach that I had to take care of it.

At the age of 18, I was convinced to go to yeshiva, and ended up in Yerushalayim. I masturbated my way through that time, and even though I tried to stop, I failed over and over again. I think back and try to imagine how I was able to go into the bathroom in yeshiva, knock one out, and then go to learn Torah.

During my second year there, I was introduced to my wife to be, through mutual friends. We got engaged and were married in 1998. I thought to myself that being married would be the end of my issue, and did end up controlling it for the first year and a half of my marriage, but alas, when I was in Kollel, I messed up again. It was like an old enemy was back. I didn't look at women or porn, and then get urges to do this, rather I got urges, and then had to find something to look at to relieve myself of the urge. The feeling of being a slave to this addiction was complete and utter hell. I was in a self perpetuating cycle of creating shame upon myself and that stress led me to abuse myself even more, over and over again. I have immense difficulty dealing with stress and confrontation, which were my main triggers. I was able to control myself during different "special times" in my life, and masturbate less, like during pregnancies or shabbos/yom tov, and transitions in life, but could never completely lose it.

My mother passed away 16 years ago, and during the shiva, I was in the bathroom, coping in the only way I knew how! My emotional shell was so thick, I didn't cry for my mother, I was acting like the strong one in the family, but the truth is that I put myself in a place that I couldn't feel or express it! I was broken!

The conversation about this kind of thing was non existent back then. The internet was in it's infancy and even though I spoke to a few people (rabbis/therapists), I managed to present it in a way of being a habit that was out of control, and the advice was usually benign and general.

My wife, who is the rock of my life, has always shown me so much love and attention. The problem is that I wasn't equipped to accept and appreciate it. In my mind, because I was hiding the darkest secrets, I wasn't able to reciprocate, so I pushed her away, and felt that she was being smothering! The guilt and shame that I imposed upon myself gave me a distorted reality

that I wasn't worthy of her love! THE IRONIC THING IS THAT I WAS PUSHING AWAY THE ONE THING THAT I WAS REALLY LOOKING FOR!!!!!! I didn't show her the affection that she so deserved. She is beautiful, righteous, loving and my rock, and I pushed her away.

Professionally, I am a very active community leader, teaching and doing other things, usually very loudly. After all, I had to make up for my inadequacies!

My children were also the other victims of my self abuse. I didn't spend time with them, or guide them properly. They love me, and I love them, but I don't have the relationship that I should be having with them.

Then came the ED! I wasn't able to be with my wife in the proper way. The years of self abuse, secrecy and guilt made my penis stop working properly! STRESS PILES ON STRESS AND BEGETS STRESS!

My wife suspected me over the years, but her intense love for me, combined with my smooth talking made me able to talk her down. At one point, she accused me of being gay! She told me that if I ever did anything like this, she would leave me! I was terrified!!! I couldn't be without her, certainly not because of my failure to be a husband and proper mate!! I kept this terrible secret to myself, and even though there were a few times I felt an immense desire to tell her, I chickened out and continued in my private world of pain and guilt.

5 years ago, my wife was pregnant with our 11th child, and we found out that there were significant genetic issues with the baby, and my wife became really sick . At some point in this pregnancy, I made another one of my "attempts" to stop my addiction, fully cognizant that it was probably to be a futile effort.

I don't know how this happened, but somehow, the One above had mercy on me, and the urges WENT AWAY!!!! I became free of this self imposed jail, and could now live a more full life. For the last 5 years of being clean, I have certainly accomplished more than before, but I still carried the guilt, shame and secrecy in my heart! My ED didn't just continue, but became more significant, with me losing sensitivity in my penis, and going floppy in the middle of relations. 3 months ago, on mikvah night, my penis failed again. We were talking about it afterwards, and my wife mentioned that she read a post on facebook about masturbation causing ED. She confronted me, and I made what was possibly the 2nd most difficult decision in my life..... I owned up to her, partially! With my heart and stomach in a tumult, I told her that I masturbated twice, 16 years ago, after my mother passed away, because I was confused and concerned about my ED issue, so I needed to check it was working!

