

How I Got Here

Posted by ForwardProgress - 14 May 2024 13:02

I just turned 30 years old (yesterday happens to be) and am posting on this site for the first time. I have been struggling with masturbation and light p*rn use (mostly lewd pictures on Instagram/Reddit, partially clothed women) for the last 12 years. I don't view my addiction as something that has completely taken over my life, but it is something that I always revert to at some point - I have been unable to fully break free. I attribute my addiction to the following two reasons:

1. Coping mechanism for anxiety/depression. I have several family members (parents and siblings) that struggle with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, etc. so one could say it is in my DNA. I am BH a very functional person with a wife, son, good job, etc. but I have constant feelings of anxiety with sporadic depression. I continue to work through my mental health challenges with a therapist, but I find masturbation/viewing inappropriate material as an "escape" / outlet for all the tense feelings that are constantly building up inside of me. It gives me something to look forward to; when I engage in this behavior I can temporarily suspend my anxious and sad thoughts and fully indulge in physical pleasure.

2. Dissatisfaction with my marriage. Granted, I started these behaviors before I was my married, but I feel they have taken on a new meaning and purpose ever since I got married. I view my wife as a great person, but ever since day 1 I have had some serious regrets in terms of us as a match both emotionally and physically. I am not particularly physically attracted to her (for sure my exposure to internet imagery plays a role here), nor do I feel we have good rapport, banter, or a strong emotional connection. Viewing images/videos online provides me with a physical experience I am not getting out of my marriage.

I am looking to break free from these habits, but items #1 and #2 feel like constants in my life. Would love to hear any thoughts/suggestions or anyone with a similar experience. Excited to be on the road to freedom!

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by jewizard21 - 14 May 2024 13:46

Welcome to GYE!

I would like to preface that I am not married or an expert.

I would like to say on the first point that using porn and masturbation causes a chemical imbalance that without it our moods can be sporadic and only while using does it feel ok. Before getting clean I would also get spouts of depression or anxiety and now that I have stopped for a while I don't get these as often.

On the second point I am not married but I listen to a lot of the talks that Dov, one of the moderators who is a clinical sexaholic who has been sober for 15+ yrs (idk the numbers but its a lot) describes that porn and masturbation is Lust and destroys the ability to feel the love and connection in a relationship. I would highly recommend his talks that can be found in the audio library here

guardyoureyes.com/tools/kosher-isle/shiurim/category/dov-s-recovery-talks

I would like to end by saying that you can and will break free. The start is hard but being here means that you've already begun. During the journey of distancing yourself from porn and masturbation you will most likely find yourself growing closer to the ppl around you, in your case your wife and son. It is extremely liberating.

Much Hatzlacha! and Welcome

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by chooseurname - 14 May 2024 14:10

Hey! Welcome to the forums!

The good news is you are in the right place. The extra good news is that your "two reasons" are extremely common here.

First, basically everyone at this point of the struggle has come to use porn/masturbation as their go-to coping mechanism. The [F2F program](#) will help you discover what/when/how is triggering your porn use, and will teach you alternate methods of responding to those triggers. It is also highly recommended to read the book, the battle of the generation, available [here](#) as a free ebook.

Second, shalom bayis problems and porn use go together like two peas in a pod (except one pea is turned away from the other and furiously loving only himself. Sorry. I'm bad with metaphors.) Often, we turn around the cause and effect and think our porn is due to our marriage issues. After some inner work, people often come to discover the opposite is true.

I suggest you read through [this](#) classic thread on one man's journey towards better shalom bayis. But there are [many other such](#) threads around. Look around and you'll learn something.

Plenty of people here who are older and have been struggling for longer. [I won't stay struggling with "worse stuff" because lust is lust, and the slippery slope is very slippery.] If you are willing to put in the work you will succeed. Hatzlacha!

And a couple questions:

- 1) What drove you here?
- 2) How long have you been married? What does your wife think about your marriage?
- 3) Do you have filters installed on all your devices?

