

Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 22 Sep 2023 14:39

Hello to my fellow GYE warriors!

I figured I'd give it a shot at introducing myself a little bit, as I've read many threads here and value the growth and journey of all the amazing people over here!

My original goal when I got to this website a few months ago, was to deal with my addiction to porn and masturbation. It was getting way out of hand and it really disturbed my quality of life.

Thankfully, I have hit 90 days and I am shocked and amazed at how this was even possible, I had already written myself off to be a porn watcher and chronic masturbator for the rest of my life!

This is no doubt due to joining this website, reading the forums, chatting, and connecting via email/phone to some wonderfully amazing people here, and I want to finally say a **huge** public thank you to you all!!!

I owe my newfound life to this place, and I hope I can continue staying away from p & m.

Due to the fact that I have been clean from p & m for a while, I will leave that part of my life out of my story (for now) and perhaps revisit it in a later post.

What I would like to address, with as limited details as possible, is that I have been struggling mightily with cleaning up the rest of my act while also struggling with my religious identity.

For a good period of my life (not from birth) I was involved in an extremist, abusive and controlling group.

Thank Heaven (and I praise Hashem for this every day) I am done with that.

But it resulted in a massive religious identity crisis, which I am still struggling through.

I wanted nothing to do with religion, I am numbed by many aspects of it. The pain in some areas is almost visceral, like being scalded when getting too close to a hot fire.

Certain things about our way of life are too painful, and I just dissociate from it.

What does this have to do with GYE and addiction?

Well, the truth is, that although I am free of p & m for a nice while, there are other things I have experimented with as I have gone through my journey.

I started watching movies, and saw hundreds of them, and many were literally soft-core porn

films.

(I must say that thankfully, I don't remember when I've watched a movie last, probably a half a year, but it's not so much "b'sh*tah," I just haven't got the brain space to put myself into a good emotional movie)

I started finding meaning in non-Jewish music. What can I say? I enjoy it, and nothing really moves me like that, I identify with the lyrics and passion. I'm not talking about outright prust music, but certain genres appeal to me and I cannot go back to Yiddish music, I have tried to and didn't hold for more than a few days.

I also started browsing YouTube as a mindless escape, and very often a clip of inappropriately dressed women pops in and I just watch it without feeling too guilty about it.

From a religious point, I understand that this is against the Torah, but I have no strength to care. I am close to Hashem, I talk to Him every day, and I feel that Hashem understands my struggles, my exposure, the sexual abuse and religious abuse that I have been through, and that He loves me unconditionally.

But from an addiction standpoint, If I truly want to "clean up", I know I can't be staring at shikshas/tic toc dances etc.

And I'm not even *talking* about the frum woman aspect, which I'm sure many people can relate to, I fall a lot with peeking glances at hot frum women and of course I should not be doing that, it's feeding the beast!

I know that addiction to porn and masturbation is like addiction to a drug, dopamine. I know that if I continue "feeding the drug", even in small quantities, I will not achieve full recovery.

But I am just so mixed up with it all, it's so hard to kick, and religious ideas don't talk to me. I don't want to identify as an Ultra-Orthodox Jew, I wish I could leave it all behind.

As part of the backlash of what I've been through, I've delved into Jewish history and have read stuff from non-traditional (read: non censored) sources, and I'm scared to death of the path open before me...I see corruption, dysfunction, and abuse and a load of BS in our "system", and coupled with the experience I had been through, it makes me want to run away from it all!!

If not for my wonderful wife and children, whom I love so much, I probably would have long ago left it all behind for a new life.

I feel trapped in my religious identity, not sure how to find solace and clarity, how to find a steady voice in my head to see through all the BS and serve Hashem as a true servant as I'm sure He wants me to be.

I feel trapped in the loop of feeding the little monster in my brain and I sometimes feel so alone and sad because even ideas, insights, and encouragements make me crazy.

I am sorry for sounding negative and embittered, but I'm just pouring my heart out, and maybe just by writing about it, it will feel better.

In any case, I hope to continue documenting these little ups and downs, and I look forward to continuing to be part of this amazing forum!