This turned into HELL on earth!!! She broke down and became angry, depressed, denial (stages of grief in action!) We went to a couples therapist, who did calm things down, but didn't get to the bottom of the addiction, rather dealing with the relationship aspect. So my wife's trauma wasn't addressed. We went to another, better couple therapist, and I confided in him with regards to the real story. He said that he doesn't believe that the healing can happen without me being completely honest! I desperately wanted to be whole again, and get back to who I should be, both with her and with myself, but the prospect of possibly irretrievably losing her was killing me.

She went to the therapist for a solo session, and he told her that to be healed, things are going to get worse (he didn't break my confidence, just prepared her). She came back from the session, and told me that she needed to speak. Then she asked me..... "What am I hiding?".

My entire body went into shock, but I realized that it was time to make the MOST DIFFICULT decision of my life! I told her that I was an addict, and went on to explain the story. I had to explain that I had been living a double life of deceit for 20 years, and holding that secret for a further 5 years.

Since then, life has been a roller coaster of therapy, interrogations, ups and downs.

I have always loved my wife, and always wanted her in every way. She is a rock, righteous, beautiful and straightforward. She didn't deserve what I have subjected her to. I cannot fathom the hell I have put her through. Unbelievably she loves me and wants to stay. She has been going from attacking me and my entire being, to showing extreme affection, to showing loss and sadness. I have caused her to feel unloved, unattractive and insecure! What kind of a man does that!

Now I'm in my mid 40's and having abused myself for 20 years, I look back and can't relate to that person. All I have now is my guilt and the knowledge that I have destroyed everything good in my life. For the first time, I truly broke down and cried about my mother's death, because I began to learn how to show and express the loss and suffering. I have learned how to tell my wife how I feel about her, how she makes me feel. In the last few months, I have felt satisfaction with my wife like I never have. Through all the suffering I feel more alive and openly expressive to my wife and Hashem than I have for as long as I can remember. I have started learning and davening consistently, going to the mikvah more regularly and being a better husband!!! I am the luckiest SOB in existence! I have no words to express my appreciation and brochos that I have received!

I was davening a few weeks ago, and in my tears I saw and thought the following:

Tehillim 124

A song of ascents. Of David.

Were it not for the LORD, who was on our side, let Israel now declare, were it not for the LORD, who was on our side when men assailed us, they would have swallowed us alive in their burning rage against us;

the waters would have carried us off, the torrent would have swept over us; over us would have

swept the seething waters.

Blessed is the LORD, who did not let us be ripped apart by their teeth.

We are like a bird escaped from the fowler's trap; the trap broke and we escaped.

Our help is the name of the LORD, maker of heaven and earth.

Were it not for Hashem who was on our side when MEN assailed us - the usual understanding is that we need Hashem on our side when enemies rise against us. But I think that it is more than that. It's not the MAN from without we need protection from, but rather the man WITHIN us, meaning the human instinctual urges that assail us over and over again. We need Hashem to be with us, and without that, the challenge can seem insurmountable. Hashem can break our trap, and we can escape. I never went to any 12 step meetings, but the idea that I am powerless without the protection of the One above carries me through. The seething waters might take us, but we are not completely swept off.

I don't know what my journey will be from here on. The fear that my relationship with my wife is irreparably destroyed is constantly on my mind. The fear that even if she will stay with me, that I will live a shell of an existence, constantly being reminded for the rest of my days.

In my loneliness, I couldn't imagine that anyone lived a similar life as I have. On the GYE website, I don't see many people who went through this double life for so long or who were given freedom from it spontaneously as I have done. My challenge isn't to stop myself from doing this abominable act, but to try to repair the gaping holes in my life. I read the challenges that people on this site go through and feel the greatest pity for them and myself.

Has anyone had a similar journey? What do you do to continue? How do you cope with this?

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Re: My long journey

Posted by Foolie - 30 May 2023 22:33

Welcome aboard!

