

My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)

Posted by ezraw - 14 Aug 2024 04:38

Hey everyone, my name is Ezra W, and I'm here to connect with people who are going through the same struggles as I am. I've been asked by a few people to share a bit of my story, and I've agreed in the hopes that it can motivate/help people in their struggles for freedom.

I was raised in a loving, Frum family with open internet. Due to life (I can't go into to many details here for multiple reasons), I started feeling a lack of love and attention at a very young age. when I was forced to switch schools in 2nd grade, I was too shy to connect with the other boys properly. This exacerbated the feelings of being unloved and unwanted, and led to my being bullied adding to the mess and making me feel different, a loser. When I was 8 or 9 (I don't remember exactly) I saw a picture in a newspaper article that drew me in. I wasn't porn, but it drew me in, offering promises of warmth and goodness. Although I knew it was wrong, I cut it out and kept it. I couldn't bear to part from how it made me feel.

All to soon, I needed more. the growing pile of cut outs wasn't enough. I resorted to looking online, constantly looking for more and more explicate pictures and videos, relishing the warmth and delight that each step further brought.

About three months after I found that first picture, I stumbled across porn. To this day I can remember every detail of that first video, that's how much I loved it, how much I needed it.

Three months after that I discovered masturbation, and the relief and joy that it brought was indescribable.

The next few years was filled with joy and guilt over what I was doing. Joy because it made me feel good. Guilt because I knew it was wrong. I would watch P and M, build up my collection of pictures, and then burn it every few months out of shame and guilt, vowing never to do it again.

But there was always an again.

When I was 12, my parents caught on and asked me if I was looking at inappropriate things online. I admitted to doing it, and with my parents urging, admitted it to my menahel who referred me to a therapist. I went to her for a bit, but it didn't help.

The following bunch of years was filled with bingeing on P and M, then trying to stop but being unable to. Every time my parents caught me, I knew that never ever no matter what, I would not do it again. I couldn't bear the shame and other feelings that came with being caught or admitting. But I could never keep my convictions. Eventually I became better at hiding it and gave up on telling my parents because that never helped anyway. I was caught in an endless loop that I couldn't bear to live in, and yet I couldn't bear to live without. At some point during this time, I tried GYE, but because my parents decided to limit my internet access, I couldn't access the tools that they provide. The lack of internet connection also led to me relying on fantasy more and more. And therefore when I did get access to internet without my parents

knowledge, I would head to porn more often than to GYE.

In 11th grade, I admitted to my mashgiach, hoping that he could help, but once again it didn't work.

After going to a yeshiva out of town and resorting to buying and downloading porn so that I could have a ready stash (and not being able to throw them out because of ba'al tashchis)(told you I was Frum, LOL), calling into chat lines, and signing up to receive explicit picture by text. I was at the end of my rope. All I could see in my future was pain and misery. All the shame, the guilt, the leading a double life and everything associated with it was too much to bear. In desperation I called GYE and pressed the number for the only one that offered something new and someone to talk to.

I spoke with Dov regarding the 12 step program. He was someone offering something new, something that he said worked for countless others who were even more hopeless than I was. I had already tried everything else (davening, learning, healthy living, punishment and rewards, brachos from tzadikim, kivre tzadikim, working on myself, promises, deals with hashem, learning up about how bad it was and how much reward I would get for not doing it, segulos... and many other things, you name it, I tried it.), and that had never worked, but this sounded different didn't fully understand what it was, but I decided to go for it anyways. After all, my life was falling apart, becoming unbearable, so what did I have to lose? I decided to give it a try, and to this day, it's one of the best decisions that I've ever made.

I have to pause my story for now, but I hope to be able to continue it later today. I hope that so far there are people who can connect and find this useful in any way. Looking back from you until then.

All the best,

Ezra W

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by chaimoigen - 14 Aug 2024 04:45

Thank you for sharing!

You seem like an unbelievable fighter, and someone that we will have a lot to learn from.
Looking forward to getting to know you better!

Here's a warm hand,

Chaim Oigen

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)

Posted by BenHashemBH - 14 Aug 2024 04:55

Thank you for opening up. You sound very wise, and I too cannot wait to get to know you better. I feel that you will have a lot to offer in helping the oilam here, in addition to finding the freedomhappiness that we all seek.

(edit: Freedom won't necessarily make us happy. Inner happiness is much more likely to set us free).

Welcome to the family (Brotherhood might be more accurate, but also sounds a bit too ominous)!

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)

Posted by ezraw - 14 Aug 2024 05:05

Thank you! looking forward to getting to know you as well.

Just came back to clarify that I am in no way trying to convince people to join the 12 step program. I am only sharing what worked for me (after GYE was not a feasible option for me), in the hopes that it can help others in their own journey to a happy and free life through recovery

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)

Posted by yiftach - 14 Aug 2024 13:24

A very warm welcome (again)!