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 18 Apr 2024 21:28

[chaimoigen wrote on 18 Apr 2024 21:08:](#)

[chooseurname wrote on 18 Apr 2024 16:52:](#)

[youknowwho wrote on 18 Apr 2024 03:36:](#)

There's a question that's been slowly growing in the dark crevices of my mind. Gnawing at me and slowly but surely chiseling away at my resolve.

I've shared this question with some dear friends offline, yet would like to share it here, with some thoughts.

Question: Life as it was in the past, being addicted to porn and masturbation, was miserable.

Now that I don't watch porn or masturbate...surprise! Life can still feel miserable, sometimes. **It's not utopia**...Can I say with confidence that now my life is so rosy? No, I don't see how everything else got so much better. Some days are hard, I feel powerless and want to succumb. I am left to deal with those emotions that drove me to porn in the first place, yet now there's no escape!

Isn't that even worse?

What's the point of not falling?

Something that helped me, was actually following that train of thought, from start to finish. I won't get too graphic here, but I started to **picture** it all in my mind.

The hunt for the perfect clip, hours upon hours of relentless pursuit. The sheer desperation, the complete haze and numbness as I stumble, shake and gasp to the finish line. Finally, hours later, spent and weak kneed, I turn up to face myself in the mirror. I *hate* myself. Why? Just *why*? What the heck have I done? So *now* I'm happy?!

But that was only good for a little while, before long it was rinse and repeat.

And so, for me the answer is clear...yes, there are days that are really challenging. Days that bring along difficult emotions. Days where I even stumble into lust, I see a pretty girl and it drives me bonkers. Fine. It's still a lot better than going through hell again, and I won't trade it for anything in the world.

Sometimes, we forget what it was like. It's normal to forget. But we can use our imagination, talk it through with a friend, but don't let yourself truly forget what a Gehinnom it really is to be ensnared in porn and masturbation without a hope of ever seeing a way out.

Okay, that feels a whole lot better, maybe life *is* rosy after all...

-YKW

I identify with this post. Thank you.

I don't know if it works so well with to remember how miserable I was (am?) when I watch porn. The misery is far away and the porn is close. For me, this approach is helpful when times are good to focus on how much happier I am clean. When times are bad it's hard to remember that.

A slightly different approach I'm working on (from the easy-peasy method) is to drill into my head that I'm not a porn-watching-person anymore. I'm a different person now. This person still has urges, but porn is not part of this person's *weltanschauung*. So what if life is miserable? Why does that relate to porn? My misery needs a solution, but porn is not a solution in this person's toolbox.

I don't want to get distracted from this powerful post. But it's interesting how we get so wrapped up in the struggle and shame and the whole negative parsha that we think "if only if I could fix this life would be great." But that's not true. There's always gonna be another mountain. Just hypothesizing here, but it could be there's two explanations for this phenomena. First, that's just how people are wired that whatever problem we are faced with we think everything would be great if not for this problem. Second, and more likely, porn is a major, life affecting problem. our lives are better without this problem. But we get used to the freedom and start focusing on our other problems. Meaning, if with porn we have 100 problem units. Without porn we have don't have 99 problem units, we are down to 55. But now we focus in on the 55 and forget to be happy about the 45 we're no longer staring down the barrel of.

Probably the solution is something cheesy like gratitude.

Terrific Shiur Klalli.

I'm going to chazer the points to get them Klohr.

1. To help one **feel** motivated, It maybe be easier to focus on the pleasure of a clean present than to struggle to remember and feel the agony of the past.

2. Welcome to the non-smokerporner club. Life is different when you're a no-smoker. There are stresses and strains but what does that have to do with ~~cigarettes~~ porn, anyways?

3. You see: "Life is pain, highness. Anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something". So really, given that truth, the problems that arise in life cannot ever justify the negative method of escape, for that pain is a fundamental part of life, and will always be there regardless. Other methods and ways of living must be found, if one is to live.

4. Being involved in porn etc is a major life problem in-and-of itself. So the problems of "lifeing" are reduced when you join the non smoker club. Granted, new patterns must be found and that's not so easy for a guy hooked on the wrong ones. But that's what has to happen if he is to learn to LIVE.

I think that was the gist.

These are great, thought-provoking points. Great stuff.

