

I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by tenstoriestall - 11 Sep 2023 09:56

I don't know what to do or where to go next.

TLDR: I have struggled with P and M addiction since I was very young. I have tried many solutions and made significant growth in my relationship with both addictions, however, I have been unable to completely rid myself of either. I don't know where to go now, but I am looking for solutions and seeking G-d's guidance.

My Story: I discovered P when I was young (11-12) through DVDs and Magazines in my house. It was how I learned about sex and where I have built my relationship with the subject over the next 17 years of my life. From that first exposure I started seeking P wherever I could find it. I searched my home, friends' homes, the internet, and stole from libraries and retail stores. I was hooked and nothing satisfied the need to consume more. Multiple times I was caught, even then the shame and guilt was never enough to keep me from returning. I grew up religious and constantly struggled with my faith due to the guilt placed on M and P. I could not find a pathway to free myself from lust and so I could not understand how G-d had given me a challenge I seemingly could not overcome. I still struggle with this today, however, I am more confident than ever that there will be freedom. As a teenager and then young adult I had a few relationships that turned physical, P was always still an unbreakable habit, even while I was in committed and physically active relationships.

When I was in my 20's I left faith and allowed myself to be consumed by the secular world and my habits. I fully gave into P and M believing that I was unable to fight my urges and that it was "not harmful" as the secular world likes to claim. I am now part of a community, I daven 3 times a day normally with a minyan, I learn as often as I am able, and I love Hashem. I have not found freedom yet. I understand that Hashem gives us challenges in life that we are able to overcome, that each sin we have is a vessel that can be transformed and filled with His goodness. I understand that He loves me, forgives me, and seeks my good in all things—before, during, and after the moment when I am weak. However, I am done, I am sick of struggling, fighting, and failing time and time again. I am frustrated with how weak I feel. Discouraged and hurt by the lack of support I feel. I don't know what to do next. So, I am trying this. If this fails, I will try something else.

At one point I would watch hours of P a day. It was and is a form of anxiety relief for me, a drug to help me focus, and an endorphin rush that I am hunting for. I don't know if I need to seek out medication for ADD or anxiety as a way to help me fight the addiction. I have other habits I have been unable to break that deal with the same physical and mental release. Such as biting nails. I have had success from time to time with stopping—then, during periods of high stress or hard work, I always fall back to old habits. I am at the point now where I can go for one-two weeks without falling into my old

habits. I have made a lot of growth—but I want to be fully rid of this.

What has worked so far.

- **My phone has no social media or internet.** I have found that by removing my access to easy and mindless scrolling I am able to limit my exposure. However, no system is full proof and even with a guarded “kosher” phone I can find ways to view stimulating images if I want.
- **Charity.** You are able to challenge G-d with your charity. I have given consistently, daily. For over a year now. Sometimes manually each day, others through an automatic charity service. I have and am challenging G-d to remove and help me overcome my addiction.
- **Prayer.** I pray sincerely for freedom from lust. I find that after I have failed my prayers are distant, guilty, and distracted but when I am able to focus I believe I am heartfelt in my requests to be free.
- **Learning.** I have been learning a wide range of topics. All torah learning helps me distance myself from temptation. None of it has been the final nail in the coffin of this addiction. I know the chemical makeup, the way addiction works on the brain, I can observe myself during moments of temptation, I even know steps I can take to help or stop myself from giving in—It often delays but never fully breaks the habit.
- **Schedule.** Having a dedicated schedule is very helpful. Praying 3 times a day, learning, eating well, working hard, exercise—all of this helps me remain strong. At some point however all of these structured habits make me grow exhausted and I break. I don't go to sleep early enough, I take a day to watch a TV show or movie, I grab junk food, miss a minyan, and then always end up watching P and M.

There is more I could go through that I have tried, am trying, and might be working to some degree. At the end of the day - nothing has fully worked.

Why it's not working.

- **The desire to M for me becomes extremely strong.** I think this is my biggest problem. I can guard my eyes, I can avoid temptation, I can delay long enough that the desire to watch P goes away. However, I get a pressure in my mind and physical discomfort in my waist that pushes me to find a release. I think this is a mental thing overall. When I am stressed and my body wants the endorphin rush. I become fixated on the idea of release and the pressure never seems to go away, it can last for days. It is distracting and very much impacts my focus throughout the day.
- **The ease of P and temptation.** Our world is packed to the brim with sexual images, quick access to our drug, and temptation. I work online and can't be

disconnected from the world. As much as I would love to learn full time, stay in my community, and shut down every online access point - my job requires me to be online. Going to the store exposes me to images and clothing that's hard to avoid. Doing anything in the secular world seems to immediately expose you to sexualized images.

- **My own mind. I have so many images and thoughts in my own mind from the years I spent giving in fully to temptation. Those images become a catalyst without anything else external feeding them.**
- **The reward for a avera is a avera. When I fail, I am more likely to fail again. When I am faithful and diligent I am more likely to succeed. However, I always seem to have a point of failure where I start over again.**
- **The guilt. Why keep trying? It can be very hard to have hope and push forward when you have 17 years of failure.**

Questions.