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by ForwardProgress - 14 May 2024 14:31

Thank you for the response and guidance! To answer your questions:

1) I have been trying to free myself of this habit/addiction since it started. I have taken more serious steps in the past year or so, with a therapist that specializes in this area. Although we have had great conversations around understanding the addiction, I did not make any progress with changing my behaviours. He recommended I find an "accountability partner" - hence, GYE. F2F sounds like a great program - I will check that out.

2) 7 years. My wife is a very perceptive person in general and can certainly tell that I am not fully satisfied with our relationship. She can tell that I am distant. She also thinks I am not fully in touch with my emotions, but I attribute that mostly to how I engage with *her* as opposed to my general ability to be emotionally vulnerable. She does NOT know that I am not physically attracted to her. Thank you for sharing the resources re: shalom bayis - will check those out.

3) There are 4 internet-capable devices in my house - my wife and I each have a smartphone and laptop. My laptop is work-issued and that alone works as a deterrent from anything "hardcore" since my company can track web activity. My phone and my wife's laptop (which I also have access to) has Web Chaver (not filtered) installed, and my wife and I receive emails every week with each other's activity. My wife's phone does not have Web Chaver, so when I reach a moment of weakness while she is asleep, I use her phone for explicit content.

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Re: How I Got Here

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This is definitely the right place for accountability. There's a place on the website where you can

sign up for a partner. I'd suggest you first reach out to some of the senior members/mentors/legends on the site. Specifically, @HashemHelpMe. His email is in his signature.

An essential (but not sufficient) step in getting clean is removing temptations to the greatest extent possible. This means filtering up to the greatest extent possible. Covenant Eyes and work monitoring are great (assuming they suitably deter you. I see what you wrote about deterring you from "hardcore" stuff.) But I think you know you gotta do something about your wife's phone. If she's resistant to covenant eyes (why should she be?) then have her change the password. I would not worry about that cluing her in - tell her some fake inspirational shuir you heard about filtering etc. etc.

Re: Marriage. The threads I threw in there are not comprehensive resources. Just examples of how working on our lust is a crucial part of working on marriage.

Keep on posting, reading, working.

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by mggsbms - 14 May 2024 15:06

[ForwardProgress wrote on 14 May 2024 13:02:](#)

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anxious and sad thoughts and fully indulge in physical pleasure.

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I very much relate to the first part of your issues, you seem to have a good understanding of where your struggles are coming from, which is a big plus, many people don't have clarity as too where their desires are stemming from or what's driving them. Finding ways of managing stress and depression are key, as well as a strong commitment and barriers.

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by vehkam - 14 May 2024 17:14

[ForwardProgress wrote on 14 May 2024 13:02:](#)

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Please take the following as an observation, and certainly not a condemnation. I fully understand the draw of using inappropriate sexual behavior to escape from the pain around us.

I believe that a strong connection in marriage is extremely difficult when your wife doesn't really know you. There are walls and protections that you put in place because of your addiction. These barriers will not let you be fully open with your wife. If you can't be fully open and vulnerable the likelihood of strong connection (and/or attraction) is greatly diminished. In addition, ever since day 1 your wife has been a threat to the only outlet that has numbed the tension building up inside you. If I understand you correctly, you have not had the opportunity to build a meaningful relationship without the side effects resulting from masturbation and (light) pornography.

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by yitzchokm - 14 May 2024 18:16

I have bipolar disorder so I am very familiar with anxiety and depression.

For anxiety I found exercise, Urge Surfing, SOBER and journaling as I described in the following post to be

effective: <https://guardyoureyes.com/forum/19-Introduce-Yourself/401159-This-time-for-real?limit=15&start=165#405970> You can download Urge Surfing and SOBER exercises by pressing on the coins in the top right corner of your screen. There also is an 18-minute Urge Surfing exercise in the SOS section that is very effective.

For depression I found exercise, socializing and behavioral activation to be effective.

Keep on posting and sharing and make friends.

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by eerie - 14 May 2024 18:20

Welcome to the family! There are lots of good things inb this place, so stick around, learn the ropes, get to know the boys, and keep trucking! The oilam has some good points for you to ponder. You look like you are doing that well. Much hatzalacha!

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by ForwardProgress - 14 May 2024 18:47

Just wanted to say thank you to everyone who responded to my intro. I am in awe of all the responses and support that I received - I am feeling good about this journey already! Let's do this!!!