I'm sure if a contrarian would want to weigh in, he could counter that delicious porn and lust is a good distraction from the existential pain of livin', better than any other he knows of, and these thoughts don't necessarily help a guy who isn't feeling them. And he might say that sometimes the problem of porn is not as great as the problems dealing with feeling the pain in life without a numbing agent. It would hurt to hear that.

But I'd yet counter that a persons **feelings reflect their cognitions**, more often than one would care to admit, and clarity is a great thing, a can help tremendously. Even taking into account the sometimes-great distance between the head and the heart.

yeah, there are different types of problems in life. It's not easy. But For me, I choose to **live** even if it's painful at times, because even though the heightened clarity may sometimes cut like glass, nevertheless it's clear and has sharp, defined colors, and catches and refracts the light. Ain't goin back to the twisted pink haziness, ever.

Now I will go back to the work I was supposed to be doing. With gratitude for the discussion, the wisdom and the friendships.

KOMT,

Chaim

It is perhaps easier to focus on a clean present. My point was, to bring out that for me, when I don't feel clean, usually while in the throes of "regular" (for lack of a better term) lust, I don't relate to that at all.

In that mindset, it helped me to remember that as black as my day is now, in lust mode, it still is gold compared to that horribly dead zombie feeling of being trapped in the PMO trap. And

forging ahead to numb with desperation, doing something I don't even *want* to do.... I had forgotten that with the passage of time, and found it healing to vividly portray it in my imagination.

That's just me, may not work that way for all of humanity!

-YKW

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by jackthejew - 21 Apr 2024 02:59

~~And thanks for taking the words of the contrarian out of my mouth...~~

I definitely feel like the process of slipping and eventually falling was a result of me forgetting the feeling of complete and utter desperation that led me to be willing to admit that I was an addict, consider going to SA, and being ready to do whatever I had to. Including joining GYE. (Baruch Hashem the wise men here helped me see what an addict is and why I'm not one, and why SA wasn't for me.)

The conclusion of the Vidduy we say at least 20 times a year (I Daven Nussach Ashkenaz) ends with ????? ?????? ??? ??? ???.

The Cheshbon Hanefesh of Vidduy should bring us to a point where we recognize that we haven't addressed the underlying things that drove us off track in the first place, rather we just continued the same dysfunctional behavior, which actually unfortunately worsens things. So, as long as I have stored somewhere in the back of my head that feeling, when the chance comes up to fall, I'm not just pitting it against my streak of whatever number of days, I have a concrete idea of what hell I'd be putting myself into by falling. But when I forget what it can be like, that is when I've lost my way.

In a related post from Dov:

You are saying just what I have posted about so many times, and about which some posters

guys get upset about or just shrug their shoulders and walk away: 1- I expect no schar whatsoever for my sobriety. 2- And I do not consider my sobriety a madreigah in any respect. And by the (very) same token, 3- I do not expect more sex from my wife because I 'held back and was faithful to her'.

I do, however, expect the same little smile and wink from Hashem that He probably gives *all* the sober alcoholics, pillheads, gamblers, and perverts who die sober and in recovery, as they pass by on their way 'up there' to their Big Judgement. Perhaps a nod, that conveys: "Hey, I know you had it rough, good job, dear. So glad you could join the rest of the human race."

That's about all.

Maybe I am wrong. Maybe He will give me a ticker tape parade down Shvilei D'rakia Avenue. None of my business, and I am not interested.

The day I need to get paid extra *because I am a recovering addict*, I will be in grave danger. The greatest danger is that I will drop my sobriety when I see that I am not getting paid enough! And that is the same whether the person 'paying' me is G-d (with schar, a feeling of deveikus, or a fun life here), my wife (with admiration, sex, or whatever), or people (with whatever I'd want from *them*).

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by eerie - 03 May 2024 17:20

[youknowwho wrote on 18 Apr 2024 03:36:](#)

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Being away over YT, I hadn't seen this gevaldige post, my friend. One major point I take away is the power of the opportunity to put your thoughts into words on this forum, and to watch the emotions change from the beginning of the post to the end.