- **Is it better for me to M as a way to avoid looking at P? Should I make the transition away from P fully while still getting physical release when I seem to have no option?**
- **Why has G-d not removed this challenge from me? Why after prayer, charity, repentance, and so much suffering am I still facing this same challenge?**
- **Should I seek medication as a way to fight? I know that some of the signs of ADD, Anxiety, Depression are a likely dependence on endorphins and higher proclivity to addictive substances. Am I at the point now where I should seek medical help?**
- **Is it normal to have a physical desire that is overwhelming, distracting, and seemingly impossible to overcome?**

Thanks for reading. I hope to be active and work through the 90 day challenge. This is the next step forward. G-d willing it is the last one needed before I find freedom from this addiction.

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .
Posted by Foolie - 11 Sep 2023 13:36

I'm not going to claim to be an expert enough to address all your points but I will address 2 of

them, the first point I would like to address is you ask should you look into anti anxiety medication and ADD medication. ADD/ADHD medication in my experience has zero effect on removing the urge to P and M. I will also say that in my experience anti anxiety medication is a game changer. Obviously you should be speaking to a therapist and a psychiatrist and between them come up with a treatment plan before you have a manic anxiety attack or if medication is even the right way to go, self medicating is obviously very dangerous and should be avoided at all costs

To your point of is there a point pushing forward after 17 years of failure. I failed for 20 years and I'm sure there are others here who failed even longer than that and are here and have found a measure of success in their own fight to rid themselves of P and M so there is no reason to throw in the towel just yet

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .
Posted by Vehkam - 11 Sep 2023 15:04

[Foolie wrote on 11 Sep 2023 13:36:](#)

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Took me over 30 years....

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by chancy - 11 Sep 2023 18:04

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[list]

[*][p][b]The desire to M for me becomes extremely strong. I think this is my biggest problem. I can guard my eyes, I can avoid temptation, I can delay long enough that the desire to watch P goes away. However, I get a pressure in my mind and physical discomfort in my waist that pushes me to find a release. I think this is a mental thing overall. When I am stressed and my body wants the endorphin rush. I become fixated on the idea of release and the pressure never seems to go away, it can last for days. It is distracting and very much impacts my focus throughout the day. [/b]

It seems that you have a very active body with a lot of energy, good for you! Now you can go get those endorphins thru healthy ways, figure out a good exercise regiment that will give you those endorphin highs you feel you need, and that WILL decree your need to get them from bad places.[/p]

[*][p][b]The ease of P and temptation. Our world is packed to the brim with sexual images, quick access to our drug, and temptation. I work online and can't be disconnected from the world. As much as I would love to learn full time, stay in my community, and shut down every online access point - my job requires me to be online. Going to the store exposes me to images and clothing that's hard to avoid. Doing anything in the secular world seems to immediately expose you to sexualized images. [/b]

Getting away from everything thats tempting is key, I understand its hard, but its still the key, at least in the beginning. Your brain needs to detox for a while from being fed so much garbage. So, get a great filter that has shading on images, so even if you 'need' to get unto some site or other, you will not be triggered. After a while your brain will start detoxing. But you need to stop feeding it either with visual or imaginative images.[/p]

[*][p][b]My own mind. I have so many images and thoughts in my own mind from the years I spent giving in fully to temptation. Those images become a catalyst without anything else external feeding them. See above,[/b] I dont think thats 100% true, (i get that you think so, but actually, the mind is very persuasive and forgets or puts into storage those things that we dont constantly need or bring up).[/p]

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[p][b]Questions. [/b][p]

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[*][p][b]Is it better for me to M as a way to avoid looking at P? Should I make the transition away from P fully while still getting physical release when I seem to have no option? [/b]

There are some that say that, but i dont think its too helpful. The problem is that you will still feed your imagination and that will create new lasting pathways in our mind, so you are not gaining much. [/p]

[*][p][b]Why has G-d not removed this challenge from me? Why after prayer, charity, repentance, and so much suffering am I still facing this same challenge? [/b]

If i had 1 cent for every time one of us has that question..... I wouldn't be typing now..... I would be eating cents for lunch. There is not easy answer for that. 1 think you need to understand and that is that we CANT POSSIBLY understand Hashem! He is way beyond our narrow way of thinking in terms of ones and zeros..... So dont waste your time trying to figure out why He made like this or why He is not giving you what you want, the only helpful thing to ask yourself is wrote:

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Should I seek medication as a way to fight? I know that some of the signs of ADD, Anxiety, Depression are a likely dependence on endorphins and higher proclivity to addictive substances. Am I at the point now where I should seek medical help?

Lots of times there is a underlying cause thats pushing us to these kinds of things, sometimes its to pacify pain, or to numb anxiety or depression, etc. So It would be a good idea to look for a good therapist that will be able to guide you inward and help your figure out why you were unable to quit so far.

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Is it normal to have a physical desire that is overwhelming, distracting, and seemingly impossible to overcome?