Yiftach'I

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by Muttel - 14 Aug 2024 14:25

Welcome, welcome!

Here's hoping you can continue sharing a journey
of success and purity,
freedom and liberty,
from this menace, for eternity!

Muttel

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by upanddown - 14 Aug 2024 15:41

Wow. Ezra, thank you for your introduction. You've moved me to tears, as it brings me back memories of my own, difficult childhood. I also lacked love but for (possibly) different reasons. My parents' Shalom Bayis was terrible. (I could write a 5 volume book about what I went through...) I was DESPERATE for love and warmth but instead I was busy mediating between my parents and making sure there were no explosions at the Shabbos meals, from the very young age of 5, 6, 7 years old... I remember one week the Mishpacha magazine's front page

had a picture of 3 very sweet looking young boys and I would fantasise in bed, that I was ill in hospital and they would come to visit me...

At one point, when I was 11yrs old, my single uncle invited me into his house to show me some exciting pictures of naked woman which he collected from newspapers. And so, every Friday I went in to him where he showed me pictures and abused me, we masturbated together... this went on until my Bar Mitzva!

I also had a friend who was ill with cancer L"O and I was literally jealous of him! He was getting so much care and attention. I wished everyone knew what I was going through at home. I was embarrassed of my father wherever we went. I turned bright red in my face at any given moment. So, however well meaning my parents were, it's no wonder I found love and comfort when watching porn on our completely unfiltered computer... (I think back in the day I was able to watch porn on YouTube, if I'm not mistaken..)

Sorry for writing about myself on your thread, but you've really brought back memories and I very much relate to your struggles from such a young age.

May Hashem give you the strength you need, and I'm looking forward to hearing more from you!

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UpAndDown

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by ezraw - 14 Aug 2024 16:01

Thank you everyone for the warm welcome!

It feels good to connect.

I appreciate hearing feedback from everyone, and I'm glad that there are people who can connect. If anyone feels a connection and wants to share it like @upanddown, please feel free. I want people to feel connected here so please don't hesitate to share your thoughts and feelings in relation to my story. Also, If anyone has any questions, comments, needs clarity on something I said, wants my opinion, or wants to voice their opinion on what I write, I will try to respond as necessary to the best of my abilities.

Keep looking forward! wishing everyone much hatzlacha in all their endeavors.

All the best,

Ezra W

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)

Posted by ezraw - 15 Aug 2024 23:12

My story continued:

(Once again, disclaimer: I am not trying to push the 12 steps on anyone in any way. this is just my personal experience and what has worked for me. If you find something else that is working for you (E.g. GYE) then use it)

I attended my first ever 12 step meeting the night after I spoke with Dov. I wont go into the details right now, but my first thought was: I don't belong here! sure I have a problem, but nothing like these guys!

But something pulled me to come again. And then again. And before I knew it, I started to realize that although some of them have done things that I told my self I would never do [eg online dating app, connecting with people to have sex, etc.] (remember what I said here....), we were all here because we had a common problem and needed help to recover. With that realization, I was able to start connecting and working the steps.

Over the next year or so, I started going from masterbating multiple times a day, to once every few days without much effort. If I was lucky, a week. If I pushed myself, two weeks. and if I tried really hard and had some luck, three weeks. But for some reason I could never get any more than that.

At the end of my first year in the program, I ended up pushing myself so hard not to act out that I was literally in a daze. I couldn't sit still, barely knew what was going on around me, and couldn't focus on anything. Two of my rebbeim noticed something was wrong and pushed me to share it with them so that they could help me. After getting the okay from my sponsor, I told them.

One of them told me that the program was fine, But he also wanted to do something else that had helped other bochrin (we never ended up doing it.). The other insisted that I speak to a

Rav in Monsey who knows about the 12 step program, and find out if he thinks I should be doing it.

I spoke to the Rav, and he told me I should drop out and try therapy instead. I told my sponsor, and he agreed that I should listen to the Rav.

I went to a therapy session once, but over the next year, it never worked out again. Logistically it was difficult being in an out of town yeshiva, and finding a therapist that I and my rebbe felt was qualified never happened.

During this time, my list of ways of acting out got longer. I started checking out dating apps, explicate video games and tried contacting girls to connect and have sex (remember what I said before? LOL) among other things. I also discovered that I no longer enjoyed watching porn. I found it disgusting, yet I was powerless to stop myself from watching. I could not stop even though I hated every minute of it.

With succos approaching, and I was making plans to come to yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel, I called the Rav and explained my difficulties in finding a therapist, and the pain, shame and despair I was feeling over the fact that I felt it was just getting worse and more hopeless. After a long discussion about the pros and cons, he said I should rejoin the program.