My friend, if I may add. I haven't seen anybody promise that sobriety brings bliss. No. But sobriety does guarantee that you'll be living life the way it was meant to be lived. And yes, life has its miserable days, sometimes. Life has its challenges. Life also has its extremely difficult

days. But when we are sober, we will live life the way it was meant to be lived. How should we cope if we can't escape to an alternate reality? There are many wonderful ideas out there. I'm sure a professional can give more ideas than I can, so I'll just mention a few:

Living with goals, with a system to meet them, so your life feels worthwhile living. (Goals is a very broad word, including ruchniyus and gashmiyus)

Leaning about G-d's plan, and internalizing that we, and all that happens to us, is part of all of that.

Working on upping our tolerance level.

Talking to friends (maybe this should be number one:))

Dear friend, thanks for being here and adding your un-imitationable (no, there's no such word) flavor here!

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by chancy - 06 May 2024 17:21

Oh Dear YKW,

I knkew that deep down under the snake- red eyes, slit nose and high pitched cold voice, you have a warn yidisha heart beating.

I have nothing to add to your post, you said everything i had in my mind. I feel excatly the same.

But, I know that I am doing the right thing! Get clean or die trying!

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by Bennyh - 18 Jun 2024 18:46

Hey, Reb YKW! We haven't heard from you in a while. Other than the occasional grouch, and

pearls of wisdom on other people's threads... But what's up in your neck of the woods? How are you doing?

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 18 Jun 2024 19:21

[Bennyh wrote on 18 Jun 2024 18:46:](#)

Hey, Reb YKW! We haven't heard from you in a while. Other than the occasional grouch, and pearls of wisdom on other people's threads... But what's up in your neck of the woods? How are you doing?

Bennyh, how did you know I was actually typing this up as you paged me?

Here goes:

Dearest Friends,

I am approaching 365 days since I joined GYE.

Although I am not really in the headspace of writing or sharing much, I am pushing myself, because I think it is important to note these developments as I move along on this journey.

It would have been so nice to write about how unbelievably amazing these last 365 days have been. It would have been nice to write about how my relationship with Torah, mitzvos and learning has so dramatically improved.

It would have been nice to talk about how much closer I feel to Hashem, how much closer I feel to a life that is fulfilling and satisfying.

However, I cannot write anything like that. Nothing of the sort.

A year ago, I arrived to this website, completely beaten, bloody and battered by lust, porn, video chats and masturbation. They were constant, obsessive and intense. And it was *really* getting progressively worse. I do believe that I was fully addicted to it, much like one would be addicted to drugs.

I was, by the grace of G-D, able to kick the heavy stuff pretty much cold turkey, for I had hit my rock bottom. Without getting into graphic details of what that rock bottom was, I was indeed ready to let go of porn and masturbation and managed to stay away from those behaviors for most of this year. I did not feel like I was white knuckling at all, for the most part.

But the general guarding of my eyes was not really on my radar. Sometimes I had some nice periods of time during this year when I was “cleaner” in that sense of the word, but not much.

Towards the end of the year, I slowly slipped, more and more, until I fell completely. That was hard. It hurts. I wish I could be more. I wanted more. I wanted to have certain things behind me, as they appear to be for others, but they aren't for me.

Sometimes, the lust is so very intense, especially after that first little slip, and it gets really hard to stop sliding after that. Other times, its calmer and easier.

My spirituality, my relationship to Hashem and His Torah, are still frozen in time. I thought I would be doing better, but it still hurts. I sometimes feel cynical, skeptical, doubtful, despondent and apathetic.

I know I'm sounding pretty morbid, so that is enough of that! I am not morbid. I am not giving up. I am not lost forever. Here are some of the absolutely amazing things that have happened over the past year:

Firstly, I have gained lots clarity and confidence that the path I have chosen is correct. I cannot share details publicly, but that means leaving behind a very different way of life, which was all encompassing and pervasive. I am no longer mentally enslaved.

I am free.

I am alive.

Another thing: I've been able to let go of a lot of toxic, negative emotions. I've tried to forgive without being forgiven, tried to love back without being loved. Tried to look at someone with compassion and sadness, rather than vindictive hatred. The anger that simmered on the front burner for a long while, has now found its way to a very far back burner. This has happened through a lot of prayer, meditation, and the tears and sometimes tough love of the friends I have made on this forum.

Lastly, although I have fallen, I need to tell myself about all the real progress I've made. From chronic, constant porn and masturbation, I've come to slip and dip into it minimally. From watching mostly soft-core movies, I've gone to watching light, happy stuff for the most part. From listening to secular music without a cheshbon, I've learned to proudly set myself some red lines.