That said while I'm not married nearly as long you, nor did I carry a secret that I was sure my

wife would leave me over as long as you, I did carry one that I was sure she would leave me over because who would want to be married to a person with my secret. That said stick around maybe others have more similar stories to yours, and you'll find more than enough sympathetic ears to lend you support on your journey

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Re: My long journey

Posted by true_self - 30 May 2023 22:53

Welcome!

Here you wont need to feel lonely anymore, you will have many friend joining you along your journey of filling the gaps and repairing the damage.

I was holding my breath while reading your long journey,it sounds like a novel. Im sure that you have grown a lot along the way as well.

I cant relate to all parts of your story, but i can relate to the pain of living with a secret (although in my case it was only 6 years), you gotta get all that guilt out of your stomach, and you've started already, you are on the good path. start connecting with others here it helped me a lot to get rid of my toxic shame and guilt, (reach out to HHM if you didn't yet)

I can also relate to the feeling of causing a wife all that pain and suffering that she doesn't deserve.

There are no 2 people with the same exact story, but with a few friends together you will find that everyone can relate and give there 2 cents on a fraction of your journey.

Wishing you all the best

True self

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Re: My long journey

Posted by Eerie - 30 May 2023 23:45

Wow. That's a lot to absorb! What a story, and my friend, thank the Lord forever for the wife that you have, and tell her about it! We are happy to have you on board, and I'm sure you'll have plenty to add to the conversation. Keep posting...and trucking!

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Re: My long journey

Posted by chaimoigen - 31 May 2023 01:06

My Dear Friend, I have also just joined up here.

It's an incredible relief to be able to share what secretly burdens you with people who can feel some of your pain. We each have our story, and are walking this road together. You have a lot of pain. But I feel that you have a lot we can all learn from. Hang in there, hang on to Hashem, we are here to do this together!

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Re: My long journey

Posted by dovberyl - 31 May 2023 03:04

Welcome aboard! It was so sad to read your story, and beautiful to read your description of your wife, and scary to see the roller coaster you are going through. I feel for you.

I think many of us crave someone else going through exactly what we went through, and that is very understandable. However, part of the support GYE provides is that which comes from people walking separate, lonely, individual roads coming together to lend an ear to someone going through something different. People can go beyond their own struggles and hear out someone going through something a bit different.

Having said that, even though your story is unique to you, many people have gone through, or are going through, serious trust issues with their spouse, and it may be quite similar to what you

are experiencing. People can get depression ten different ways, and it is still the same diagnosis, and possibly the same treatment. Stick around.

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Re: My long journey

Posted by chaimoigen - 31 May 2023 11:03

It's so painful to read your story, chaver. I think that many of us relate to the heavy burden of guilt and secrecy, to the feeling of horror over inadequacies and over hurt that we have caused ??????? ??????.

I have also joined only recently. There's a big comfort in being able to share and talk.

Hang on. One of the aspects of the ??? ??????? is the that they overwhelm us with the terrible lie that the Yetzer foists on us to make us feel that damage done is irreparable, that theres no hope, that we are too damaged.

What has been built in Ruchniyos can never be lost.

It seems to me, from what you write, that you have accomplished great and wonderful Binyanim in Ruchniyos, and that you are an individual of true depth and great strength. You are more than your mistakes. I know too well some of the feelings you descibe, (if coming from other places). Please work on having more rachmanus for yourself - you deserve it. Hang on, hold on to the Rebono Shel Olam, keep moving forward. We are together here, keep in touch.

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Re: My long journey

Posted by AZGaddict - 13 Jun 2023 20:34

Appreciate the chizuk

Feeling quite down, trying to make up for years of self abuse and ruining relationships

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Re: My long journey

Posted by true_self - 13 Jun 2023 21:57

I'm sorry to hear that you are going through a hard time emotionally, we all know how it feels.

It's good to see that you are still here, we are here for you, do yourself a favor, and reach out to a friend or to HHM, Eerie etc., if you haven't yet.

"It's never too late. Don't focus on what was taken away. Find something to replace it, and acknowledge the blessing you have."

~ Drew Barrymore

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