This past December, I rejoined the program and it's been mostly uphill since then. I realized that I had been doing my step work wrong the first time. I thought I had a connection with Hashem, but when I came back, I realized that I had been lying to myself the whole time. One of the main principals of the 12 steps is to trust God, but although I thought I was trusting him and relying on him, I was really trusting and relying on myself!

That realization was crucial in my ability to connect with Hashem in a more meaningful way than I had ever done in my entire life!

Since I've rejoined, my life has improved drastically. I love Hashem now more than I ever have. I love yiddishkeit more, people more, life more. I can look back on my life and see that everything in my life that I thought was bad, that Hashem had abandoned me and hated me for what I was doing, was really all from Hashem leading me to this point in my life. He wasn't just holding my hand, he was hugging me and carrying me so that I could grow to be the best person I could be!

And all this could only have happened with me being told to leave the program for a year. A year that I hated because I thought I had a solution that although wasn't perfect, was helping. A year that unbeknownst to me, I needed. I needed the pain, the despair, the shame.... everything was a necessary part of the plan that Hashem had for me and has been kind enough to show me (at least in part).

I managed to get three months before going home for pesach and falling.

But I came back, and have been going strong since.

Slowly but surly, with the help of Hashem who loves me more than I can ever imagine, and through working the steps of the program to which he guided me to, I have been able to rebuild

my life in ways that I never imagined possible.

The freedom of being myself, of having lust free thoughts, the knowledge that I have support and tools to deal with the lust when it comes (and don't get me wrong, it still comes very often to me), have given me a new lease on life and feelings of joy and freedom that I cant even begin to describe accurately.

(as an example, this past motzi shabbos I saw something incredibly triggering, something that in the past I would have jumped at. But when I realized what it was I was seeing, I found it so disguising that I couldn't stand being there to see it for another moment. I felt ill and disgusted. At that moment I couldn't understand how I had ever liked this stuff.)

I don't have all the answers, and that's okay, I don't need to understand Hashem's plans, I just need to trust him.

There is a saying in the 12 steps; ?let go and let God.

He knows what is best for me, and he decided that I should be where I am. My job is to accept what he does, no matter what the situation may be. No matter how painful, hopeless and distressing it may feel. And to be the best Ezra I can be.

My final message (at least for now) is to never give up no matter what. Hashem loves you more then you can ever imagine. He put you in your situation so that you can grow to be the best possible person you can be. He was hugging you throughout your life, guiding you to where you are today even (possibly especially) when you where doing all those things that your ashamed of. Trust in him and it will all work out. It may be painful. It may feel like there is no hope. It may take years. But as long as you keep trying to do your best, he will be there to help. Use the tools he provides along the way, and always look forward.

Wishing you all much Hatzlacha, and looking forward to continue my journey in life with all of you by my side.

With lots of love, wishing you all the best,

Your friend/brother,

Ezra W

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)

Posted by ezraw - 15 Aug 2024 23:14

P.S. I'm looking forward to hearing peoples comments, thoughts, questions, stories, feelings,

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by stopsurvivingstartliving - 15 Aug 2024 23:27

WOW!!! What a story. You seem to have built yourself as a real oivad hashem. I am jealous of you. Though I manage to stay clean it's never with such a deep connection to hashem. You say your not trying to recommend the 12 steps but you defiantly make it sound enticing.

Hatzlacha Raba.

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by ezraw - 15 Aug 2024 23:35

[stopsurvivingstartliving wrote on 15 Aug 2024 23:27:](#)

WOW!!! What a story. You seem to have built yourself as a real oivad hashem. I am jealous of you. Though I manage to stay clean it's never with such a deep connection to hashem. You say your not trying to recommend the 12 steps but you defiantly make it sound enticing.

Hatzlacha Raba.

LOL, I knew that it would come out sounding like the 12 steps are awesome (hence the disclaimer), because for me it is what worked. It doesn't work for everyone, but it definitely helped me get to where I am today.

?And all you have to do is look what people are saying about GYE or whatever else works for them, it's the same idea. It helped them, so they love it.

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by amevakesh - 16 Aug 2024 15:33

Lots of wisdom in your posts. What struck me was the way you classified your hard ????? as a '????? ?????? ?????. The hard work you put in, and the way you didn't give up after so many setbacks is awe inspiring. Welcome to our family! We're looking forward to hearing more wisdom from this truly impressive individual.

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by 138eagle - 16 Aug 2024 16:52

Just amazing.

No words. Just tears in my eyes.

Keep Flying!!

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Re: My journey to happiness and freedom (ongoing)
Posted by eerie - 18 Aug 2024 05:56

Wow! Amazing reading your story, Ezra! Please stick around and share, my friend! You have a lot pf clarity, and you write so clearly, I'm sure many of us can benefit from your words of wisdom

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