And last, but certainly not least...I've made some very dear, amazing and close friends here this past year. Y'all know who you are, and I want you to know, how I appreciate you all so very much. I would not be where I am today without each and every one of you. Thank you.

You'll never know how much it means to me...

I look forward to the future with hope, that this progress will lead to more. A more spiritual life and a cleaner life. As long as I am alive, there is hope. I really do believe that Hashem is with me, every step of the way.

Signing off for now,

-YKW

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by oivedelokim - 18 Jun 2024 20:50

Hey buddy!

I can't believe I never came across this thread before. I haven't gone through all of it but I definitely relate both to the title and your latest post.

Abandoning lustful thoughts and behaviors while struggling with Yiddishkeit is much harder-in fact, overcoming any challenge while struggling with Yiddishkeit is hard, because you lose a lot of your sense of self worth, objective meaning and purpose, faith in your future etc. At least for me. But I digress.

I also relate to your frustration with your lack of the kind of progress you would have like to see. I've been on and off this site for over 7 years, and I still feel like I'm nowhere near where I want to be.

But like I saw elsewhere on this forum: "If it was easy-GYE wouldn't exist. If it was impossible-GYE wouldn't exist either".

Wishing you success in your continued efforts.

Also, feel free to PM if you'd like to chat. I'm always happy to make new friends on here, and maybe we can help support each other.

All the best!

OivedElokim

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by BennyH - 18 Jun 2024 21:05

[youknowwho wrote on 18 Jun 2024 19:21:](#)

[Bennyh wrote on 18 Jun 2024 18:46:](#)

Hey, Reb YKW! We haven't heard from you in a while. Other than the occasional grouch, and pearls of wisdom on other people's threads... But what's up in your neck of the woods? How are you doing?

Bennyh, how did you know I was actually typing this up as you paged me?

Mental telepathy?

I do have a very handy butler who keeps me abreast of the goings on in the minds of my friends...

And now to the meat and potatoes of your post.

I don't know, to me this sounds like an ocean of progress, as you yourself acknowledge at the end.

Unfortunately, I know all too well that it's not all rainbows and unicorns on the other side. You can conquer porn and masturbation, but that doesn't mean that the skies open up and the angels suddenly start singing in falsetto.

It sounds like there are huge issues in your life and past that you still have to work through. And that's okay. You *have* accomplished a tremendous amount, basically all on your own. *You* get the credit.

It's frustrating that we don't feel like some other fairytale threads on this forum. Those people might have less complicated lives/histories/family dynamics in general, and their one big issue was P/M. So conquering that unlocks the yodeling angels. But others have a lot more going on inside, and, while conquering P/M is *vitaly important*, it's not the be and end all of living happily ever after.

So what am I even saying? I'm not 100% positive (it's hard to think straight as I'm sitting in a noisy office with people potentially looking over my shoulder at my screen), but I think you have every right to a) be proud of what you've accomplished and b) at the very same time, be okay with the frozen feelings. One does not necessarily effect the other.

Your very dear friend,

Benny

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by eraygrand - 18 Jun 2024 23:18

Very similar here. After 450+ days clean, while I have seen a definite change in bein Adam

I'chaveiro, especially family, the shift in the bein Adam L'makom connection has been a MUCH slower go. I believe that after so many years of despair there is a lot of rust buildup that will take time to get through.

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by upanddown - 18 Jun 2024 23:24

Dear YKW,

What an amazing thread! I read most of your posts and many of the great responses..

You're an absolute star! A huge inspiration!

I very much relate to your struggles. My journey was similar, a very difficult childhood incl sexual abuse and a lot more. I've been angry at the Yeshivish system. Fed up of my Yiddishkeit. Complex Emunah struggles. Disillusioned by so much that goes on in the Torah world. Furious at Hashem (I've written about it on my threads). Frustrated by this endless struggle of P&M and fed up of fighting it. Eventually I managed 400 days clean! But then I fell very badly again and again. I was ready to give up and to ditch it all. But with tremendous ??? I'm now back on track.. its hard work though... very draining...

