

The Role of The Cognitive Method on GYEPosted by nederman - 23 Dec 2012 20:43

I gave myself a big sanity check today. I was bothered by the fact that Dov jumps into a discussion between me and people who come here for help. One thing I realized is that Dov *should* indeed butt in, so to speak. I will try to explain how I came to that conclusion.

I have a recurring cognitive distortion called "disqualifying the positive." I actually remember the day when I was sitting in the back of my parents' car on the way to our country home as a child and I thought to myself "if I want to make more progress I need to let go of my achievements," or something like that. This is such a good example of cognitive self-therapy. This belief that recognizing my achievements holds me back is probably 100% wrong. It has caused me a lot of excitement and also a whole lot of grief too. I feel anxious when I am not impressed with whatever I am engaged in. I have a tremendous urge to do something else, anything that seems new or impressive, which is an arbitrary judgement entirely up to me. It's utter nonsense. Last July I stopped procrastinating on reading Feeling Good, by David Burns, a book which has been shown to cure depression as well as in-person cognitive therapy. This book lists several well-known, recurring cognitive distortions (thinking errors), and one of them is "disqualifying the positive." This means that you look at your achievements and like magic you make them look like nothing. It's a book about mental magic. The purpose of cognitive therapy is not to teach specific beliefs but to teach skills with which to strengthen whatever beliefs you wish to have. One of these skills is identifying exactly what you are thinking when you are feeling depressed, etc. You feel the way you think, but without training the feelings just appear to be innate, valid, absolute. With practice you start intercepting the thoughts that lead to your feelings, and you can then evaluate whether these thoughts are accurate or not. The point is not auto-suggestion, telling yourself whatever you wish, but to get yourself to think objectively, on the assumption that acceptance of reality (ourselves, others and the world) is a solid basis for success. This is basically just bitachon, it means that G-d designed a world that allows us to succeed with reasonable efforts, as long as we don't sabotage ourselves. It also shows what the Mesillas Yesharim says, namely that the world is full of darkness, and that introspection is sometimes necessary for success. This in turn is based on the pasuk in the Torah that says "therefore the rulers say, let us enter into an accounting." The etz ha-daas does not offer true daas. It provides the ability to think what we want to think and truly believe it, because we are never really going to be like G-d, knowing right and wrong. Fooling ourselves into thinking that we really know what's true and false is the closest we get, and that's the "gift" of the etz, that ability to rationalize. Reflection allows us to take the tree which we have eaten and internalized, and push it out again. Too bad it takes effort. In order for this process to succeed it has to be based on proven facts. And sometimes the best we can say is "we don't know." Since I learned this skill I used it several times, but I am only just starting to hear the yetzer tell me "what you are doing right now is worthless" (disqualifying the positive.) And I realized today that I am doing this with my contributions on GYE.

I have had several exchanges with Dov, in which I state that you *can* fight your yetzer, and Dov

states that you cannot. And just today I finally realized that when I read that I am *really* surprised that anyone would think that you cannot fight the yetzer. I am thinking *of course you can*. But it's a cognitive distortion, I am just disqualifying the positive. *I* have learned how to fight my yetzer (using a cost-benefit analysis and by hearing the yetzer when it says I have no choice,) but for how many years did I think like Dov? About thirty years. But to me they feel like nothing. No wonder I cannot have a meaningful dialogue. I think that my point is absolutely obvious. It's not. At all. The very existence of this web site reminds me that it's not obvious.

Just because Dov has been in recovery for a long time and he is such a big help to people doesn't mean that he understands what I understand. As long as he believes what he believes he cannot agree me. If I produce evidence that there was no need for him to go into SA (and no need for GYE) I am just going to elicit negative responses.

Since I joined GYE I have helped a few users. Before our interaction these people wrote that they couldn't stop doing porn. At the end (about three weeks later) they wrote that they could, if they tried. When I saw this I reacted by thinking "what's next?" as I have become accustomed to doing. I think I started posting publicly again because I was thinking "okay, I can fix people up in three weeks, now how do I fix *everyone*?" I am just disqualifying the positive. Fixing even one person is a real achievement. I have done it three or four times already. And that's three more than the 12-step program has done in its entire history, because these people do not need a group.

GYE itself is like an emergency room. When all else fails, you come here, as Dov said. When I write "no, you shouldn't be in the emergency room, there is nothing wrong with you, I can prove it to you!" this is likely to sound as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. However, I have found that I can rescue people if I focus on them one at a time, behind the scenes. I believe that this approach will yield better results.

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Re: The Role of The Cognitive Method on GYE
Posted by Icandothis - 12 Feb 2013 10:19

Any way we can talk about your cognitive methodology some more, it peaked my interest.
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