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by ForwardProgress - 14 May 2024 18:53

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I agree with you to some extent and really appreciate the honesty. Let me know if you think I am in denial (don't worry about being harsh - I want the truth) but I truly feel there are issues with my marriage that are not fully a result of my masturbation/explicit image viewing (not that this is any better, but I don't do actual "porn", but for purposes of this discussion I will refer to it as such). For example, I don't feel our personalities go well together and there are things about her physically that really bother me. You can make the argument that I am viewing all of her through a skewed lense, but part of what I struggle with is that even as I overcome my addiction, the negative aspects of the relationship will remain. Not sure if that is just the yetzer harah speaking, but I really truly feel that way.

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by eerie - 14 May 2024 18:59

My friend, I cannot say that porn definitely caused your problems, but I can say that breaking free can be the way to your solution. Besides for the obvious lust-based perceptions, porn makes us very selfish. As you break free you will give yourself a chance to deal with your marriage from a healthy perspective. You wrote "but I really truly feel that way". Until you break free, it might be strong words, but I think you don't even know what you're feeling. My friend, we are here for you, we care for you, and we look forward to celebrating your wins together with you!

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by amevakesh - 14 May 2024 19:00

[ForwardProgress wrote on 14 May 2024 13:02:](#)

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Welcome!!! As chooseusername mentioned, there is a ton of insight and good, sound, practical advice to be found on these forums. You will find the most understanding, encouraging and empathetic people that dispense pearls of wisdom, Chizuk when needed, the occasional constructive criticism and sometimes a loving kick in the pants.

Personally, one of the paradigm shifts that I have undergone, thanks to these wonderful forums, that has helped me break free completely (may Hashem help me stay strong) has been the realization that lust is lust period. There's a tactic that the YH has that says "this isn't really porn", or "I'm really in control", and we don't realize how damaging this is to ourselves, our outlook, and worst of all the subtle pressure we unwittingly place on our wives. I remember my first phone call to the great HHM, when he asked me why I want to stop, I responded that I feel like a hypocrite, and I fear the Yom Hadin. He then gently asked me "Did you ever consider that you're cheating on your wife?" I remember the thoughts going through my mind then. "What in the world is he talking about? Cheating? Me? I never watched a porn video in my life, I'm not so bad I don't masturbate. Cheating are people that are in affairs and behaviors that their wives don't know about" I told him that my wife understands my struggle and I'm open about it with her. He didn't back down. At the time I didn't appreciate the wisdom of his words, but over time, very gradually, I came to realize the truth of what he was telling me. Regardless of how mild the form of lust one is engaged in, it makes our our "sexual apatite" bigger until it becomes too big for them to possibly fill. They sense our dissatisfaction and realize that nothing that they can ever do naturally will ever be enough. We then feel like they're failing us. Even if you never say it, they can feel it. Then we wonder, why they're unhappy and we can't connect. If that's not cheating, what is? You're putting them in an impossible position, whatever they do, won't satisfy the void inside of us. It's not the natural way we were meant to be, and that our problem. Until I stopped rationalizing that what I was doing wasn't so bad, I was in the same vicious cycle you're describing. I also had my own excuses for what I was doing. Although mine were different then yours, until I said "enough is enough" I wasn't able to completely break free. Generally, I didn't have an issue, but then there were the "lusting days". After every time I'd tell myself "never again", only to fall again sometimes a few days, weeks, or even months later. I hope I'm not coming across as critical of you, as this is the farthest thing from my mind. Only sharing what worked for me. Try it, it may just be the ticket to your newfound Shalom Bayis!

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I really appreciate the insight and advice! I am willing to take the plunge and quit my behaviors cold-turkey. I certainly can relate to the "lusting days" - are there specific resources that you have found to be most beneficial in those moments of need? I know GYE has a lot and still getting familiar with all of it given that this is my first day on the sight but given our commonalities in this area from what I can gather, would be interested to hear what works for you.

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Re: How I Got Here

Posted by vehkam - 14 May 2024 20:21

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You may not be able to know until you break free. Given your circumstances your motivation for breaking free will probably have to be your relationship with yourself and with Hashem.

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