Just to share a thought that helps me:

Put Torah aside. Put Hashem aside. Regardless whether I believe or don't believe. There is 1 thing that is a 100% ??? that P&M can't be a good thing:

It's the instinct. That feeling right after acting out. How can it possibly be a 'normal' & correct thing to act out, if right after doing it you feel depressed, upset, frustrated, guilty? Noone brainwashed me that I'm meant to be feeling upset and guilty. Because even when I was a young boy, I felt that way, before hearing about the strictness of the sin!

?? ????? ?? ??? ?? ???? ?? ????? - referring to ???". Because its not the ??? ??? to masturbate. There are more ????? where this Lashon is used. And I've always wondered, how can you say it's not the ??? ??? to do it if most of the world are doing it? The answer is that the natural instinct is to feel its wrong, but the world tries hard to ignore it. Even Goyim feel some depression and emptiness after acting out - you can Google it!

Why is the ????? ???" not ????? in the Torah? Because its ????? in every persons body! It's an instinct. ??? ??? ???? ??????. Unlike all the other mitzvos.

Keep strong!

??? ????

Upanddown

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by Hashem Help Me - 19 Jun 2024 04:27

HUG!!! Dear chaver, you are a hero. Plain and poshut. Keep growing. None of us are perfect; your resilience is the stuff of *hechere mentshen*. Continued hatzlocha!

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 19 Jun 2024 15:40

Thank you, Oived Elokim, for your kind words, I am very familiar with your thread, actually. I read it a long time ago, and found your journey absolutely riveting. My heart ached when you bid farewell, and I sent you a PM. Your return to this forum is mind-bogglingly (is that a word?) inspiring. We will be in touch.

Bennyh, your important point is so spot on and I really appreciate it. And last night, I fell asleep to the gentle voices of angels serenading to sleep me in falsetto...they were singing something that strangely resembled something I'd heard on VeggieTales...

Thank you eraygrand and upandown for the chizuk, it means a ton! And HHM, your hug was well received! (although I may have a cracked rib or two).

A great day to you all,

-A less Moldy Voldy

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 19 Jun 2024 15:42

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Re: Trying to clean up while struggling religiously
Posted by youknowwho - 08 Aug 2024 18:25

Had a spat with my wife the other night, felt pretty horrible after that. Going through a lot of stress right now. Did what I had done as a mind-numbing escape for many, many years...masturbated.

?I've been feeling pretty dejected. This is not what success looks like.

It sure doesn't *feel* like success...

I've been clean for almost a year and in recent months I've been failing again. I'd always feared not being able to fully get up again after breaking a long streak and those fears have been realized.

Then, something really eye-opening occurred.

I happened to be sifting through my wallet. Through those dusty crevices that I never think about. A wallet spring cleaning, purging the things I no longer needed.

Found a folded up paper, slightly crumpled. In handwritten Hebrew:

"I, YKW, am going to try to abstain from watching porn and masturbating from April 1 until April 7, or pay \$1000 knaas"

It was a quiet place and I had time to reflect. I remembered these little notes well...for years, I was desperately trying to stop compulsively using porn and masturbation, with zero success.

These notes would give me some slight reprieve, until a total relapse not long thereafter.

Then, it was right back to:

- Wake up in the morning (porn in the bathroom)
- Daven (porn in between, if possible)
- Head out to work (porn on my beautiful commute)
- Arrive to work (sneak porn in as much as possible)
- Get some work done (masturbate in the bathroom)

Come out feeling strangely focused, yet **sick** of myself

- Back to work, come home, help with kids, learn for a few minutes
- Maariv, (back to porn, till the "finish line" at 2AM)
- Wife out on errands? Porn.
- Wife in the shower? Porn.

-Wife on the phone? Porn on the other side of the hallway.

I'd follow through on one note, and cross out the dates, adding sad new ones in their place.

Those were pretty dark times.

So, maybe success really does come in different sizes and flavors. For some, that may mean "kicking it". Yet for some, the struggle continues, and we don't always manage to stay clean. That does not mean you aren't a success.

I carefully tucked that sad, somewhat crumpled piece of paper back into my wallet. I want it with me wherever I go. I need it there forever, to remind me of what I was and how far I've come.

Success is real, and boy, does it taste *sweet!*

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