Yes, yes a million times yes. every single one of us has/had that feeling sometimes/always..... (you are not special....)

[/list]

Thanks for reading. I hope to be active and work through the 90 day challenge. This is the next step forward. G-d willing it is the last one needed before I find freedom from this addiction.

Thank you for posting and articulating so clearly.

I would suggest that you start doing the F2F program, it will give you lots of insight on how to kick this for good.

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 11 Sep 2023 20:19

Extremely well written. Did you ever speak to someone about all of this?

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .
Posted by eerie - 12 Sep 2023 00:00

My friend, welcome to the family! You have joined a group of people who care about you, you want to hear from you, a group of people who are committed to work on this together and grow past these challenges. We are here to support each other and help each other out. My friend, I think it might be a good idea to speak to a healthcare professional and ask him some of those questions. I don't know if it needs treatment or what the treatment would be, but a conversation with a healthcare professional might be able to add a lot of clarity. Please stick around and let us know how you are doing!

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .
Posted by chaimoigen - 12 Sep 2023 02:21

You write well and articulate your pain and suffering clearly.

There is healing in joining a community of people who can understand your pain. Please stick around. There are special people here who have had personal experience with tremendous challenges and have gone on to achieve freedom and positive growth. Many of those who have responded to your painful and heartfelt post fall into that category.

Spend some time here, friend. Read the threads - there is tremendous wisdom and experience in them. And you may find people who can give you advice, and more importantly: Hope.

Here's a warm hand, it's better to be in this together....

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by tenstoriestall - 12 Sep 2023 07:06

I don't know if I need medication or not. I do know that if P or M is partially a form of stress relief or is fueled by a need for short term reward systems in the mind (ADD leans on this) then it might help.

I have health insurance for the first time since I lived at home - so I hope to talk with someone about it all.

Not throwing in the towel - just frustrated by where I am.

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by tenstoriestall - 12 Sep 2023 07:10

Thanks for the detailed response. I need to learn how to format my posts better.

I will start the F2F tonight.

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by tenstoriestall - 12 Sep 2023 07:10

I have not specifically talked with someone about it.

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by true_self - 12 Sep 2023 11:41

I'm sorry to hear about all your pain and what you currently feel, it's overwhelming and can make you feel in despair not knowing what yes or not to do, or where to even start.

I can definitely relate to some of your feelings, this might be your struggle for life, it sometimes seems impossible to overcome but with the help of hashem and friends you can give yourself a push and reveal that it is possible.

Never give up and start counting you seemingly small victories as they will for sure keep on becoming bigger and greater.

As HHM recommended, speak to someone that will be able to help you clarify things and get them somewhat off your heart, no need to carry your package all by yourself, indeed Hashem help me is a good candidate to start with.

Thinking of you!

True self.

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by eraygrand - 13 Sep 2023 06:01

For me it was closer to 40 years and now closing in on 200 days clean. For so many years I approached this time of year with dread and hopelessness. The amazing chevra and programs here can help you lift the burden of your struggles and lighten the load of despair. Don't give up, I promise it's worth the fight!!

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by bright - 13 Sep 2023 11:44

I have not specifically talked with someone about it. I would then suggest reaching out to Hashem Help Me...

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .

Posted by bright - 13 Sep 2023 14:05

Questions.

- **Is it better for me to M as a way to avoid looking at P? Should I make the transition away from P fully while still getting physical release when I seem to have no option?**
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the next step forward. G-d willing it is the last one needed before I find freedom from this addiction.

My dear friend and brother, first of all, you are so courageous for coming back! Secondly you seem to have put tremendous amount of thought and energy into this area of your life. IYH you can and will succeed! You asked great questions! Really!

?As far as your questions, I personally have found that using masturbation as a way of not using porn never worked. Ever. Perhaps you can focus on working on one and not the other, but to use it as an outlet in my experience doesnt work. What does is working on yourself, getting a friend, and setting up accountability.

As far as medication, like everyone said here, thats for a professional, but from the symptoms you are describing, it doesnt seem like a must at all. You are not crazy, actually you seem more normal than most.

Your question about Hashem is a multi-faceted one and needs to be addressed separately.

It is normal to have such major nisyonos, we all did, on our own level. I think your main question is why? Which is a great one but I will IYH get back to it later. For now keep on shteiging. Your coming here will iyh be the start of a bright future!

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Re: I don't know what to do next . . .
Posted by bright - 13 Sep 2023 18:04

[bright wrote on 13 Sep 2023 14:05:](#)

- **Why has G-d not removed this challenge from me? Why after prayer, charity, repentance, and so much suffering am I still facing this same challenge?**

I really feel for you it is so hard! Just like with many challenges in life, we cant always get out of it with the big three. Many times we have to get through it. Why Hashem wants us to have the nisayon is the worlds question, but suffice to say he does, and your job in life is to overcome it. If you wouldnt and would just have it magically removed, there would be a part of your shelaimus you would never be able to attain.... You will IYH find your way to grow through this challenge together with the special people here and it will be amazing!

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